

10¢

12 STORIES FOR TEN CENTS

# DETECTIVE SHORT STORIES

**HORROR HOUSE**

by  
**HENRY T. SPERRY**

**BLOOD OF THE BEAST**

by  
**ROGER TORREY**

APRIL

ALSO

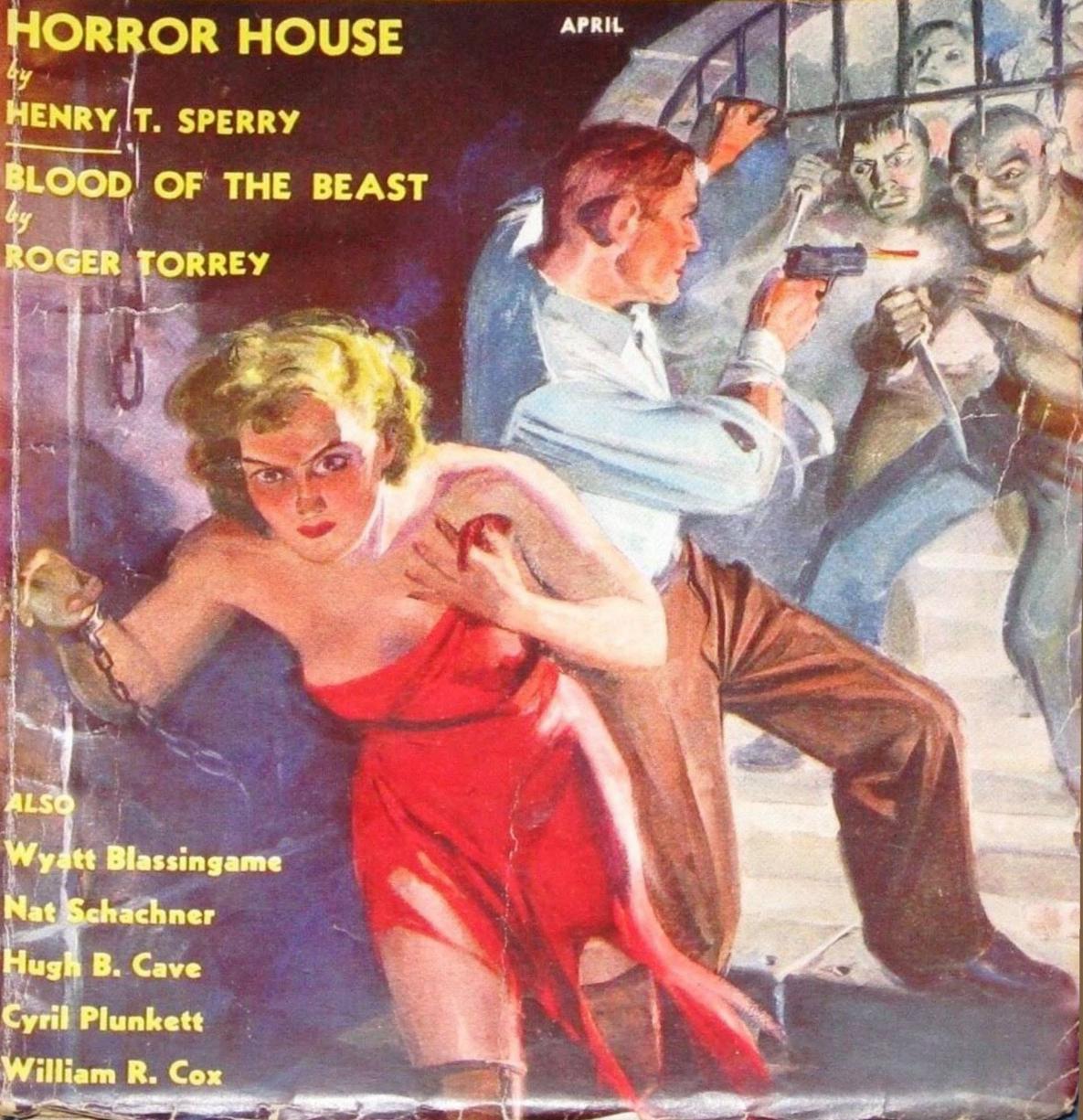
**Wyatt Blassingame**

**Nat Schachner**

**Hugh B. Cave**

**Cyril Plunkett**

**William R. Cox**





# A Money-Making Opportunity

for Men of Character

EXCLUSIVE FRANCHISE FOR

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

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

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

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

*New another change is taking place. An old established industry—an integral and important part of the nation's structure—in which millions of dollars change hands every year—is in thousands of cases being replaced by a truly astonishing, simple invention which does the work better—more reliably—AND AT A COST OFTEN AS LOW AS 2% OF WHAT IS ORDINARILY PAID! It has not required very long for men who have taken over the rights to this valuable invention to do a remarkable business, and show earnings which in these times are almost unheard of for the average man.*

**Not a "Gadget"—  
Not a "Knick-Knack"—**

*but a valuable, proved device which has been sold successfully by business novices as well as seasoned veterans.*

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

**Some of the Savings  
You Can Show**

You walk into an office and put down before your prospect a letter from a sales organization showing that they did work in their own office for \$11 which formerly could have cost them over \$200. A building supply corporation pays our man \$70, whereas the bill could have been for \$1,600! An automobile dealer pays our representative \$15, whereas the expense could have been over \$1,000. A department store has expense of \$58.60, possible cost if done outside the business being well over \$2,000. And so on. We could not possibly list all cases here. These are just a few of the many actual cases which we place in your hands to work with. Practically every line of business and every section of the country is represented by these field reports which hammer across dazzling, convincing money-saving opportunities which hardly any business man can fail to understand.

## EARNINGS

One man in California earned over \$1,600 per month for three months—close to \$5,000 in 90 days' time. Another writes from Delaware—"Since I have been operating (just a little less than a month of actual selling) and not the full day at that, because I have been getting organized and had to spend at least half the day in the office; counting what I have sold outright and on trial, I have made just a little in excess of one thousand dollars profit for one month." A man working small city in N. Y. State made \$10,805 in 9 months. Texas man nets over \$300 in less than a week's time. Space does not permit mentioning here more than these few random cases. However, they are sufficient to indicate that the worthwhile future in this business is coupled with immediate earnings for the right kind of man. One man with us has already made over a thousand sales on which his earnings ran from \$5 to \$60 per sale and more. A great deal of this business was repeat business. Yet he had never done anything like this before coming with us. That is the kind of opportunity this business offers. The fact that this business has attracted to it such business men as former bankers, executives of businesses—men who demand only the highest type of opportunity and income—gives a fairly good picture of the kind of business this is. Our door is open, however, to the young man looking for the right field in which to make his start and develop his future.

**Profits Typical of  
the Young, Growing Industry**

Going into this business is not like selling something offered in every grocery, drug or department store. For instance, when you take a \$7.50 order, \$1.83 can be your share. On \$1,500 worth of business, your share can be \$167.00. The very least you get as your part of every dollar's worth of business you do is 67 cents—on ten dollars' worth \$6.70, on a hundred dollars' worth \$67.00—on other words two thirds of every order you get in years. Not only on the first order—but on repeat orders—and you have the opportunity of earning an even larger percentage.

**This Business Has  
Nothing to Do With  
House to House Canvassing**

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

**No Money Need Be Risked**

in trying this business out. You can measure the possibilities and not be out a dollar. If you are looking for a business that is not overcrowded—a business that is just coming into its own—on the upgrade, instead of the downgrade—a business that offers the buyer relief from a burdensome, but unavoidable expense—a business that has a prospect practically in every office, store, or factory into which you can set foot—regardless of size—that is a business but does not have any price cutting to contend with as other necessities do—that because you control the sales in exclusive territory is your own business—that pays most on some individual sales than many men make in a week and sometimes in a month's time—if such a business looks as if it is worth investigating, get in touch with us at once for the rights in your territory—don't delay—because the chances are that if you do wait, someone else will have written to us in the meantime—and if it turns out that you were the better man—we'd both be sorry. So for convenience, use the coupon below—but send it right away—no wire if you wish. But do it now. Address

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12 STORIES FOR TEN CENTS

# DETECTIVE SHORT STORIES

THE BIGGEST DETECTIVE MAGAZINE

Vol. 1, No. 4



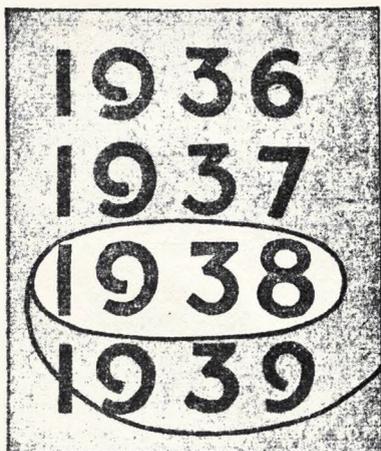
April, 1938

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28x31.40-28	\$15.95	28x31.40-28	\$15.95
28x31.60-28	\$16.05	28x31.60-28	\$16.05
28x31.80-28	\$16.15	28x31.80-28	\$16.15
28x32.00-28	\$16.25	28x32.00-28	\$16.25
28x32.20-28	\$16.35	28x32.20-28	\$16.35
28x32.40-28	\$16.45	28x32.40-28	\$16.45
28x32.60-28	\$16.55	28x32.60-28	\$16.55
28x32.80-28	\$16.65	28x32.80-28	\$16.65
28x33.00-28	\$16.75	28x33.00-28	\$16.75
28x33.20-28	\$16.85	28x33.20-28	\$16.85
28x33.40-28	\$16.95	28x33.40-28	\$16.95
28x33.60-28	\$17.05	28x33.60-28	\$17.05
28x33.80-28	\$17.15	28x33.80-28	\$17.15
28x34.00-28	\$17.25	28x34.00-28	\$17.25
28x34.20-28	\$17.35	28x34.20-28	\$17.35
28x34.40-28	\$17.45	28x34.40-28	\$17.45
28x34.60-28	\$17.55	28x34.60-28	\$17.55
28x34.80-28	\$17.65	28x34.80-28	\$17.65
28x35.00-28	\$17.75	28x35.00-28	\$17.75
28x35.20-28	\$17.85	28x35.20-28	\$17.85
28x35.40-28	\$17.95	28x35.40-28	\$17.95
28x35.60-28	\$18.05	28x35.60-28	\$18.05
28x35.80-28	\$18.15	28x35.80-28	\$18.15
28x36.00-28	\$18.25	28x36.00-28	\$18.25
28x36.20-28	\$18.35	28x36.20-28	\$18.35
28x36.40-28	\$18.45	28x36.40-28	\$18.45
28x36.60-28	\$18.55	28x36.60-28	\$18.55
28x36.80-28	\$18.65	28x36.80-28	\$18.65
28x37.00-28	\$18.75	28x37.00-28	\$18.75
28x37.20-28	\$18.85	28x37.20-28	\$18.85
28x37.40-28	\$18.95	28x37.40-28	\$18.95
28x37.60-28	\$19.05	28x37.60-28	\$19.05
28x37.80-28	\$19.15	28x37.80-28	\$19.15
28x38.00-28	\$19.25	28x38.00-28	\$19.25
28x38.20-28	\$19.35	28x38.20-28	\$19.35
28x38.40-28	\$19.45	28x38.40-28	\$19.45
28x38.60-28	\$19.55	28x38.60-28	\$19.55
28x38.80-28	\$19.65	28x38.80-28	\$19.65
28x39.00-28	\$19.75	28x39.00-28	\$19.75
28x39.20-28	\$19.85	28x39.20-28	\$19.85
28x39.40-28	\$19.95	28x39.40-28	\$19.95
28x39.60-28	\$20.05	28x39.60-28	\$20.05
28x39.80-28	\$20.15	28x39.80-28	\$20.15
28x40.00-28	\$20.25	28x40.00-28	\$20.25
28x40.20-28	\$20.35	28x40.20-28	\$20.35
28x40.40-28	\$20.45	28x40.40-28	\$20.45
28x40.60-28	\$20.55	28x40.60-28	\$20.55
28x40.80-28	\$20.65	28x40.80-28	\$20.65
28x41.00-28	\$20.75	28x41.00-28	\$20.75
28x41.20-28	\$20.85	28x41.20-28	\$20.85
28x41.40-28	\$20.95	28x41.40-28	\$20.95
28x41.60-28			

# HE THOUGHT HE WAS LICKED--THEN A TIP GOT BILL A GOOD JOB!



MY RAISE DIDN'T COME THROUGH MARY--I MIGHT AS WELL GIVE UP. IT ALL LOOKS SO HOPELESS.

IT ISN'T HOPELESS EITHER BILL. WHY DON'T YOU TRY A NEW FIELD LIKE RADIO?



TOM GREEN WENT INTO RADIO AND HE'S MAKING GOOD MONEY. TOO. I'LL SEE HIM RIGHT AWAY.



BILL, JUST MAILING THAT COUPON GAVE ME A QUICK START TO SUCCESS IN RADIO. MAIL THIS ONE TONIGHT



TOM'S RIGHT--AN UNTRAINED MAN HASN'T A CHANCE. I'M GOING TO TRAIN FOR RADIO TOO. IT'S TODAY'S FIELD OF GOOD PAY OPPORTUNITIES



TRAINING FOR RADIO IS EASY AND I'M GETTING ALONG FAST--

SOON I CAN GET A JOB SERVICING SETS-- OR IN A BROADCASTING STATION  
THERE'S NO END TO THE GOOD JOBS FOR THE TRAINED RADIO MAN



YOU SURE KNOW RADIO--MY SET NEVER SOUNDED BETTER

THAT'S \$15 I'VE MADE THIS WEEK IN SPARE TIME

THANKS!



I HAVE A GOOD FULL TIME RADIO JOB NOW-- AND A BRIGHT FUTURE AHEAD IN RADIO

OH BILL, IT'S WONDERFUL YOU'VE GONE AHEAD SO FAST IN RADIO.

## I'LL TRAIN YOU AT HOME In Your Spare Time For A GOOD RADIO JOB

**Many Radio Experts Make \$30, \$50, \$75 a Week**  
Do you want to make more money? Broadcasting stations employ engineers, operators, station managers and pay up to \$5,000 a year. Spare time Radio set servicing pays as much as \$200 to \$500 a year--full time servicing pays as much as \$30, \$50, \$75 a week. Many Radio Experts operate full or part time Radio businesses. Radio manufacturers and jobbers employ testers, inspectors, foremen, engineers, servicemen, paying up to \$8,000 a year. Radio operators on ships get good pay, see the world. Automobile, police, aviation, commercial Radio, loud speaker systems offer good opportunities now and for the future. Television promises many good jobs soon. Men I trained have good jobs in these branches of Radio.

**Many Make \$5, \$10, \$15 a Week Extra in Spare Time While Learning**

Almost every neighborhood needs a good spare time serviceman. The day you enroll I start sending Extra Money Job Sheets showing how to do Radio repair jobs. Throughout your training I send plans and ideas that made good spare time money for hundreds. I send Special Equipment to conduct experiments, build circuits, get practical experience. I GIVE YOU A COMPLETE, MODERN, PROFESSIONAL ALL WAVE, ALL PURPOSE RADIO SET SERVICING INSTRUMENT TO HELP SERVICE SETS QUICKER--SAVE TIME, MAKE MORE MONEY.

**Find Out What Radio Offers You**

Mail the coupon now for "Rich Rewards in Radio." It's free to any fellow over 18 years old. It points out Radio's spare time and full time opportunities, also those coming in Television; tells about my Training in Radio and Television; shows you letters from men I trained, telling what they are doing and earning; shows my Money Back Agreement. MAIL COUPON in an envelope, or paste on a postcard--NOW!

**J. E. SMITH, President, Dept. 5BK1  
National Radio Institute, Washington, D. C.**

**J. E. SMITH, President, Dept. 5BK1  
National Radio Institute, Washington, D. C.**

Dear Mr. Smith: Without obligating me, send "Rich Rewards in Radio," which points out the opportunities in Radio and explains your 50-50 method of training men at home to become Radio Experts. (Please Write Plainly.)

NAME.....AGE.....

ADDRESS.....

CITY.....STATE.....



J. E. SMITH, President National Radio Institute Established 1914. The man who has directed the home study training of more men for Radio than any other man in America.



### HERE'S PROOF THAT MY TRAINING PAYS



Broadcast Operator after Twenty Lessons

\$10 to \$25 a Week in Spare Time



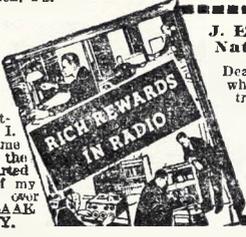
"When I had completed the first twenty lessons I had obtained my license as Radio Broadcast Operator and immediately joined the staff of WMPC, where I am now chief operator." H. O. L. I. S. F. HAYES, 85 Madison St., LaPeer, Mich.

"I am making from \$10 to \$25 a week in spare time while still holding my regular job as a machinist. I owe my success to N. R. I."--W. J. E. RUPP, 203 W. Front St., West Conshohocken, Pa.



\$3,500 a Year in Own Business

"After completing the N. R. I. Course I became Radio Editor of the Buffalo Courier. Later I started a Radio Service business of my own, and have averaged over \$3,500 a year."--T. J. TELAAK, 667 Broadway, Buffalo, N. Y.



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## Flush Poisons From Kidneys and Stop Getting Up Nights

When you can get for 35 cents a supremely efficient and harmless stimulant and diuretic that will flush from your kidneys the waste matter, poisons and acid that are now doing you harm, why continue to break your restful sleep by getting up thru the night. Just ask your druggist for Gold Medal Haarlem Oil Capsules—but be sure and get **GOLD MEDAL**—right from Haarlem in Holland. Other symptoms of weak kidneys and irritated bladder are backache, puffy eyes, leg cramps, moist palms, burning or scanty passage.

## OLD MONEY and stamps WANTED



**LOST YOURSELF!** It pays! I paid J. D. Martin, Virginia, \$200 for a single copper cent. Mr. Manning, New York, \$2,500 for one silver dollar. Mrs. G. F. Adams \$740 for a few old coins. I want all kinds of old coins, medall, bills and stamps. I pay big cash premiums.

**I WILL PAY \$100 for A DIME**

1894 S. Mint; \$50 for 1918 Liberty Head Nickel (not buffed) and hundreds of other amazing prices for coins. Get in touch with me. Send 4c for my Large Illustrated Coin Folder and further particulars. It may mean much profit to you. Write today to

**B. MAX MEHL, 205 Mehl Bldg. Fort Worth, Tex.**  
(Largest Rare Coin Establishment in U. S.)

When in Need of **False TEETH**

**ROOFLESS PLATES**

FILLS A LONG FELT WANT

Order by Mail at Money Saving Prices

**FREE** Sanitary Wrapped Impression Material and FULL INSTRUCTIONS How to Order By Mail!

MULTITUDES OF PLEASED USERS SAY MY PLATES SAVED THEM MANY DOLLARS—IMPROVE THE APPEARANCE—AIDS YOU WITH YOUR SPEECH **SEND NO MONEY**

Just send name and address TODAY. Don't delay.

**60 DAYS' TRIAL** **Dr. J. S. LIPPERT**  
Plate Specialist with 33 years' experience  
Pres. of Dr. Jos. S. Lippert Dental Lab. Inc.,  
Dept. 327M, 24 E. Van Buren St., Chicago, Ill.

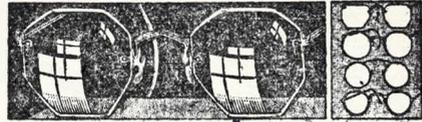
## SONG POEMS WANTED AT ONCE

Mother, Home, Love, Patriotic, Sacred, Comic or any subject. Don't delay—send poem today for our offer.

**RICHARD BROS.**  
54 Woods Building, Chicago, Illinois

The air is full of action again!  
**SKY DEVILS**, the air fiction magazine, is packed with *zooming thrills!*  
Brand new issue now on sale. Yes, it is A **RED CIRCLE MAGAZINE!**

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## 10-DAYS' TRIAL

**SEND ONLY 20 CENTS** with name, age and address, and by return mail **RECEIVE** a set of **14 TRIAL GLASSES** to select from to fit your eyes **NOTHING MORE TO PAY** until you can see perfectly far and near. Then the above **Beautiful Style** will cost you only \$3.90, no more; other styles \$2.20 and up.

We only handle **High Grade Single Vision and DOUBLE VISION or KRYPTOK BIFOCAL** toric lenses, ground into **ONE SOLID PIECE OF GLASS. DOCTOR H. E. BAKER, O.D.**, with over 30 years' experience, **GUARANTEES** to give you **Perfect Fit or NO COST.** Circular with latest styles and lowest prices **FREE.**

**MODERN SPECTACLE CO., Dept. 82-J**  
5125 Pensacola Ave., Chicago, Ill.

## KNOW THESE FACTS ABOUT PROSTATE ILLNESS

Don't Guess—Send for Our FREE BOOKLET  
"Facts About Prostate Illness."

For years—Men from every walk of life—ministers, merchants, doctors, farmers, railroad men, and lawyers from every state of the Union have been treated for Prostate Illness in Milford, Kansas.

**FREE BOOKLET OF FACTS**

including diagrams, illustrations, pictures of our modern sanitarium, and valuable information about prostate illness. Address

**MILFORD SANITARIUM, Dept. S, Milford, Kansas**



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About your business, travel, changes, matrimony, love affairs, friends, enemies, lucky days and many other interesting and important affairs of your life as indicated by astrology. Send for your special Astral Reading. All work strictly scientific, individual and guaranteed satisfactory. **FOR MANY YEARS PRIVATE ASTROLOGICAL ADVISER TO ROYALTY and the ELITE.** Write name, address and date of birth plainly. No money required, but if you like send 15 cents (stamps; no coins) to help defray costs. Address: **PUNDIT TABORE, (Dept. 441), Upper Forjett Street, BOMBAY VII, BRITISH INDIA.** Postage to India is 5 c.



**BIG Free BOOK ON CRIME CASES**

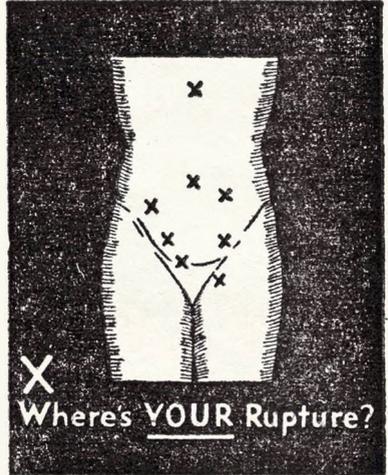
Fascinating book on scientifically solved true crime cases sent absolutely free to those over 17. Also tells how to get into Scientific Crime Detection: Home Study. New opportunities, Travel, Steady Employment. Experience not necessary. Very easy terms.

**SCIENTIFIC CRIME DETECTION INSTITUTE OF AMERICA, INC.**  
C & O Bldg. Dept. 29A6, Huntington, West Virginia  
J. T. Burdette, Pres.

**SKY DEVILS**

# don't **Worry** about Rupture

Why put up with days . . . months . . . YEARS of discomfort, worry and fear? Learn now about this perfected invention for all forms of reducible rupture. Surely you keenly desire—you eagerly CRAVE to enjoy life's normal activities and pleasures once again. To work . . . to play . . . to live . . . to love . . . with the haunting Fear of Rupture banished from your thoughts! Literally *thousands* of rupture sufferers have entered this *Kingdom of Paradise Regained*. Why not you? Some wise man said, "Nothing is impossible in this world"—and it is true, for where others fail is where we have had our greatest success in many cases! Even doctors—thousands of them—have ordered for themselves and their patients. Unless your case is absolutely hopeless, *do not despair*. The coupon below brings our Free Rupture Book in plain envelope. Send the coupon now.



## Patented AIR-CUSHION Support Gives Nature a Chance to CLOSE the OPENING

Think of it! Here's a surprising yet simple-acting invention that permits Nature to close the opening—that holds the rupture securely but gently, day and night, at work and at play! Thousands of grateful letters express heartfelt thanks for results beyond the expectation of the writers. What is this invention—How does it work? Will it help me? Get the complete, fascinating facts on the Brooks Automatic Air Cushion Appliance—send now for *free* Rupture Book.

## Cheap — Sanitary — Comfortable

Rich or poor—ANYONE can afford to buy this remarkable, LOW-PRICED rupture invention! But look out for imitations and counterfeits. The Genuine Brooks Air-Cushion Truss is never sold in stores or by agents. Your Brooks is made up, after your order is received, to fit your particular case. You buy direct at the low "maker-to-user" price. The perfected Brooks is sanitary, lightweight, inconspicuous. Has no hard pads to gouge painfully into the flesh, no stiff, punishing springs, no metal girdle to rust or corrode. It brings heavenly comfort and security—while the Automatic Air Cushion continually works, in its own, unique way, to help Nature get results! Learn what this patented invention can mean to you—send coupon quick!

# PROOF!

Read These Reports on Reducible Rupture Cases.

*(In our files at Marshall, Michigan, we have over 33,000 grateful letters which have come to us entirely unsolicited and without any sort of payment.)*

### Likes Brooks Best

"I bought one of your Rupture Appliances in 1935, wore it day and night for one year and laid it aside last December. The rupture hasn't bothered me since. I used several others without success until I got a Brooks."—J. B. McCarter, Route 2, Box 104, Oregon City, Ore.

### "Runs and Plays"

"My son has not worn the Appliance for over a year. He wore one for ten years and I am very grateful now to think he has laid it aside. He is twelve years old, runs and plays hard like all boys and is never bothered about the rupture."—Mrs. M. George, Route 1, Box 103, Cumberland, Md.



C. E. BROOKS.

## SENT ON TRIAL!

No . . . don't order a Brooks now—FIRST get the complete, revealing explanation of this world-famous rupture invention. THEN decide whether you want the comfort—be freed from fear and worry—the security—the same amazing results thousands of men, women and children have reported. They found our invention the answer to their prayers! Why can't you? And you risk nothing as the complete appliance is SENT ON TRIAL. Surely you owe it to yourself to investigate this no-risk trial. Send for the facts now—today—hurry! All correspondence strictly confidential.

## FREE! Latest Rupture Book Explains All!

Send You in Plain Envelope **Just Clip and Send Coupon** →

Brooks Appliance Co., 209-P State St., Marshall, Mich.

## Mail This Coupon NOW!

BROOKS APPLIANCE CO.  
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Without obligation, please send your FREE BOOK on Rupture, PROOF of Results, and TRIAL OFFER—all in plain envelope.

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

State whether for Man... Woman... or Child

# ALUMINUM STREAMLINED BICYCLE

Boys Earn It



**BOYS, 12 to 16!** Three hundred big prizes, including athletic equipment, movie machine, typewriter, musical instruments, printing press--and this aluminum streamlined bicycle! Bike comes fully equipped with electric horn, coaster brake, headlight, parking stand, wheel lock, etc. Low, bow-arch, streamlined frame; chromium plated; 20% lighter than most bikes. Swift, flashy, sturdy.

Earn this bike, or any of our other prizes, and make **MONEY**, besides. It's easy. Just obtain customers in your neighborhood and deliver our nationally known magazines to them. Need not interfere with school or play. Many boys earn a **MAIL THIS PRIZE** the first day. Perhaps you can, too. Mail the coupon and we'll start you right away.

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Dear Jim: I want to earn **MONEY** and **PRIZES**. Start me at once and send me a Prize Book.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

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EARN A BICYCLE • TYPEWRITER • MOVIE MACHINE • PRINTING PRESS • MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

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A Good Position, Well Paid for You  
**TRAINED MEN**—10 to 50—are wanted constantly as Railway and Bus Passenger Traffic Inspectors. Simple, home-study course qualifies you and upon completion we place you at up to \$135 per month, plus expenses, to start, or refund tuition. Advance with experience. Free Booklet.

Standard Business Training Institute  
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Banish the craving for tobacco as thousands have. Make yourself free and happy with Tobacco Redeemer. Not a substitute, not habit forming. Write for free booklet telling of injurious effect of tobacco and dependable, easy way to relieve the craving many men have.

**FREE BOOK**

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## WANTED ORIGINAL POEMS SONGS

For Immediate Consideration Send Poems to  
Columbian Music Publishers, Ltd. Dept. 145  
TORONTO, CAN.

## Epilepsy—Epileptics!

Detroit lady finds relief for husband after Specialists home and abroad failed! All letters answered. Mrs. GEO. DEMPSTER, Apt. 16, 6900 Lafayette Blvd., West, Detroit, Mich.

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Double the life of your coat and vest with correctly matched pants. 100,000 patterns. Every pair hand tailored to your measure. Our match sent FREE for your O. K. before pants are made. Fit guaranteed. Send please of cloth or vest today.

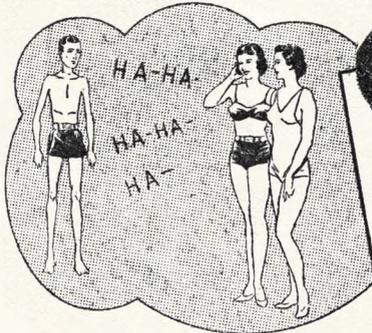
**SUPERIOR MATCH PANTS COMPANY**  
209 South State St. Dept. 582 Chicago

## Stop Drink Habit

Just get tasteless Cravez in his coffee, tea, liquor or food. He won't know and soon his craving for whiskey, beer or wine should disappear. New, proven treatment—physician's prescription, 100% success—this natural stop habit. Safe—doesn't upset stomach. Thousands benefited. Satisfaction guaranteed. Mailed postpaid in plain wrapper for \$3.00. C. O. D. if desired, plus a few cents additional charge. Order today.

**CRAVEX CO., Dept. 170, P. O. Box 242, Burbank, Calif.**

# THE GIRLS LAUGHED AT HIS SKINNY FORM!



"It's no fun to have everybody laughing at you and calling you scarecrow. I was so skinny and weak I didn't want to go out. Finally I tried IRONIZED YEAST. In five weeks I gained 14 lbs. and I'm good and husky all over. Now I go out regularly and have all kinds of good times."  
—Irvin Echard, Barberton, O.

— till he gained 14 LBS. QUICK  
this new, easy scientific way

**New IRONIZED YEAST  
gives thousands  
10 to 25 POUNDS  
in a few weeks!**

THOUSANDS of skinny, trundown men and women who never could put on an ounce before have recently gained 10 to 25 pounds of solid flesh, new pep and popularity —in just a few weeks!

They've taken this new, scientific formula, Ironized Yeast, which although perfected at the cost of many thousands of dollars, comes to you in pleasant little tablets which cost you only a few cents a day!

## Why it builds so quick

Scientists have discovered that many are thin and run-down simply because they do not get enough yeast vitamins (Vitamin B) and iron in their daily food. One of the richest sources of marvelous health-building Vitamin B is the special yeast used in making English ale, world-renowned for its medicinal properties.

Now by a new and costly process, the vitamins from this imported English ale yeast are concentrated to 7 times their strength in ordinary yeast! This 7-power concentrate is combined with 3 kinds of strength-building iron (or-

ganic, inorganic and hemoglobin iron). Pasteurized English ale yeast and other valuable tonic ingredients are added. Finally, for your protection and benefit, every batch of Ironized Yeast is tested and retested biologically, to insure its full vitamin strength.

The result is these marvelous little Ironized Yeast tablets which have helped thousands of the skinniest, scrawniest people quickly to gain normally attractive pounds, natural development, peppy health.

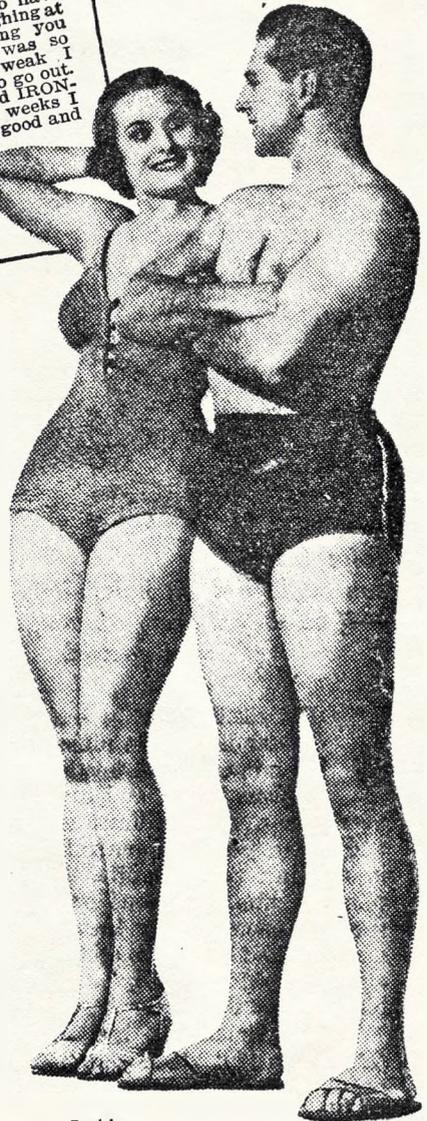
## Make this money-back test

If, with the very first package of Ironized Yeast, you don't begin to eat better and to get more enjoyment and benefit from your food—if you don't feel better, with more strength, pep and energy—if you are not absolutely convinced that Ironized Yeast will give you the pounds of normally attractive flesh you need—your money will be promptly refunded. So get Ironized Yeast tablets from your druggist today.

## Special FREE offer!

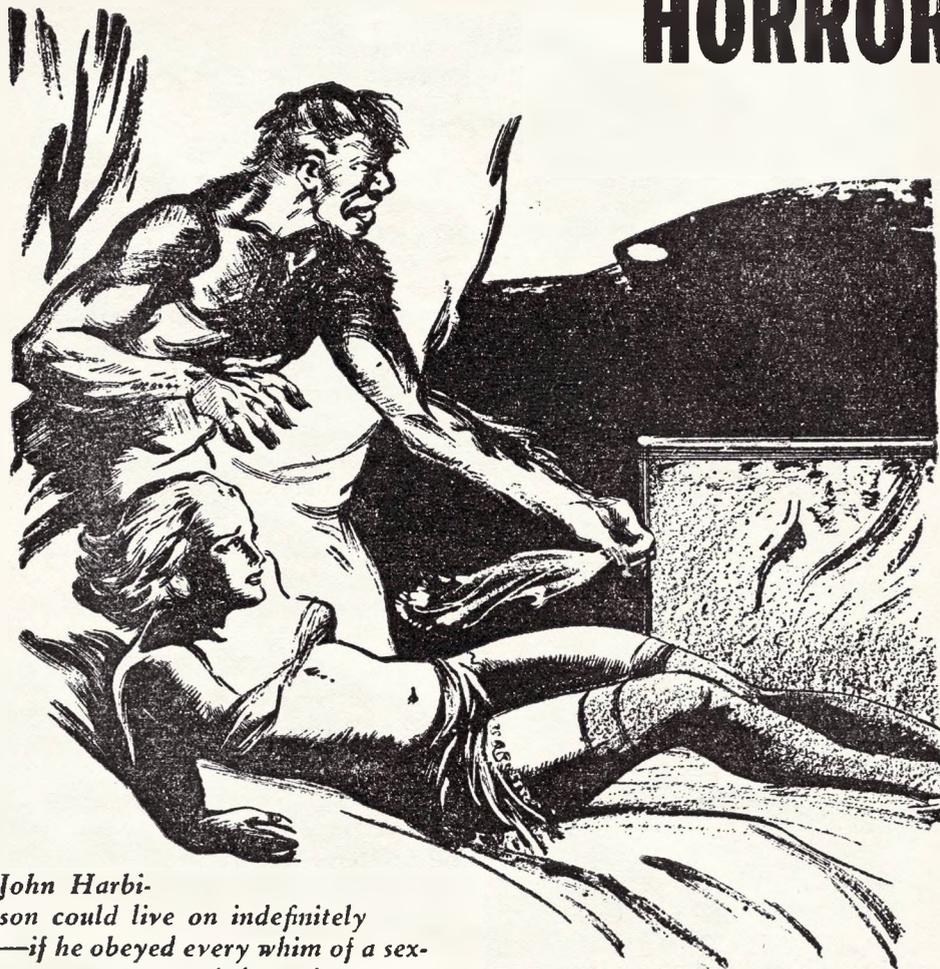
To start thousands building up their health right away, we make this absolutely FREE offer. Purchase a package of Ironized Yeast tablets at once, cut out the seal on the box and mail it to us with a clipping of this paragraph. We will send you a fascinating new book on health, "New Facts About Your Body." Remember, results with the very first package—or money refunded. At all druggists, Ironized Yeast Co., Inc., Dept. 962, Atlanta, Ga.

**WARNING! Beware of the many cheap substitutes for this successful formula. Insist on genuine Ironized Yeast.**



Posed by professional models

# HORROR



*John Harbison could live on indefinitely —if he obeyed every whim of a sex-mad doctor!*

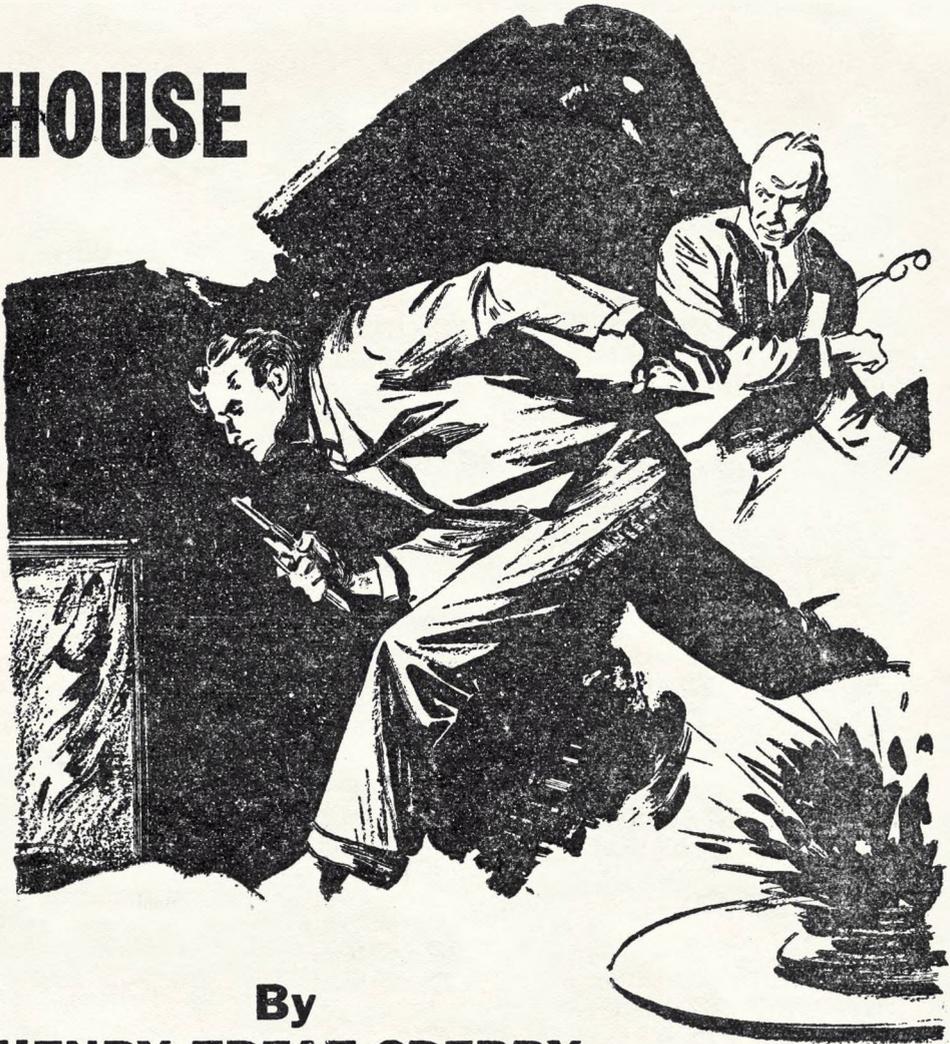
**J**OHAN HARBISON was trying to understand. It was difficult, because his mind seemed unstable, his perceptions vague and dreamlike. He heard the words Dr. Faustus was saying and understood their general import; but he couldn't realize, quite, that they applied to him. Someone had died, and then, in some utterly incomprehensible manner, had been brought back to life again. Could it actually be he, John Harbison, whom the doctor was referring to?

The physician who had assumed this rather fanciful alias—perhaps, as some people thought, because he had sold his soul to the devil—talked on in a low-pitched, patient voice. He seemed kindly, affable, as he talked to John Harbison who lay there on the operating table in that room of cold glaring white and

glittering steel. And John Harbison was listening carefully, trying to remember, trying to understand these things the kindly doctor was telling him, but which for a long time seemed beyond any human being's understanding. Too terrible, too painful for his groping strangely numbed brain to grasp all at once. And finally, when he did understand, it was too much for his overwrought nerves, and he lost consciousness again.

But this unconsciousness was not like the first. It was as if he had slipped off to sleep—a sleep troubled by nightmares, strange distorted visions of what had actually happened, colored and twisted by the fathomless horror of the situation he had awakened to there on Dr. Faustus's table.

# HOUSE



By  
**HENRY TREAT SPERRY**

Through it all Myrna's face swam like a pale, diaphanous moon. There were other faces, too. Shapes of furies and demons that seemed, somehow, vaguely recognizable. Their eyes glared at John Harbison from out of his dream, and their lips moved in an insane, squeaking gibberish.

The kindly Dr. Faustus leaned over and looked at his patient. And then, suddenly he wasn't kindly any more. A muttered imprecation bubbled from his thick lips as he pulled back the lid of his patient's right eye, and his face fell into lines of bestial rage.

"Karl!" he roared. "Karl, you fool, come here."

Almost instantly a wasted, tallow-faced youth appeared in the doorway of the operating room. The light of aban-

doned terror blazed in his phthisically-bright eyes as the flabby bulk of the doctor hurled itself at him.

Like an enormous, black tarantula, the doctor was then moving with surprising swiftness for one so ungainly-looking, so fat and flabby. One puffy, mottled hand reached out and grasped the boy called Karl by his skinny throat and shook him viciously back and forth, snapping his head forward and back on its frail stem of a neck, as though the boy were nodding a series of hysterical affirmatives to what the doctor roared at him.

"*Dunkopf!*" snarled Dr. Faustus. "Why did you not give him enough oxygen? Quick, get the tanks!"

With a final terrific shake he hurled the youth out into the corridor, so that he fell on the slippery tile floor, sliding

almost as far as the opposite wall before he was able to scramble to his spindly legs and stagger off.

With another mumbled oath the doctor whirled about and strode on his fat legs to the side of his patient. He leaned over the body on the operating table, looking anxiously into the pale face, fumbling at the wrist for the pulse.

Soon Karl returned, trundling along two tanks on a rubber-tired handtruck. Without direction from the doctor he adjusted the cone over the nose and mouth of the patient, and turned a small wheel controlling the valve of the tanks.

John Harbison's chest rose and fell with steadily increasing tempo until, at a signal from the doctor, Karl turned off the flow of oxygen and removed the cone.

Slowly the dream-wraiths faded out of John Harbison's mind, and a cool, white blankness took their place. His skin tingled with a cold, vibrant sensation. His tongue and soft palate felt stiff and numb as he opened his eyes again, and gazed upward at the quivering fleshy mass of the doctor's face.

DR. FAUSTUS had not been able to throw off the habits and mannerisms acquired during the course of thirty years' practice of legitimate medicine, even after he had left the paths of ethical procedure far behind him. He still had the professional bed-side manner. He was kindly, solicitous, as he practiced his criminal, dark science upon the helpless bodies of his victims. As his delicately-wielded scalpel carved living death into the souls of his unfortunate prey, he clucked and murmured pitying phrases. He was genuinely sorry for his "failures." He provided them with comfortable rooms, fed them well, watched them and guarded them with paternal solicitude until they died, horribly.

For a long time John Harbison gazed up into the flabby, dewlapped mask that was the face of Dr. Faustus. And gradually, now, he began to realize what had happened to him. And with that realization came a false feeling of strength, generated by the white heat of the fury that surged suddenly in his brain.

John Harbison thought he was cursing; he thought that he was going to smash that soft balloon-face above him with his big, hard fist—but he was mistaken. He had become so weak that he

could not even force his vocal chords into response to his desire to swear.

Later John Harbison lay with bandaged head upon his cot, and watched a weird parade pass to and fro before the open door of his room. All manner of men passed that door, bent on slow, mysterious errands. They were young men and old men; but they had several qualities in common: they walked with shuffling gait, their faces were uniformly drawn and pale, devoid of expression, and not one ever turned his head to look into John Harbison's room.

He started calling out to them, but still they paid him not the slightest attention. Karl came, then, and warned him to keep silent.

"The doctor does not like it," said Karl.

"God damn the doctor," John Harbison said, glad that he could at least curse again, although he was still very weak.

Days passed, each day the counterpart of the one preceding. Every morning Karl came and conducted him to the operating room. Here Dr. Faustus injected a small amount of colorless fluid into his arm hypodermically. Then he had to sit in a glittering cage of glass, nickel, and brass for fifteen minutes, while he experienced slight electrical shocks, and his nostrils were assailed by a strange mephitic odor.

He was gaining strength rapidly, now; but the state of his mind and nerves did not improve. This seemed to cause the doctor to worry. He had trouble sleeping, and finally, apparently with great reluctance, the doctor began giving him hypodermic sleeping injections. The doctor also tried to reassure his patient, talking to him, during his frequent tirades of towering rage, with his uniform kindly patience. But he had little success, for this was one patient who could not forget and who would not surrender, even though he knew his case was as hopeless as though six feet of sod had been heaped above him.

For John Harbison was no longer a name that meant anything in the world of living men. He had died out of that world as all men must eventually die out of it. A civil employee had examined him and made the pronouncement of death official. And the body of John Harbison had lain on the floor of the room in which

he had found the dark girl, with a bloody path plowed across his head. But the girl had gone, by that time, along with the two thugs who had burst into the room, shortly after he had arrived. The Coroner said death had resulted from traumatic shock, and turned the body over to the two white-coated internes who appeared and carried the body out to an ambulance that had been parked by the curbing in front of the house, before John Harbison had even entered the room of the dark girl.

And John Harbison knew that although he lived again, he had left that other world as definitely and irrevocably behind him as though he had stayed dead. Dr. Faustus made that clear. He lived by virtue of the injections and the "treatments" in the glass cage. They must be administered every twenty-four hours or he would die, again. But if he stayed under the doctor's care, and endured the "treatments" and injections regularly, he might live on indefinitely. So Dr. Faustus said, and so John Harbison, perforce, believed.

**T**HEN one day, after a particularly careful examination, the doctor told John Harbison that he had completely recovered.

"Yes," said Dr. Faustus, "I think I may congratulate myself on your case. My technique is decidedly improving. Frankly, for a while, I feared that I had suffered just another . . . failure."

He wheezed suddenly, and his eyes rolled sideways in their fat-rimmed sockets, as though he feared the approach of something from the direction of the corridor. John Harbison thought of the ghastly, blank faces of the men who passed to and fro before the door of his room, day after day; and he wondered about the failures of Dr. Faustus.

Then the doctor licked his rubbery lips, and stretched them into that benevolent smile that John Harbison had come so to hate.

"I think you will be able to begin your duties, tomorrow," said Dr. Faustus.

"Duties? What duties?" asked John Harbison.

"The duties of an amanuensis," said the doctor with a fat smirk. "You were, in your former life, I understand, a rather well-known newspaper correspondent. The talent which brought you near

the top of your profession will enable you to discharge the great obligation which you incurred when I restored your life to you. I am sure you will be glad to avail yourself of this privilege."

"Life!" snarled John Harbison. "Do you call this life? I can't leave this place; I can't even communicate with my friends. I am kept here like a prisoner, a slave to you and your God-damned injections and your electric-olfactory treatments, as you call them. Why can't I go for a day at a time—returning for treatments every twenty-four hours?"

"I have already explained to you," said Dr. Faustus, "that I withhold all contact with the outside world from my patients for their own good. The hazards of normal life would inevitably result disastrously for them. And it is a bit unreasonable for you to insist that I give my secret to the world, merely so that you can resume what you are pleased to call your life. Kindly remember that you are, to all intents and purposes, dead to that life. It was I who rescued you from death, and restored you to another sort of life—not, perhaps, as pleasant as your former one—but better, surely, than death."

"I am not so sure," said John Harbison gloomily.

"Oh, come," laughed the doctor in his jolly bedside manner. "After all, you are rather well-treated here, it seems to me. And I ask very little in return. Perhaps you are not in a mood to appreciate it, at present, but I assure you that I am offering you a chance to share in my immortality. I say this without vanity. It is a simple fact that I, who have mastered the great enigma of death, will loom in future history as the greatest figure produced by the human race. How can it be otherwise? And the means I have been forced to employ, the fact that the members of my own profession would denounce me instantly, if they knew of the work I am engaged in—all this will be forgotten. Or, if remembered, it will redound to the discredit of my critics."

In the end John Harbison agreed to undertake the work. Not through gratitude or fear, but because he knew that he must find some sort of activity for his harried brain. He had begun to feel that he was going mad. Horrible dreams tor-

tered his nights. Dreams in which he seemed to be eternally tossed about among the storm-swept billows of a bloody sea.

That feeling of impotence, of terrifying weakness was utterly new to John Harbison. Big-framed, strongly-muscled, and possessed of a clear sharp brain, he was a man for whom life hitherto had held no terrors, no obstacles worthy of the name. And lately that fearful feeling of physical and mental incompetence had been assailing him during waking hours. It was as though his resistance to the attack of this inner foe had been formerly too strong for it while he was awake, but that he was losing ground to the extent that even with all his faculties on the alert he could no longer fight it off successfully.

He explained his symptoms to Dr. Faustus, at last, his mounting terror conquering his pride.

**D**R. FAUSTUS listened carefully, pulling out his lower lip with thumb and forefinger, and then letting it snap flabbily back in place, as though it were a thick rubber band. His face showed no surprise, only disappointment and depression.

"Yes, yes," sighed Dr. Faustus when John Harbison had finished. "I feared it was too good to last. I had hoped . . . Well, never mind. You must get to work at once. You have a duty of inestimable value to the human race to perform. It will be your privilege to perpetuate for the benefit of posterity the record of my achievements—but you must hurry. I cannot tell definitely how much time you—we—will have . . ."

John Harbison glared at him for a long moment.

"That means I am going mad," he whispered huskily, and felt his knees give beneath him a little.

"Oh—no, no!" spluttered the doctor. "Not that at all—not at all. I—I merely meant that—well,—the sooner the better, you know. You're quite all right—quite all right."

He chuckled with a sound like butter-milk gurgling from a bottle.

But John Harbison knew that he lied, and in the end he began to work feverishly, hoping that thereby he might save himself—perhaps stave off indefinitely the ghastly thing that gnawed at the

root of his reason.

The doctor arranged for him to work in the laboratory where there was a small table and a typewriter that had been set aside for him. Several days he spent in assembling the records of countless experiments, listening to the doctor's explanations, taking dictation from him, and outlining the book which he was to make out of all this.

But the doctor was impatient. He could not see the need for all this preliminary work. "Why don't you just start in and write the thing?" he asked, childishly petulant.

So, really caring little how imperfect his book should be, John Harbison started to write. He found relief in the process, respite from the phantasms and strange fears that plagued his mind. But he was still in an over-wrought condition, irritable, on edge. He snarled at the doctor, to be met, always, with a kindly humoring attitude that merely heightened his irritation.

Then came the day when the door of hell swung open upon the house of Doctor Faustus.

A scream was the beginning of it. A piercing, long-drawn shriek that was like the cry of a soul experiencing its first stab of infernal fire. It was answered, immediately, by other shrieks, and the customary silence of the great house seemed blasted for all time.

Howls, wild shouts, eldritch wails echoed along the long corridors, rose faintly from deep in the bowels of the building, seemed to pour forth from every part of the house, as though every stone in it had suddenly become endowed with the voice of a maniac.

John Harbison leaped to his feet, hurling over the small table on which his typewriter rested. He stood trembling, fighting to keep from breaking, himself, into mad gibbering.

The doctor cursed and scrambled to a door at the far end of the room. He wrenched it open, disappeared for a moment into the small closet behind it, and came out with a long bull-whip in one hand and a pistol in the other. Still muttering curses he dashed out into the corridor.

John Harbison groaned and clutched the sides of his head with his hands. Those ghastly wails out there seemed to find a response within him that tore

frantically at his brain for expression. An hysterical impulse goaded at him to raise his voice in a long shriek, to laugh wildly, to throw things about.

He shuddered and bit his lip until the blood came.

Then a different sort of sound arose above that mad bedlam in the corridor, and hearing it, he straightened suddenly and felt his brain instantly clear of the encroaching spasms of madness that had been beating in on it, as though borne on the waves of horrid sound.

**F**OR, while it was a scream of pure terror, that new shriek was unquestionably different in timbre from the other sounds raging in that house. There was, somehow, a note which carried conviction to John Harbison's mind that it emanated from a sane person. Without doubt, moreover, it had been voiced by a woman.

He sprang through the door into a human maelstrom.

It seemed to him that these maniacs had become obsessed with a senseless, raging fear of each other and of themselves. They tore and bit one another like rabid animals. They clawed their own cheeks with their fingers, shrieking. Some lay writhing upon the floor, foam flecking their lips, and their eyes seeming to start from their sockets.

He gasped and struck down two frantic creatures who flung themselves upon him, mewling and slobbering. Near the center of the corridor he made out the figure of the doctor, whose right arm rose and fell with a slow rhythm as though it were tired of its activity. The raving men were making no effort to avoid the lashing whip which was being wielded on their faces and bodies. They seemed not to know that they were being struck, until they fell, stunned or blinded. They clawed and struck at the doctor and at each other with complete impartiality.

John Harbison fought his way forward, striking out when he had to, but for the most part merely shoving a way through the tangle of legs, arms, and bodies that obstructed his path. He had covered half the distance to the doctor's side when something struck him from behind. He felt a pain as though red-hot pincers had been sunk into the nape of his neck, and he knew that rabid teeth

were tearing his flesh.

The force of the attack bore him to the floor. The man who had leaped upon his back was jarred off by the force of the fall, his teeth ripping loose from John Harbison's neck. Then evil-smelling, howling bodies were piling over him, tearing at his clothes and flesh, battering at his face with wild blows. Two claw-like hands were inching up his chest, under the pressure of another man's prone body, feeling for his throat. And John Harbison, whose arms were pinned to the floor, was helpless to fight them off, even after they fastened on his windpipe and began squeezing with terrible, merciless strength.

Time for one shout to the doctor, he had, before his breath was imprisoned in his chest and dancing lights began to flash before his eyes, to be followed by all-enveloping blackness.

The blackness continued even after John Harbison opened his eyes and knew he had regained consciousness. He lay for a few moments staring upward into the dark, wondering confusedly if he were blind. He was aware of intense cold, of a horrid odor. Then there was a slight scraping off to his right, and the sound of a low whimper.

John Harbison lay very still and closed his eyes again. Perhaps, if he were indeed blind, there was light for the thing that had whimpered to see that his eyes had been open—that he had regained consciousness.

Then his outstretched fingers carried to his brain the impression of slimy stone surfaces. He was lying on floor of stone flagging, and the damp cold air suggested that he was in a cellar.

The whimper sounded again, followed by a long-drawn sigh. Then the scraping noise was repeated, and John Harbison was aware that something was stealthily approaching him. Something pawed at his leg, seemed to take direction from it and pattered up his body. Then he was grasped by his right hand, and he felt soft pudgy fingers pressing into his wrist.

John Harbison flung himself upward and struck out in the darkness. He felt his knuckles connect with flesh and bone, and the next moment his arms were encircling a large soft body.

"Don't—don't," gasped the doctor's voice. "It's I, John—Dr. Faustus. I was

just taking your pulse again, my boy. You've been out for several minutes."

"Where the devil are we?" asked John Harbison, releasing his hold and standing up in the darkness. "And what, in God's name, is that awful smell?"

THE doctor was silent for several moments. Then he whimpered again, like a wounded puppy.

"*Ach, Gott, John,*" he said, "we're in a terrible predicament—terrible!"

He wheezed and gurgled in his throat, and John Harbison felt the pudgy moist fingers tighten on his wrist. Then a grisly memory came back to John Harbison and a ghostly wind seemed to fan the back of his neck. The morgue . . . that was where he had smelled that horrible mephitic odor before. Only this was much worse.

"They've imprisoned us, John," husked the doctor fearfully. "Imprisoned in a horrible room in the cellar where—where . . ."

"Your private charnal house, I suppose," said John Harbison. "Where you throw the poor devils after they've died as a result of your tinkering with their bodies and brains."

"You put it very unkindly, John," whimpered the doctor. "You see, I couldn't very well dispose of them on the outside—"

"Shut up," snarled John Harbison. "There must be a way out of here. Think, man. Isn't there a partition we could break through? Another door—?"

Suddenly he broke off. There was a clanking sound, a rattle of a bolt and chain behind him. He whirled just in time to see a door open at his back. He threw himself bodily at the opening and found himself suddenly standing outside in the middle of a vaulted corridor, surrounded by the now quiet inmates of Dr. Faustus' house. The Doctor was but a step behind him and, having gained his side, turned and surveyed the humble blank faces before him with a swift questing glance.

What he saw in those faces apparently reassured the physician, for he said "Hah!" in a triumphant tone, and brushed the surface of his palms together in a satisfied, complacent gesture.

"So you've decided that you'd rather go on living than be revenged for your fancied grievances, have you?" said the

doctor in a cold, gloating voice.

"Randolph," he continued, turning to an extraordinarily tall, lean individual who, in spite of his extreme emaciation seemed to have a stronger light of intelligence in his eyes than the others, "I suspect you of being the instigator of this affair. I'll deal with you shortly. In the meantime, all of you go to your rooms—immediately!"

The men made uncertain shuffling movements, as though undecided whether or not to obey the doctor's command; then, with one accord, they turned their faces toward the man the doctor had called Randolph.

Randolph blanched, realizing, no doubt, that he was being tacitly condemned by his companions as their ring-leader. But he recovered himself after a moment.

"We have had no treatments, doctor," he said, "some of us for longer than twenty-four hours."

He spoke softly, humbly, but there was a dangerous light far back in his deep-sunk eyes. The doctor saw it and went white in his turn. He knew, in that moment, that his dominance over these shattered men hung by a thread. He realized that this was the moment to put his power to the test; but he quailed before the prospect failing to bring them to heel and, perhaps, of instigating another riot.

But he was spared the necessity of making a decision for the time, for at this moment a repetition of the shriek that had first brought John Harbison charging into the maniac-cluttered corridor, came to their ears from the upper portion of the house.

The patients of Dr. Faustus stiffened at the sound, and John Harbison noted how their eyes began to roll, as though they were being threatened by some dire influence. The doctor gasped, and tensed himself, stepping a little back, as though preparing for an attack.

John Harbison wheeled about and threw up his arms.

"Wait," he shouted in a great voice that thundered in the corridor. "Be quiet, and listen to me for a moment."

The madmen turned terror-filled eyes upon him.

"Wait," repeated John Harbison. "There is nothing to get excited about—nothing is going to hurt you. Go to your

rooms as the doctor told you to do. He will begin giving you your treatments immediately!"

While he was speaking the doctor had been plucking fretfully at his arm. Now, as the men, with whining, animal-like murmurs began to slink off, John Harbison turned irritably to the doctor.

"Well, what is it?" he demanded.

"That scream," said the doctor. "I'm afraid something is happening to Gretel. She screamed like that a few minutes ago. I tried to get to her, but—"

"Who the devil is Gretel?" broke in John Harbison.

"She's my daughter," explained the doctor. "I'm very much afraid, John, that she's—"

AT this moment John Harbison discovered the doctor's pistol lying near the opposite wall of the corridor where it had been dropped and forgotten, apparently, during the doctor's struggle with his patients. He scooped it up and dashed for the stairs.

Shriek followed shriek, guiding him to the last room opening off the upper corridor. Reaching the open door of this room he paused in horrified amazement at the scene within.

A gigantic man, whose back was turned toward the doorway, was leaning over the body of a girl which lay on a divan. As John Harbison appeared at the door, this man was engaged in tearing the last of the girl's clothing from her shoulders.

John Harbison shouted and sprang forward as the man turned with a snarl, staring with blazing wolfish eyes over his tremendous shoulder at the intruder. Then he whirled about, his lips writhing back from broken black teeth, his arms dangling apishly. He seemed to grin ghoulishly as he roared like a lion at bay and sprang.

John Harbison shouted again and fired. There was time for one more shot, and the beast-like man was upon him. The momentum and weight of the great body bore him to the floor, the pistol jarring from his hand with the impact of his fall. But he rolled over immediately, and the heavy body, suddenly inert, sloughed down at his side, turning face upward and revealing two bubbling holes in its chest. The giant sighed hoarsely twice, little red bubbles rising and bursting from the two holes; then he coughed

and was still.

John Harbison got to his feet and shook himself. Then he looked at the girl on the couch. She had raised herself on one arm and was looking at him. Suddenly, strangely, she smiled.

"Oh," she said. "It's you. You have rescued me again, haven't you?"

John Harbison recognized her. It was the dark girl in whose room he had been killed.

There was the sound of hurried, heavy feet in the corridor and Dr. Faustus, wheezing mightily, was among them.

"Daughter!" he gasped. "What has happened?"

He stood in the doorway, puffing and gazing in blank amazement at the girl, the dead giant, and John Harbison in turn.

The girl smiled faintly. She seemed to have recovered her composure completely, and to be not in the least embarrassed by the fact that stockings and shoes constituted her sole apparel.

"One of your little pets decided to pay me a visit," she remarked casually. "I expected that it would happen some time. But it was my fault because I forgot to lock my door. Have you got a cigarette, John Harbison?"

Suddenly the doctor seemed to awake to the impropriety of the situation.

"Here, here," he wheezed, bustling forward. "You haven't any clothes on, my dear girl. That brute—My God! Here, Harbison, you had better go back to the office. Er—thank's awfully, old man—for—er—"

He divested himself of his coat and wrapped it about the girl's shoulders. Then he turned, waving his hand toward the door as he looked owlshly at John Harbison.

The girl gave her father a look of pitying contempt, and then smiled sweetly at John Harbison as he shot her an angry glance, turned about and strode from the room.

He knew, now, that he had been the victim of a plot. That girl—Gretel, the doctor had called her—it was she who had called him that night, told him that she was a friend of Myrna Travis's, that she must see him immediately concerning something that affected Myrna's happiness. He had been a fool to fall for that without calling Myrna first. But Gretel had warned him against doing

that. Oh, she had been clever, this Gretel had; told him he mustn't let Myrna know; because Myrna would never consent to the sacrifice John Harbison must make for her. . . .

So he had come to the address the girl had given him, and he hadn't been in her room three minutes when two thugs had burst through the door and grabbed him. One had tried to jab him in the arm with a hypodermic, but John Harbison had put up too much of a fight for that. He had knocked the man sprawling and was choking the life out of the other one, when the man he had felled pulled a gun and fired. There was only blankness after that until he awakened in Dr. Faustus' operating room.

He went into his room, sat down on the side of his bed, cupping his chin in his hands. He stared at the floor in a mood of desperate melancholy.

Myrna—he must try to forget her. To think that he had ever wondered if he really loved her! They had known each other so long, come to take each other so much for granted. Sometimes he had felt that it would be a mistake for them to change their relationship to a more intimate one. But now she represented for him a veritable heaven of peace, sanity, and the joy of living.

Losi . . . lost.

**D**URING the two days following things went on very much as before the outbreak of the maniacs. The doctor had resumed giving them their daily "treatments," and they seemed as quiet and subdued as they ever had been. Nevertheless, John Harbison sensed a tension in their attitude, a strange sort of brooding watchfulness that he had not noticed before. Then, on the afternoon of the third day John Harbison raised his eyes from his typewriter to see Gretel standing in the doorway of the laboratory, a pensive, quizzical smile lighting her really lovely face.

John Harbison did not return her smile, but arose from his chair with grudging courtesy and said, "Come in," gruffly.

"Heavens!" exclaimed the girl, still smiling. "You're not very cordial, John Harbison."

But she came forward and seated herself gracefully in the chair John Harbison had just vacated.

John Harbison laughed shortly, staring down at her. "You're either an idiot, like the rest of the inmates," he growled in a deliberately insulting tone, "or you're just plain dumb, to expect cordiality from me!"

The girl stared back at him for a moment, apparently surprised by this low-voiced outburst, then she threw back her head and laughed ringingly.

"You're quite charming, John Harbison," she gasped, when the paroxysm of merriment had passed, "even when you're rude. But really, you shouldn't hold it against me that I was instrumental in bringing you here. Father is a fearful tyrant, and I am deathly afraid of him sometimes. I am always very obedient to him and I never thought of disobeying him that day when he ordered me to telephone you and say the things I said. Of course, I didn't know what a nice person you are, then. I was only doing what I have done numberless times before, when father needed new patients to experiment upon. . . ."

She paused as the frown on John Harbison's face deepened. She looked at him with an expression of wondering innocence, as though she could not account for his apparent non-acceptance of her explanation, and John Harbison, noting that expression felt something resembling awe at the realization that here was a woman as completely devoid of human feeling as the devil's mistress, herself.

"Do you mean to tell me," he husked, finally, "that you see nothing wrong in luring poor devils up here so that fiend of a father of yours can turn them into living dead men—into helpless brutes with minds of animals—"

"Oh heavens," interrupted the girl again, "I didn't lure them all up here. Only you and a few others. Most of them father gets from a morgue, and a certain prison where he has an arrangement with the Warden. But I help him in other ways. And, after all, if father is finally successful, won't he have accomplished something of—as he calls it—infinite benefit to the human race?"

"No!" shouted John Harbison. "Not even if he is successful. And any way, he can never be successful. Listen to this—here is something your illustrious father dictated himself."

He strode to the table and searched through the pile of papers upon it until

he found the page he wanted. Straightening he read:

"—and so it appears that the brain cells governing the higher functions of the body, being structurally more delicate, are the first to deteriorate. It is obvious, at any rate, that none of the cells can long stand up under a complete lack of oxygen, and it is of the utmost importance that the first steps in procedure A-2 be taken immediately following death. Even in such cases, when procedure A-2 was begun within two seconds after the diagnosis of death was made, profound changes had evidently occurred in the patient's cerebrum which, while not immediately apparent, began to manifest themselves in a complete syndrome of incipient schizo-phrenia within from a day to three days after the operation."

Suddenly he broke off.

"I don't know why I'm reading this to you," he said; but even as he spoke the words, the answer to his question came to him. The doubts he had been harboring concerning his own sanity had driven his nerves and self-control almost to the breaking point. He had reached the place where he must talk to someone—anyone, even this cold, self-centered woman—about the terror that had been threatening to engulf him for almost a week.

"Listen," he said, coming forward and gripping her tensely by the shoulders; "the doctor thinks that in spite of his other failures, in spite of the fact that some disintegration always takes place in the brain cells after death, in my case he has been completely successful. But he doesn't understand how he has succeeded. And I . . . I sometimes think—sometimes I'm afraid I'm going mad—that the usual process of deterioration is merely slower, in my case—"

THE girl rose suddenly to her feet, and stood looking at John Harbison with the light of fear in her eyes.

"But I thought—I thought—" she began.

"Yes?" he prompted with fierce eagerness. "You thought—what? What did your father tell you about me? Does he really believe that he has saved my sanity . . . ?"

A calculating look came into the girl's eyes, and fear died out of them.

"I think you are sane, John Harbison," she said; "but you are worrying, you are allowing the uncertainty to unbalance your nerves. Really, you are acting like an hysterical child. You should make more of an effort to get a grip on yourself." She slipped her hand into his and started leading him toward the door. "Come," she said, "I have some excellent brandy in my room. Perhaps a few drinks will—"

At this moment the door of the laboratory opened to reveal the rotund figure of Dr. Faustus. With a glance the doctor took in the details of the tableau of John Harbison and the girl standing hand-in-hand, and a look of petulant anger swept into his eyes.

"So," he said addressing his daughter. "Up to your usual monkey-shines, are you, Gretel? *Mien Gott!* What a hussy I have for a daughter . . . Come, off to your room, with you."

He waddled over to his desk and sat down as Gretel, throwing a vicious look at him, and muttering something beneath her breath, tossed her head and walked out of the room.

The next morning a shriek awakened John Harbison. At first he did not identify the sound, but when it was repeated he realized that it proceeded from some woman in mortal agony. Hurling on his bathrobe he ran into the hallway just as another scream reached his ears, apparently from the direction of the laboratory. He dashed down the hall and threw open the door of the laboratory.

The sheet-swathed figure of a girl rested on the operating table and over her body on either side leaned Karl and the doctor, the latter with a hypodermic needle poised in his hand. As John Harbison burst into the room the doctor looked up and scowled.

"Get out!" he shouted. "This doesn't concern you—get out, I say!"

From the table the fear-twisted features of the girl looked up at him imploringly.

"Oh, save me," she wailed. "He's mad. He's going to kill me and then bring me back to life again. Help me, help me!" she broke off, sobbing.

John Harbison sprang forward, but the doctor hastily jabbed the needle into the girl's arm, just as John Harbison caught him by the shoulder and spun him away with such force that the doc-

tor lost his footing and fell to the floor. Karl was on John Harbison, then, lunging forward with a scalpel which he wielded like a dagger, trying to bury it in John Harbison's heart. But he missed his aim and the next moment went crashing into oblivion as John Harbison's fist cracked his jaw with a blow that hurled him half-way across the room.

The doctor had bounced to his feet like a huge rubber ball. His eyes almost disappeared into the puffy folds around their sockets, and his whole face swelled and grew blood-red with berserk rage. As John Harbison turned to meet Karl's attack he saw his chance, and catching up a light steel chair, crashed it down on John Harbison's head, just as the latter sent Karl sprawling on the floor.

John Harbison had a sensation as if someone had thrown a bowl of warm milk into his eyes, and then he sank into oblivion.

The doctor stood over his body for several seconds, breathing stertorously, the beet-like color gradually ebbing from his face. Then he turned his gaze on the girl, but she had fainted and lay there on the table, very white, and breathing almost imperceptibly.

"*Verdammt!*" exclaimed the doctor, as though in disgust.

And then a slight noise in the hall caused him to glance suddenly in that direction. He saw nothing, but went to the door of the laboratory and peered out cautiously. But not cautiously enough.

As he stuck his head out of the doorway he had a half-glimpse of a gaunt, flying figure bearing down on him from his left, but before he could move a muscle it was upon him, bearing him to the floor with the force of its charge. A wild eerie yell broke from its lips as the doctor went down, and it was answered, as though it were a pre-arranged signal, from every part of the house.

**T**HEN Doctor Faustus was fighting for his life. Bone fingers were searching for his throat. Wildly-aimed kicks glanced off his round skull, crashed into his ribs, ground into his groin. Frantic fists pummeled every portion of his body and long finger nails ripped the flesh from his flabby cheeks.

Spurred by over-powering terror he gathered his strength, rolled suddenly

over and over along the floor, momentarily escaping the clutches of his tormentors and even succeeded in scrambling to his feet.

But only for a moment.

In the next instant he was literally submerged in a struggling mass of howling, berserk mad-men. They clung to his arms, hands, and legs, and about his neck, like weird human festoons, and bore him shrieking to the floor. There he struggled and screamed until skeleton-like fingers suddenly shut off his windpipe. Then, for a while he merely struggled with increasing feebleness, until life slipped out of the quivering mass of flesh that was his body, and even the maniacs at last realized that they were mutilating a cadaver and not a man.

After that they quieted down, gradually, and stood grouped about the tall, spider-like man who seemed to be their leader, and who had been the first to attack the doctor. The eyes of this man glowed with a fierce light of insane satisfaction as he glared down at the prone figure of the doctor. Then he turned and looked in the direction of the laboratory. Speaking no word he started walking in that direction, the others following him with a blank trance-like look on their faces.

The girl, Gretel, was perhaps the logical result of her environment. Cold, cruel, and unscrupulous, she had never before betrayed any of the usual feminine emotions. Her father had told her she was an emotional moron, and she believed that this was true. Still, she had fallen in love, after her own peculiar manner, with John Harbison. But she had no wiles, knew not how to go about attracting the man. She knew that she was beautiful, and she thought that, perhaps, this would be enough. Her two interviews with John Harbison had shown her that it wasn't. He regarded her scowlingly, seemed to loathe the very sight of her. He knew her for his betrayer. Obviously he hated her.

For the first time since childhood Gretel wept. She cried at night until her pillow was wet. For hours she wept after her encounter with John Harbison in the laboratory. She had suddenly become a woman. But she was still unscrupulous, still coldly calculating. She wanted John Harbison and she was determined to have him, cost what it might. His own hap-

pinness and peace of mind were secondary, even negligible, considerations. But in spite of all her planning, her carefully thought-out traps which she could, somehow, never succeed in springing, she finally admitted to herself that she was defeated. She was learning the bitter lesson that it is impossible to force a person to love one. And force, the sort of ruthless, lawless force she had learned the technique of from her father, was the only sort of tactics she understood.

And so Gretel wept the night through.

Toward dawn she had what, for her, amounted to an inspiration. She suddenly decided to tell John Harbison everything. She could not make matters worse, and there was a chance that he would forgive her, come to look upon her as a human, desirable woman—as, indeed, she was. And—she would tell him of her love for him. Perhaps—if only out of gratitude for what she could tell him—

And then Gretel heard the scream. The scream that awakened John Harbison, that aroused the inmates of the sinister house of Dr. Faustus to the murderous mania that such a sound always whipped into their twisted minds. But Gretel did nothing about it. She had heard such sounds before, had witnessed their effects on the poor lunatics in that house. She knew of the whip and the gun with which her father never failed to subdue them, and her orders, on such occasions, were always to stay within the confines of her locked room.

Later she heard the sounds of the rioting maniacs. She heard more screams but did not identify them as her father's. Indeed, they sounded like nothing human. But they were worse, more abandonedly horrific than any she had ever heard before. She shuddered and felt cold—a novel reaction, for her.

Then silence fell. She waited for several minutes before unlocking her door, opening it a crack, and peering into the hall. For the moment it was empty, but just as she was about to venture out, the door of the laboratory swung open and a group of men appeared bearing a limp body which she recognized with a gasp as being John Harbison. Behind this group came another, bearing the sheet-swathed form of a girl whom Gretel also recognized. It was Rosemary Travis, the daughter of Dr. Oliver Travis who,

Gretel knew, was her father's greatest rival in medicine and his sworn enemy.

**T**HE two groups of inmates disappeared into next room off the corridor from the laboratory; and a few seconds later reappeared and re-entered the laboratory, closing the door behind them.

A few minutes more the girl Gretel waited, and then she tip-toed softly up the corridor to the room into which she had seen the bodies of John Harbison and the girl disappear. Peering within she saw these two lying side-by-side on a cot; both very still and white of face.

Gretel gasped, and a curious mixture of emotions assailed her. She knew a terrible moment of dread as she noticed the pale face of John Harbison, and the look of death upon it. And then he stirred and moaned, but her gratitude at this reassurance that he still lived was tintured by an unreasonable feeling of jealousy at seeing him lying thus, by the side of a beautiful young woman. Indeed, this sensation quickly dominated all the other emotions in Gretel's heart, and she advanced upon the figure of the unconscious girl with a fury blazing in her eyes that was not quite sane.

John Harbison stirred again and opened his eyes. The back of his head felt wet and horribly painful as it lay upon the pillow, and a blinding headache prevented him for a moment, from seeing that he lay beside the girl he had attempted to rescue from the table of Dr. Faustus; kept him from realizing that this girl's life was even now being more direly threatened than ever it had been by the mad science of the evilly brilliant doctor.

But some instinct, powerful enough to bring the girl out of her fainting fit, warned her that death was close upon her, and she awoke in time to see the slim hands of Gretel advancing toward her throat.

Rosemary Travis screamed, and grasped the other girl's wrists, as Gretel's hands reached their goal.

That sound brought John Harbison back to full consciousness; but so stunned was he by the incongruity of the situation he had awakened to, that for a moment he was unable to move a muscle. Then, with a curse for the pain the sudden movement cost his battered head, he reached over and grasped Gretel by her

forearms, wrenching her hands away from the soft throat they had been closing upon with lethal strength.

"In God's name what sort of a devil are you?" he groaned, his head spinning with a dizzy nausea, so that he had to fight with all his strength to prevent the girl's arms from slipping from his grasp.

And Gretel's eyes, tear-filled, and blazing with frustrated wrath, softened and became stricken with anxiety as she saw that he was badly hurt.

Jerking her arms loose from his weakening grasp she swept around to the other side of the bed, and knelt beside him, burying her face in his chest and breaking into wild despairing sobs.

In the meantime Rosemary Travis had struggled to her feet, and stood looking down at the strange tableau on the bed with wide, uncomprehending eyes. Very beautiful, John Harbison thought her, as he watched her while Gretel sobbed on his breast. Like a slim Grecian goddess she stood, clutching the sheet which imperfectly concealed the perfect curves of her glorious body. A strange, unnamable emotion clutched at his throat as he noted the frightened, wondering look in her wide blue eyes, saw the terrified question in them as she gazed at him.

Sickness and giddiness swept over him and he closed his eyes with the grief and pain of a thought which came to him in that moment. For the sight of this girl brought home to him with devastating weight the knowledge of all he had lost through the gift of spurious life from the hand of Dr. Faustus.

Gretel was sobbing, murmuring broken phrases, wetting the shirt over his chest with her tears. Suddenly she raised her head and gazed into his eyes for a long moment, looking at him with a strange expression as though weighing a question in her mind.

Then she began speaking, and John Harbison heard the story of how he had been tricked. Learned that the physician who had examined him and pronounced him dead had been too hasty; that Karl, discovering later that this was the case, as he prepared John Harbison's body for the experiment of Dr. Faustus, had been persuaded to keep the truth from the doctor by Gretel.

Between spells of uncontrollable sobbing this girl, who had once seemed so cold, so cynical and unemotional, poured forth her confession into the incredulous

ears of John Harbison, while the other girl stood and gazed from one to the other in mute amazement.

"I knew that you would not stay here if you knew the truth," Gretel whispered, her lips close to his ear; "and so I let father convince you that your life depended on your staying near him. For ever since that day when I first called you to me, I have loved you, John Harbison . . ."

Then, as if it were a ribald commentary on the girl's confession of love, a wild cacophony of insane laughter suddenly broke on their hearing; and John Harbison tensed in anticipation of the breaking out of another horror in this house of multiple horrors.

**B**UT it was with a new feeling of joyous power to cope with the worst that the house of Dr. Faustus might offer that John Harbison rose to his feet, despite the still bleeding and painful wound in his head.

"Stay here," he curtly ordered the two girls, and strode from the room, closing the door behind him.

The sounds of laughter, more subdued now, but containing a maniac, triumphant note that chilled his blood, came from the direction of the laboratory. But John Harbison hesitated not a moment. He walked down the length of the corridor and flung open the door of that chamber of horrors. And as his eyes took in the significance of the scene that now met his gaze, his brain comprehended what had happened even before the words of the tall, gaunt ring-leader of the madmen reached his ears.

This man stood at the side of the operating table, around which were ranged the other victims of Dr. Faustus's dreams of scientific glory. Upright on the table, itself, sat the quivering, white-faced bulk of the doctor, himself.

"And so, doctor," came the sepulchral tones of the cadaverous ring-leader, "you are now in a position of gain first-hand information as to the efficacy of your methods. You see, we feared that, perhaps, you were not as intensely interested in the problem of restoring us to a normal condition as you might be. Now, however, that you have been, yourself, brought back to life under the identical conditions imposed upon us, we are almost sure that you will be spurred on considerably toward the achievement of

the goal that means so much to all of us."

A sudden plan formed in the brain of John Harbison, and he quietly closed the door and returned to his room. His intrusion upon the scene in the laboratory had not been noticed. He entered his room and closed the door behind him, standing there for a moment, looking at Gretel who regarded him with an unspoken question in her eyes, trying to formulate in words the thing he had to tell her.

"Get one of your gowns for this girl, Gretel," he said at last, suddenly deciding to postpone telling her what had happened to her father. "We are all three going to get out of here as soon as it is humanly possible. I don't think we have anything to fear from your father's—patients—but it would be best to take no chances with them."

"I suppose father is dead?"

John Harbison paused.

"Not exactly," he said at last.

For a long moment Gretel looked at him, and again the man was struck by this woman's quality of cold detachment.

"I think I understand," she said finally and moved toward the door. John Harbison stepped aside and the two girls walked out into the corridor, toward Gretel's quarters. John Harbison followed them and stood guard outside the door while they went inside.

The silence of tongueless dread brooded over the house of Dr. Faustus, as John Harbison waited in that long dark hallway. No further sounds came from the end in which the laboratory was located, and John Harbison mused on the curious fate of this doctor whose mad science had, at long last, overtaken him.

Then the door of Gretel's apartment opened and the two girls came out to him. But John Harbison had eyes for only one

of them. Rosemary Travis was a vision of youthful loveliness in the dark cloak which Gretel had given her, her crown of golden hair in startling, brilliant contrast to the somberness of the wrap.

**T**HEN Gretel spoke, her eyes darkening with a hidden pain, as she watched the expression in his face.

"Good-bye, John," she said. "You can take Rosemary Travis back to her father, now. I will stay here with mine and try to help him and his poor slaves. He was evil and unscrupulous enough to try to sacrifice Rosemary merely because he hated Dr. Travis, her father; but he is all I have and I think he still cares for me in his strange manner. That, after all, is the only sort of emotion—if it is emotion—that I understand."

She extended her hand and John Harbison grasped it.

"Are you sure," he said, "that you want to stay here?"

"I am sure, John," she answered; "but I hope that you do not feel it is necessary to inform the police about us. There is nothing left to be done for father or his patients that anyone can do but father, himself. Perhaps he may yet discover the thing he has sought so long—the thing he was tricked into believing he had found when he thought he had brought you back to life. If he does, everything will be forgiven him, I suppose. And if not—no one can help him or his victims. . . . Good-bye."

She turned, then, and quickly re-entered her room, closing the door behind her; and John Harbison looked deep into a pair of blue eyes that regarded him with an expression that sent a stab of joy that was almost physical pain into his heart.



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*"But hell, MacQuay," the Sergeant complained, "we found the open window, the rope, the jewels, the knife—and the body. What more could we ask for?" "Guess I've got a little mule in me," was Private Detective MacQuay's reply . . .*

## **—TO HANG by the NECK UNTIL DEAD**

**by JOHN GUNDERSON**

**P**PRIVATE Detective Quin MacQuay slammed his glass down on the counter, slipped the bartender a buck for his double rye, and strolled out onto Hollywood Boulevard. He had just washed up a good blackmail case, and he felt swell tonight. Now what he needed was diversion—and the thicker and faster, the better.

A blaze of illumination ahead caught his attention—the Riviera Theatre putting on the premiere of Mutual's new revue-flicker, "Broadway Serenade."

Sleek limousines slid up to disgorge their dazzling cargoes into the brilliant

glare of a battery of searchlights. Hollywood's screen satellites were arriving to pay homage to the star of the evening. MacQuay saw a raven-haired charmer in a bright Spanish shawl step out into the crowd, and quickened his step to find out who she was.

Just then something happened. Something so sudden, so crazy, that he thought maybe the drink had sent him off his nut.

Not ten feet ahead of him, a bulky, pulp-like mass, coming out of nowhere, struck the sidewalk with a squashy thud. MacQuay froze in his tracks, stared wide-eyed. A passing woman fainted. A cou-

ple of young girls started to scream bloody murder.

It was the body of a man, and he was dead—just deader than hell.

MacQuay summoned his wool-gathering senses and headed for the body. There would be no whoopee for him tonight. He wished he'd skipped that last double-rye. A crowd surged in behind him and stood gazing in ghoulish fascination at the gory mess. The man was so dead that it was pathetic.

MacQuay grabbed a stranger who stood gawping next to him. "Run like hell to the theatre. Get the cops," he ordered. "You four," he singled out some others, "grab hands like ring-around-a-rosy and hold back the crowd."

He shoved through to the curb. An electrician in overalls stood by a big searchlight trained on the theatre half a block away. "Out of my way," MacQuay snapped. His arm sent the man sprawling.

He grasped the big light and turned its beam on the fashionable apartment hotel before which the body had fallen. Slowly he manipulated it from ground to roof. The story below the top showed him what he wanted—a window wide open, with white curtains flapping.

In the chill December night, it was the only window in the building that was open more than a few inches. The room within was dark.

Whistles shrilled, and coppers barged through the crowd from all directions. MacQuay shoved in ahead of them for one more look at the body. By luck, the man had landed feet-foremost, and his head, though thoroughly doused with gore, was not much mussed up.

And then MacQuay saw something that brought a low whistle to his lips. High on the dead man's forehead, a little off-center, was a bullet hole—clean, neat. There was no sign of powder burns. His eyes travelled more closely over the blood-drenched hulk. The victim was an elderly man of slight physique, and he wore a cheap blue suit.

MacQuay jammed his way through to the hotel door. "How many floors are there here?" he bawled at a bellhop.

"Twelve," said the boy.

"Where's the elevator?"

The boy pointed, and MacQuay ran for it. "There's a penthouse on the roof," the ballhop called after him.

It was an automatic elevator. His brain still foggy from the drinks, MacQuay tried to figure. The penthouse wouldn't be counted as a floor. There were twelve other floors, and he wanted the one right below the top—that would be the second floor down—two from twelve was ten. He punched the button for the tenth floor.

When the elevator stopped, he headed for the front of the building. Between two rooms with lighted transoms there was one room that was dark—number 1009. That would be the one with the blowing curtains. He pounded on the door.

After a pause, a girl's voice said, "Who is it?"

"Detectives," MacQuay barked. "Open up."

A LIGHT snapped on, and a blonde in a tight black kimono opened the door and said, "What do you want?" She was tall and well-put-together, with wide baby eyes and hair bleached to a shimmering platinum.

MacQuay shoved past her into the one-room apartment, his trigger-finger poised on the automatic in his pocket. The room was in perfect order. There was no smell of powder, no sign of a struggle. The single window was up only a couple of inches, and there was a flower box on the sill, with flowers blooming.

"What's the idea of busting in like this?" the girl demanded.

"Take it easy, sister," MacQuay said. He pulled open the window and stuck his head out. The dead man, now the vortex of a milling mass of humanity, was directly below.

He closed the window and looked at the flower box. He had broken off a couple of flowers in leaning out. No dead man could have gone through that window without messing things up considerably. The box was bolted to the radiator.

"I'm sorry as hell to spoil your fun, brother," the blonde said behind him, "but those flowers cost money."

MacQuay sat down on the bed and said, "Who are you?"

"June Farris. I'm an actress. But I still don't see what right you've got to come bustin' in here and—"

"I didn't bust in," MacQuay told her. "You let me in. Where were you five minutes ago?"

"In bed asleep."

"Was anyone with you?"

She gave a low, throaty laugh. "That's no way for a gentleman to talk. But I'll let it pass. Nobody was with me."

"Did you hear anything?"

"I tell you I was asleep."

"You didn't hear a shot?"

"Not a damn thing."

"Then why did you lower the window?"

The girl looked at him strangely. "You know, I think you're nuts. I came in an hour ago, and the window was down. I put it up a couple of inches and went to bed because I'd been working like a dog all day on the lot. I haven't touched it since."

MacQuay stood up. "All right, you win this time, sister." He peeled a bill from a roll in his pocket. "Take this and buy yourself some new geraniums." He headed for the door.

"OK, thanks." She smiled for the first time. "You're not such a bad guy, are you? Do you live around here?"

MacQuay said, "No." On the way out, he took another look in the closet. It contained hat boxes, shoes, a long rack of dresses and chorus costumes, a yellow silk hat and a cane. He went on out of the room.

In the corridor he stopped and ran a worried hand through his hair. He glanced at the lighted transoms on either side of room 1009. Should he try one of them? But the body had been under the girl's room—and bodies usually fall straight.

And then he woke up.

1009—*Ten-o-nine!* The whiskey had played a trick on him. There were twelve floors to the building and he had figured that the second one down would be the tenth. He'd pulled a boner. It would be the *eleventh!* He'd been a floor too low all the time.

Swearing under his breath, MacQuay found the stairs and took them three at a time. A knot of police stood before the door of room 1109. MacQuay approached, feeling pretty sick.

"Mac!" a cop named Corbett greeted him. "I saw you on the street when the guy squashed. Where you been?"

"Go to hell," MacQuay said, "and let me in that room."

"Well, you don't need to get sore. Sure, it's OK for you to go in. Captain

Scanlon and the squad just got here. They're up in the penthouse where the dame got croaked."

MacQuay's jaw sagged. "What's that?" he gulped.

Corbett looked at him queerly. "You mean you ain't heard? Marilyn Merrill got done in. The squashed guy did it."

"Not the Marilyn Merrill who used to be a movie star?"

"Sure. She was a first-string tear-jerker when you was still in knee-pants. This was the guy's room, see?" Corbett stuck a thumb in the direction of 1109.

"Well, he tossed a rope with a hook up through his window and caught it on the railing around the penthouse. He shinneyed up when he thought the old dame would be in bed. But she heard him and he had to use a knife on her. Then he fingered the safe, grabbed what he could, and started to scam down the front way. But the butler in the place heard him and started to shoot—and so the guy had to slide back down the rope." Corbett stopped to see if he was making an impression.

"Yeah, and then?" MacQuay's face was grim.

"And then the butler hot-footed it after him and plugged him from the roof just as he was climbin' back in his window," Corbett finished with satisfaction. "They found the dame's jewelry on the sidewalk under the body."

MacQuay's answer was a noncommittal grunt. He looked through the open door of room 1109. There was the wide-open window with the curtains blowing out.

CORBETT brought a good-natured hand down on his back. "So Mac, me boy, the police don't need any of your high-powered private sleuthin' today. It's open and shut. I was there myself when they took the loot off the guy, and—"

MacQuay said, "Oh, go to hell," and left him standing with his mouth open. He found the staircase and vaulted up three steps at a time. He was madder than the devil. Marilyn Merrill was still front page. He'd had a chance for one swell lot of free publicity, and he'd fixed things up royally.

He said hello to the copper on guard at the front door of the penthouse and shoved past him. On the floor of the

spacious, richly-furnished living room was the sheet-covered body of the dead ex-star. Headquarters men were parked in all the nice blue-leather chairs. Over by the big fireplace he spotted Scanlon of the Homicide Bureau, talking with two men. One was the butler and the other was just a guy.

Scanlon's face broke into a grin as MacQuay came up to him. "Well, our minute man," he said. "But where you been since?"

"Corbett told me you've got it all figured out," MacQuay said.

Scanlon's eyes searched his face. "Yeah, I guess so. Why?"

"Have you identified the guy in the street?"

"Not yet."

"Get hold of a list of retired trapeze artists." Sarcasm hung heavy on MacQuay's words. "If he's your murderer, you'll find him there."

A flicker of interest showed beneath Scanlon's heavy brows. "You think the dead guy was too old to do so much climbing around? I thought that too at first. But hell, MacQuay, we found the open window, the rope, the jewels, the knife—and the body. What more could we ask for?"

MacQuay nodded briefly. "OK, Scanlon. Guess I've just got a little mule in me. Mind if I stick around?"

"Help yourself. This is Carey, the butler—and this is John Ralston, Miss Merrill's nephew." He nodded his head toward the two by the fireplace. "I'm just checking up a little, that's all."

MacQuay sat down. He liked Scanlon. Scanlon had been a cop all his life and thrived on it. Now at sixty he was moon-faced and beefy and slow on his feet. But he was consistently good humored—and what was more, he had a well-trained, mighty smooth-clicking mind.

Scanlon turned back to John Ralston. "So you were in the hotel dining room when your aunt was murdered."

Ralston, skinny and slick-haired, and looked as though he had spent his twenty-seven or -eight years being aunty's handsome young nephew, shook his head in annoyance. "No, I tell you I'd left the dining room and was on my way back here. Carey met me at the door and told me what had happened."

"And you telephoned the police at once?"

"Immediately."

Scanlon paused, then said: "You and your aunt lived here alone, did you?"

Ralston lit a cigarette and blew out some smoke very nonchalantly. "You see, I was her only living relative, and she was very fond of me."

"Of course she would be," Scanlon murmured. Then abruptly: "You were her heir?"

"Naturally."

"Did you know she kept valuable jewelry in her wall safe?"

Ralston sighed elaborately. "My dear man, of course I knew. She lost heavily in the market crash. Her jewelry was just about all she had left."

"Did you know," went on Scanlon, "that she had offered for sale a necklace worth fifty thousand dollars—the one we found on the dead man?"

Ralston coughed over his cigarette and the color drained from his face. "The Orville necklace? Why, I—I didn't know she was so hard up that—"

Scanlon cut him off with the wave of a pudgy hand. "That's all for now, Ralston. Thanks." He turned around and began on the butler: "You say you came in here tonight and found the lady dead on the floor and the murderer at the open safe."

"That's right, sir." Carey was in early middle age, slim as a rail, but broad, and with husky shoulders. His pasty face showed no emotion.

"You fought with him and he got away," continued Scanlon. "You grabbed a gun from a drawer and hot-footed after him. He swung over the edge of the building, and you fired down and killed him. Is that right?"

"Yes, sir. I rushed at the murderer bare-handed and caught him a good clip or two. But he struck me in the face—a heavy blow, sir—and I fell back. It was then I got my gun."

MacQuay shifted in his chair to have a better look at Carey's face. Carey's left eye was nearly swollen shut, and the whole side of his face was scratched and swollen.

SCANLON was fumbling in his pocket. He pulled out a diamond necklace, a huge thing set with hundreds of glittering stones. He asked Carey whether this was Marilyn Merrill's necklace, and the butler said it was.

Scanlon turned to MacQuay and said, "Got any questions up your sleeve, Mac? I'm finished."

"Just one," said MacQuay. He looked at Carey and said, "Did you know the combination to the safe?"

Carey stiffened. "No, sir. Miss Merrill never gave it to me. I saw the necklace only when she was wearing it."

At that moment a cop in uniform came in and spoke a few words to Scanlon. Scanlon's eyes lighted up and he turned to MacQuay. "They've identified the dead man. It's Jimmy Turkin."

The name meant plenty to MacQuay. Jimmy Turkin was an old-time second-story worker who had spent about half his life in the pen. Lately, he hadn't been heard from, and the police figured he'd laid off and skipped the country on jack he'd saved.

MacQuay said: "Jimmy Turkin must have been forty years old when you came on the force as a rookie. I don't quite get the picture of him swinging around on ropes."

Scanlon shrugged. "I admit it's kind of screwy. But we've got the rope, and the necklace, and the knife, and—"

"Yeah, I heard that," MacQuay said. "Any objection to my having a look-around up here?"

"Stay as long as you like," Scanlon grinned. "I'll leave a man to see that you don't fall off the roof. When the medical examiner gets here, you might let him in. But as for me, I'm satisfied with things the way they are—till tomorrow, anyway. I'm going home and grab some shut-eye."

After Scanlon had gone, MacQuay went over to the body and lifted the sheet. Marilyn Merrill's dead face, gray, contorted with pain, stared up at him. The knife, a common variety of stiletto, had struck through the inner edge of the left breast—straight to the heart.

The body told him nothing. He didn't know what he was looking for. All he knew was that the police theory was altogether too pat. Also that if Jimmy Turkin could climb twenty feet of rope at the age of seventy, he was a wiz.

Young Ralston was reading a book. Carey was puttering around in his own room. MacQuay passed them both up and headed out onto the roof. There was one chunk of evidence he hadn't seen yet—the rope.

He crossed to the railing at the front and leaned over. There, hanging from a heavy iron hook out over the brilliant street below, he saw it, extending downward to the eleventh floor. The end had been cleanly cut with a sharp knife. It seemed firm enough. A man of average strength and a good deal of guts could have climbed either up or down it.

He heard a sudden sound. He stopped, his body tensed. From somewhere at the rear of the roof came the soft scrape of footsteps.

MacQuay's hand shot to his automatic. He approached step by step. In the distance he could make out a blurred shadow against an electric sign. It could have been the butler or Ralston or anybody else—the roof was too dark for him to see. The figure was not aware of his presence, and was stealing toward the back railing.

MacQuay halted, shrank into the shadows of the penthouse, straining every sense. The figure paused, glanced swiftly around him, leaned over the back rail and threw something down—then turned abruptly and almost ran back to the penthouse.

MacQuay stood without moving a muscle until the click of the door sounded. Then he stole rapidly across the roof and peered over the edge. In the dim light from the first-floor windows he could see a vacant lot behind the hotel, filled with junk that had been tossed out by hotel guests.

Somewhere in that lot was an object that would have some bearing on Marilyn Merrill's murder. It was a slim lead, but worth a trial. He found the stairs, vaulted down to the twelfth floor and took the elevator. At the rear of the lobby he found a door leading outside and slipped through.

HE started by picking up a lot of junk at random—old light bulbs, gin bottles, cigarette wrappers. Then he began to work with a system, covering the ground from left to right with his flash in three-foot swaths. In the middle of the lot, he halted, bent swiftly.

He picked up a piece of new rope about ten feet long.

MacQuay turned the flash on it. He caught his breath. It looked like a piece of the same rope that Jimmy Turkin had used for his getaway. He stood up,

gaped at it. A piece of rope was the last thing he had expected to find. There was too much rope in this case already. Had the real murderer thrown this away? Why did he wait till after the crime?

Then suddenly a whole flock of lights struck MacQuay. It couldn't be as simple as that. And yet—

Excitedly he dashed back into the lobby and found the room clerk.

"When did Miss June Farris move into 1009?" he demanded.

"About a week ago," said the clerk. "She used to be in 312."

"Thanks," said MacQuay.

As he was heading for the elevator, he ran into Hutchinson, the medical examiner, just coming in the front door.

"MacQuay. Scanlon just called me," Hutchinson hailed him. "What's all this about Marilyn Merrill—"

"Call Scanlon back," MacQuay cut him off, "and tell him I'll have her murderer for him in about half an hour."

Hutchinson's mouth fell open. "But I thought the police knew—" he began.

"Tell him I'll be in room 1009," MacQuay tossed over his shoulder.

He went to the tenth floor and headed for the blonde's door. He saw that her light was out again. He tiptoed down the corridor and reached for the door-knob. At the same moment, he felt a pressure on the knob from within. He dropped his hand like lightning and fell back a step. The door started to swing slowly open. June Farris appeared with her hat and coat on.

She stepped back with a startled squeal. MacQuay stuck his hand against the door, shoved it wide open, and stood grinning at her. "Hello, baby," he said.

The girl's face paled, then flushed crimson. "Well, what do you want this time?" she snapped.

"Nothing to get excited about," MacQuay told her. "You asked me if I lived around here, didn't you?"

"Yeah, but listen, I—" The girl broke off as MacQuay shoved into the room. He flopped into the nearest chair. "I just came in to apologize for breaking up your geraniums. Thought we might have a nightcap together before I go on home."

The girl regarded him through hard blue eyes. "I thought you were working on a case," she said.

"That's all washed up," he told her. "They found the murderer dead, and the cops have gone home for the night."

She said, "Oh," and kept on glowering at him.

"Well, how about it," MacQuay demanded. "Do I get a drink, or do I go home with my tongue hanging out?"

"You're a queer hombre," she said, "but I guess you're harmless. Sure, I'll have a drink with you. Let's go down to the corner."

MacQuay was looking at a pinch-bottle of Scotch half-full that stood on a table. He said, "I'm comfortable now. Why not here?"

She said, "But I was just going out. I wanted to go to—the drug store for some sleeping tablets."

"That's all right. I'll phone for them."

Her eyes flashed annoyance. "All right," she said and flung her hat on a chair. "You win." She took off her coat and laid it together with her handbag beside the hat. MacQuay was particularly interested in the handbag. There seemed to be something bulky in it. Something flat and hard and square.

June Farris crossed to the built-in kitchenette. She fumbled around in the ice-box, and said, "Sorry, but there's no ginger ale. I'll run down and get some." She crossed swiftly, picked up the hat and handbag.

MacQuay leapt to his feet, stood between her and the door. "That's all right," he said. "They'll send the ginger ale when I phone for the sleeping tablets."

THE hard glint flashed into her eyes again, but was gone in an instant. "OK with me." She flung herself on a davenport. "The number is Regent 7810."

MacQuay grabbed the phone from a small table in the corner, and deliberately turned his back to the girl. At one side of the room he had noticed a mirror. Now as he spoke the number into the instrument he could get just a glimpse of the girl's body as she sat on the davenport.

She still had the handbag with her. Quick as a flash, she snapped it open, slipped out a small flat package and buried it between the seat cushions. Then leisurely she powdered her nose, closed

the bag, and tossed it to the davenport.

The operator was ringing the number.

"Give 'em my name," the girl sang out from across the room. "I've got an account there."

A click sounded from the other end of the wire, and MacQuay said, "This is Miss Farris's room. Please send a couple of bottles of ginger ale and—"

"What number did you want?" came a man's voice.

"Isn't this the drug store?"

And then MacQuay caught himself. But it was too late. The damage was done.

"Wrong number," said the voice, and the receiver hung up.

"Hey, I made a mistake," the girl said. "That was my manager's number. The drug store is Regent 4690."

MacQuay held the receiver down a moment, then picked it up, called the new number and gave the order. But his finger was on the hook. He needed the time to do some fast thinking.

The girl had given him the wrong number deliberately. She had tricked him into warning some confederate that he was in her room. There was no time to lose.

As he set down the receiver, his other hand shot inside his coat, gripped his automatic. He spun around and turned it on the girl.

"Stand up, you!" he snapped, "and put 'em up—fast."

The girl rose slowly, eyeing him with caution. "You poor sap," she said. "What's eating you, anyway?"

"I want that package. The one you just hid in the davenport."

She laughed. "I didn't hide it. I just put it there. Keep the room neat, you know—that sort of thing."

"Let me see it."

She fished it out and handed it to him. "It's a book and I'm mailing it to a girl friend for a birthday present. She's with a road show. Look at the address on it."

MacQuay looked. In a bold feminine hand was written: "Miss Jane Gorman, Hotel Alcazar, Fresno, Calif. Hold Till Arrival."

She held out her hand for the package. "Are you satisfied, Sherlock?"

"Not quite." MacQuay slipped the package in his coat pocket. "Now if you'll just sit there until the police get here, it'll make things a lot easier."

The girl's face went ashen. She half rose, then fell back and her lips curled in scorn. "There ought to be a law against dumb dicks. Won't the police be surprised when you give them a book of vaudeville gags?"

"They'll be surprised all right," MacQuay's fingers tightened around his gun, "because I'm going to give them the Orville necklace."

She laughed, short and harsh. "If I had the Orville necklace, would I be sending it to a girl friend by mail, you half-wit?"

"You'd be sending it to yourself," MacQuay told her, "because it'd be too hot to leave lying around Hollywood. You'd go to Fresno in a week or so, register as Jane Gorman, and pick it up."

The girl's face went crimson, twisted in fury. She leapt like a wildcat. One hand shot out, grabbed his gun wrist, the other went for his face, clawing at his eyes.

MacQuay's response wasn't gentlemanly, but it was effective as hell. His shoe cracked out against her ankle, and she fell back, yelping with pain. A quick swing of his free hand to the jaw sent her sprawling onto the davenport—out cold.

An elevator door clanged outside and feet pounded in the hall.

"Open up, MacQuay!" It was Scanlon's voice.

MacQuay flung open the door. Scanlon and two police burst in. Scanlon looked goggle-eyed at the girl on the bed. "MacQuay, what's all this about?"

FOR answer, MacQuay slipped the flat package out of his pocket, ripped it open. He held the glittering jewels before Scanlon's nose.

"But—but that can't be the Orville necklace," Scanlon gulped. "It's at headquarters. This must be a fake, a—"

"Save all that till later," MacQuay snapped. "The murderer of Marilyn Merrill is going to walk in that door any minute. Better be ready for him."

"Then this girl isn't—"

"She's just an accomplice. Get ready." MacQuay closed the outer door. He waved Scanlon out of sight behind a big chair and shoved the two coppers into the closet. He stuffed the necklace back in his pocket, then went

over and stood beside the unconscious girl.

After a moment soft footsteps sounded in the corridor. The doorknob rattled. His body tense, MacQuay heard the door open and close.

"Stand back you. Grab the sky!" a voice said, brittle, menacing.

MacQuay wheeled with his hands in the air. There was a moment of grim tension as Carey, the butler, strode across the room. His eyes were live coals in his thin, pasty face, his teeth clamped with a killer's determination.

A shot barked out—and the amazed Carey bent over and sucked at the fingers of the hand where his gun had been. Scanlon stepped out, service revolver smoking, and nodded to one of the coppers, who put the bracelets on Carey.

"Better put 'em on Miss Farris here, too," MacQuay said. "When she's conscious, she's dangerous."

"But MacQuay, what screwy idea is this?" blurted Scanlon. "What makes you think this butler—"

MacQuay slumped into a chair and grinned at him. "Carey knew that Marilyn Merrill was going to sell the necklace and saw that it was now or never for him. He and his girl friend, Miss Farris, worked out a fool-proof scheme. They needed a fall guy, so they hunted up poor old Jimmy Turkin. That right, Carey?"

The butler, nursing his hand on the davenport, muttered "Yeah," without looking up.

"Here's the proposition Carey made him," MacQuay went on. "Turkin was to come to the hotel and rent room 1109. At a definite time they had agreed on, Carey would force the Merrill woman to open the safe and get the necklace—then he would kill her. He would let down the necklace on a rope to Turkin at the window of his room. Then after Turkin had had time to leave by the elevator, he would fire a couple of times in the air.

"When the police came, Carey would say that a burglar had killed the old lady and stolen the necklace—and had escaped down the rope. Well, it sounded OK to Turkin the way Carey put it to him, and he agreed. He figured he was getting paid to take the blame and make a getaway while Carey did the dirty work."

Scanlon's face screwed up in an effort to keep up with MacQuay.

"But where does the girl come in?" he demanded.

MacQuay took a deep breath. "You see, Scanlon, Carey didn't intend things to work that way. Instead of waiting until the time they'd set, Carey killed the old lady some time earlier. He'd had her get from the safe not only the original necklace, but also an imitation which he knew she wore sometimes. He let the original down on the rope, which was then ten feet longer, to Miss Farris's room on the tenth floor, and she hauled it in with a cane.

"Then later Carey cut off ten feet of rope and let the imitation down to Turkin at his window on the eleventh floor."

"The minute Turkin got his hands on it, Carey shot him through the head and he plopped to the street. The fake necklace was a good enough copy so Carey felt sure it wouldn't be noticed till he and Miss Farris could make a nice quiet getaway."

MACQUAY stood up. "There's your case, Scanlon. It was one of these perfect crimes—and the murderer was supplied dead."

"But how did you ever get wind of it?" Scanlon demanded.

"Once I got started, it was easy," MacQuay said. "Carey got cold feet and figured he'd better get rid of the extra ten feet of rope. So he tossed it into a vacant lot where it would look as though Turkin had thrown it."

"I'd already noticed the fingernail scratches on his face. Men don't fight that way, Scanlon, so I figured he'd fought with Marilyn Merrill—not with Turkin. I had a hunch about the necklaces. Wealthy dames usually have copies made for ordinary wear. And I stumbled into Miss Farris's room by mistake. How's that?"

Scanlon wiped the sweat from his brow and grinned. "Not bad, MacQuay. Not bad. But just how did you happen to do this stumbling into the girl's room. I never seem to be that lucky."

"It wasn't luck," MacQuay said, "and that brings me to something else. A couple of hours ago I swore I'd go on the wagon for the rest of my life. Well, I've changed my mind about that."



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*Regular police methods are okay, I guess, but after living below the border for a couple years I sort of prefer working the Mex way, with good old stillet' in my garter . . .*

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# WHO KILLED SPANDRELLI?

by WILLIAM R. COX

**T**HE body was still warm. The murderer must have been pretty strong to drive a knife so deeply into Louis Spandrelli. Spandrelli was fleshy and muscular and wore a size seventeen collar. The blade was plunged deeply into the right side of his neck.

I looked down into the calm, dead features and I didn't like it. Louis had been a good friend to me once. The last

few years in Mexico hadn't been free of sudden deaths—life being so cheap below the border—but it's a hell of a note to come home and find a good guy like Louie sprawled out on the floor of his own home in a pool of gore, with thirsty flies buzzing around him.

A voice said, "How's stuff, Travis?"

I looked up at Sergeant of Detectives Mallas. The big guy had spoken as cas-

ually as if we had only parted yesterday. He was still as skinny as an eel, still eternally chewing gum.

"Not so hot, Abe," I said. "Louie was a friend of mine."

Abe chewed for a moment. Then he said, "He's pretty dead, ain't he? You didn't do it, did ya, Dave?"

"Would I be usin' a stillet'?" I said.

"Thought ya might 've learned in Mexico. You was always so handy with a gat—why not a shiv for a change?"

I got up from beside Spandrelli and fished for a cigarette. The sun shot reflected rays into the room. Outside ur-chins ran and laughed in the street. The First Ward in the City of Newkirk was still unaware that Papa Spandrelli had cashed in his checks.

"You got over here pretty quick," I said. "What do you know about this?"

"A babe called me on the phone and tipped me off, so I blows over. I thought it was a rib. Louie was well liked. You sure you didn't do it?"

"Don't be a cop all your life, Abe," I said. "Where's Anita?"

"His daughter? She'd be the one called me, mebbe. I dunno where she is. I'll have her picked up, though."

"Have her picked up damned quick," I said, "If this is a vendetta they'll be after her."

"I'd still like t' know how you got here before me," said Abe plaintively. I noticed he kept his hand in his coat pocket. Mallas is a pretty good guy, but he's awful careful.

"I'm not talkin'," I said. "You want to pull me in?"

"You always was a shamus," sighed he. "No, I don't want ya. I don't suppose there'll be any prints on that stabber. This is a hell of a life, Travis. Somep'n tells me we'll never get no-where on this job. We never do in this section. Nobody ever talks."

"And if nobody talks you cops are just plain lieked," I finished for him. "Listen, Abe. I'll be at the Hotel Francis if you want me. And if you hear anything from 'Nita Spandrelli—get me. At once."

I TIPPED my hat to poor Louie and went out. There was a hack cruising on Bloomfield Avenue and I grabbed it and went down to the hotel. I wanted to lie on my back because I can think

better lying on my back. They don't build these hotel beds the right size for a guy of my dimensions, but I stretched out anyway.

I was collecting myself a big headache when I fell asleep. I dreamed about Louie and Anita Spandrelli, and when I woke up I was sweating. Abe Mallas was sitting on a chair alongside the bed. He had found my bottle of tequila and was working on it.

"That stuff'll make you drunk," I said.

"I'll bet it will," said Abe solemnly. He flipped his hat onto the back of his head in a gesture I well remembered. I noticed that he had his service gun in his lap.

"What's the idea of the artillery?" I asked.

"Well—you're Dave Travis, aincha? I gotta ask ya some questions. I ain't fast on the draw, y'know. Besides, I wouldn't wanta see a nice guy like you in trouble fer bumpin' off a copper. 'Specially me."

"Why should I gun you, Abe?"

"Oh, I dunno. You gunned a lotta guys when you was workin' for Spandrelli. Durin' Prohibition."

"Oh, I did?" said I. "Funny I never took a rap."

Abe made a gesture with my bottle of liquor.

"Aw—them rats. We was glad t' get rid of 'em. I ain't lookin' for trouble with you, Dave. I just want Anita Spandrelli."

"And so do I."

"Yeah, but I don't know where she is. You was pretty sweet on the kid in the old days, Travis."

"That," I said, "is none of your damn business."

"I know—I know. But her old man's croaked, ain't he? An' she's disappeared. I gotta have her."

I sat up on the bed.

"Look here, Abe," I began, "if you think 'Nita had anything to do with this killing you're dumber than even a cop ought to be. . . ."

Abe carefully removed his chewing gum and dropped it into the waste basket. Then he said,

"I ain't sayin' nothin'. But I gotta have her. Will you work with me on this case, Travis?"

I pondered for a moment. Mallas

knew that I wouldn't leave town without doing something about Louie's murderer. It occurred to me that I would be better off with the police on my side. I had no picture of the local set-up to help me and they could furnish it. It would certainly be a laugh—me working with the cops—but there it was.

"Okay, Abe," I said. "I'll work with you. But you'll have to talk."

Abe talked for a while. Then he said as he rose to leave, "It might be smart for you to go ahead. Nobody knows you any more around here. I'll be folleyin' in your footsteps."

I watched the door close behind him and lay down again to do some more thinking. In a minute or two I got up and put one gun under my arm, another in my waistband, dangled to a stiletto in my garter-sling. I was glad that Mallas hadn't frisked me and found that knife.

Mallas had steered me to a man named Spiotta, a friend of Louie's who was also in the lottery racket. Sure, Spandrelli had been the numbers king of the ward. Not many knew it because he wasn't the pay-off guy, but he had been the financier behind the guns. Mallas had a hunch that there might have been a war between the Spandrelli faction and another outfit called the "GB". I didn't think much of the idea for various reasons but I decided to call on Spiotta.

He ran a little candy store as a blind, so I took a hack and told the driver to wait a few doors away and went into the store. Spiotta was behind the counter picking out candy for a ragged kid.

HE was a fat man, fatter even than his friend Louie. He wore an old-fashioned handle-bar moustache and a good-natured round expression on his ruddy face. There was a back room to the store and a radio was blaring away in there. It was tuned in on an opera.

I said, "Louis Spandrelli sent me to see you. I'm Dave Travis. Louie said you were having a little trouble with the boys from the GB outfit."

The fat man beamed at me.

"A friend of Louis's? That is fine. Come in the back, come, come. We will listen to the Faust for a leetle minute, no? I must listen to the Faust. The so graecious broadcasting people—on Saturday they give us the opera. Is gr-r-and, no?"

"Maybe," said I. "Swing bands are more down my alley. I haven't got much time, Mr. Spiotta. Tell me something about the trouble you're having and maybe I can help you. I used to work for Louie in the old days."

The fat man, one ear obviously cocked at the radio, said, "Ah, yes. You are that Travees, eh? Louis often spoke of you. The queek shot, eh?"

"Possibly. What's the dope on this vendetta?"

He made a florid gesture and said, "Oh—no vendetta. Not yet. We have trouble, true. Twice now we are robbed of our collection. Of course we blame the GB. They have threaten, no?"

He paused, inclining his head toward the loud speaker, his face lighting with simple pleasure as a rich voice poured forth a resounding aria.

"Mattia," he went on, "is the one. It is to him we make our reports. It is he you must see. Mattia is the veree smart man—next to Louis. He it is who can tell you of the GB."

"Mattia, eh? He's the front for Louis, ain't he?" I guessed.

"But yes, of course. A veree smart man. If you like I will take you to him. Tonight, when I must go to make my returns."

"This Mattia—he and Louie get along all right?"

Spiotta stroked his luxurious moustaches.

"As to that," he said cautiously, "I could not say."

"You mean it's possible that there might be a bit of bad feeling between them?"

"If you will come tonight at ten I will take you to Mattia. Then you may judge for yourself," said the fat man.

The stirring strains of the "Marching Song" came over the air waves. He joined in the chorus, keeping perfect pitch. He had a good voice, the fat guy. I went out with the clear notes ringing in my ears. He smiled boyishly and waved at me as I went, never missing a note.

I walked past my cab, then turned and looked in the back window. A couple of guys once were waiting for me in a cab that I hired and what happened had not been so good. I saw that there was someone waiting now. I slipped around to the street side, snatched the door open

and poked a gun inside.

"Get in quick," said the occupant. "I don't want to be seen."

"Well I'll be damned," said I climbing in hastily. "Anita, what the hell are you doin' in men's clothing?"

Her hand went instinctively to where her shoulder straps should have been. She was too beautiful for a mannish disguise. Her features were small and classical in outline and her eyes were enormous. The sadness which cast a cloud over her countenance only enhanced her loveliness. The man's suit fitted her well except across the chest and the felt hat slanted over one eye in approved fashion, but only served to accentuate her femininity. I hadn't quite remembered how wonderful she was.

"Dave," she said in her low voice. "I'm so glad you are here. Oh, Dave, they have killed father."

"I know," I said, "but how did you find me?"

"I was going to Spiotta, father's friend," she said. "He has the entree, Dave. He can get me to father's killer."

"You know who did it?"

"It could only be one man, Dave," she said. Her voice was controlled but hot passion lurked beneath its contralto surface.

"Somebody from the rival mob? The GB?"

"GB?" she said. "Who is this GB? We know nothing of them. I don't believe in the GB, my friend. My father was not killed by a stranger. I was in the house when it happened. I was upstairs. Someone came in, father admitted him. I heard voices. There was no quarrel. Just—just a thud. When I had—made sure that father was gone, I looked about carefully. I found—this."

SHE handed me a notebook. It was a book of lottery tickets bound together. On it was the trademark of three crowns.

"That is not a GB book," she said. "That is one of our own."

"So," I said. "A traitor, eh?"

"A murdering Judas," she whispered. "A jealous man. A man who wanted to rule the Ward. A man who stays in his house like a spider, never showing his face. A man who comes and goes silently, like a cat. Dave, I must get to him. You will help?"

"Who is this bird, 'Nita?"

"Who? Who but Mattia? Leonardo Mattia, the Spider, the one who was once a Mafceist."

"The Old First Ward has certainly gone to hell since I left," I said wonderingly. "Opera singers, stilettoes, and now Spiders, no less. Look, baby, you have no proof that it was Mattia, have you?"

"Who else could it be? Everyone loved my father, came to him for guidance and protection. Only a few knew that he was behind the Three Crown Lottery—Mattia, Spiotta, Marfucci, and Cozzolino. You know—they are of the old crowd. Spiotta? You have seen him. A fat sentimentalist. He makes love to me."

"He what? That toad? And you stand for it?"

She turned her big eyes at me and said, "I am Spandrelli's daughter," as proudly as if it had been Mussolini. I thought that Louie had been the local Duce after all. And a swell guy at that. I said to his daughter, "Okay, baby. But how about the bum disguise?"

"I wanted to escape the notice of the police—of anyone. I called headquarters and told them of my father's death so that he should not lie undiscovered. Then I went to see Mattia. They told me he was not at home. Always he is not at home. I could not break into that fortress in which he hides, so I came to Spiotta. I saw you go in and waited."

"Were you going to shoot Mattia, or just stab him?" I asked.

She did not answer me. I woke up the cabby and told him to drive around. Then I said,

"Look, baby. I'll see Mattia tonight. Now how about you going up my room at the hotel and laying low? After I case that joint of Mattia's we'll know something. Meantime, you can't go around stickin' your neck out in that rig. Abe Mallas is lookin' for you now."

She said in a small voice, "I g-guess I have forgotten my handkerchief."

"Try looking in your pants pocket," I said.

She started, then a reluctant smile framed her tear-streaked face. Fumbling awkwardly she produced a square white cambric from a rear pocket and dabbed at her eyes.

"That," I said, looking her up and

down, "is the lousiest masquerade I ever did see. You gotta keep it out of sight. You gonna be sensible?"

"Dave Travis, I am alone in the world. Before I saw you in front of the little candy store I felt that loneliness and I did not care to live. You know that we Spandrellis are of the mountain people. We believe in an eye for an eye. If you will swear to me that you will avenge my father, I will do as you say."

"Nita, I too, am alone in the world. I came north because I was too alone. I wanted to see your father, who had been good to me—and I wanted to see you. Do you think I would let his murderer live when I have killed so many others?"

She looked up from beneath her long lashes and fire glinted in her dark eyes.

"Good, Dave," she said. "I know how you kill—when you have to. I remember—the old days."

I got her into the hotel without being seen by too many people, I hoped. She was certainly a punk imitation of a man. I shuddered for my reputation as I followed her swaying hips down the corridor and into my room. If she had been in women's clothes it wouldn't have been half so bad. . . .

I said, "Be a good girl now, baby."

SHE came close to me and looked up into my face. She was a tall girl, but I was glad she had to look up to me. She was so beautiful then that my eyes hurt looking at her. She said,

"Dave, I always knew you would come back. I have waited for you. It was not always easy to wait for you, Dave. I can wait a little longer."

I didn't know whether I could or not so I beat it. I went downstairs and had a drink. Then I called Abe Mallas and told him to get a man over to keep an eye on my room. I wasn't taking any chances.

Abe said, "In your room, eh? You would."

"Make a nasty crack and see what happens to you," I offered. "She stays there until I've seen Mattia."

"Mattia, eh?" said Abe. I could hear him chewing gum over the wire. "I often wanted to get somethin' on that guy. He gives me the creeps. Should I pick 'im up?"

"You got nothing on him," I said. "Better let me go ahead unofficially.

I'll see you later."

I hung up before he could ask me what time I was going to see Mattia and went back to the bar. I knocked over several scotch and sodas and then went out. I was afraid I would weaken and go upstairs and I didn't want to see her until I had taken care of Mattia. I went to a movie. It was all about Mexico as it ain't, and I was glad to pull out at ten o'clock and go to Spiotta's store.

The fat man was in an emotional state. He came at me wringing his hands and weeping.

"My poor friend, my poor Louis," he moaned. "It is terrible. Poor Anita. What will she do? You have seen her, no?"

"No," I lied. "Who do you think did it?"

"Who? Who, indeed? But no—Mattia will tell you. Mattia will know. He is a veree smart one, that Mattia. We will go to heem. At once."

He fluttered about, waving his hands, moving with surprising quickness for his bulk. He got out an old Buick and we started. He drove like a demented person. I was glad when we pulled up before a house on one of the back streets of the Ward.

It was a gloomy house, higher than those about it. Its face was blank save for one door set flush with the sidewalk. It was a very thick door. Spiotta rang a bell in a manner which was certainly a signal. It opened noiselessly and we stepped into a vestibule which was dark as a pocket.

I felt that we were being inspected from within. Then there was a draft and I knew that another door was opened ahead of us. I pushed Spiotta ahead of me as a light showed, and we found ourselves in a spacious room.

There was a desk and behind the desk sat a man. Behind the man was a cabinet with glass doors. To one side was a table. It was a pretty bare room.

I walked toward the man. Spiotta was behind me, but I could see him in the glass doors of the cabinet. Mattia was a grey man. His hair, his skin, his clothing were all the somber hue of ashes. Only his hooded eyes were black. His nose was a predatory beak. There was a furtive air about him. Here, I thought, was the perfect picture of a murderer.

I said, "Mr. Mattia, I'm here to learn

something about the death of my friend Louie Spandrelli."

"I know," said the man in colorless accents. His black eyes seemed fastened on my hands. I had a hunch someone had told him about me.

"If you know anything, I want it," I said harshly.

"I know—many things," said Mattia slowly. "I would be very glad to talk to you about them, Mr. Travis. Tomorrow. . . ."

Something had caught my eye. There was movement in the glass doors of the cabinet. The door, the impregnable, heavy door through which we had come, was opening slowly.

I thought that Mattia could not see it through my body which was directly in front of him. I wondered if he had it timed, wondered if I could throw off that timing. While he still spoke I acted.

I move pretty fast. I grabbed Spiotta with my left hand and threw him at the table. I snatched out my gun and flipped a snap shot at the door. Then I jumped over the table onto Spiotta.

**L**EAD poured into the room as guns began to cough. Mattia had a .45 in his hand, but bullets crashed into his chest. They were using a tommy gun. I fired three shots and ducked behind the table. Spiotta was praying rapidly in Latin.

It was difficult for them to poke the gun around the corner, I thought, so I took a chance and turned loose the rest of my clip. There was silence thereafter. I poked my hat out for a lure, but got no response.

I got up and said, "All right, my fat friend. Either I got lucky or my fincfeathered policeman is around. You can stop prayin'."

I went out into the vestibule. There were two of them and they were quite dead. Outside someone was pounding and I opened the door. It had a spring lock. Abe Mallas said, "I had you tailed but I was a little late. Someone snatched your babe. I told that dumb flatfoot that was s'posed to be watchin' her that he'd be out with th' goats t'morrow."

"Someone got 'Nita?" I said. "Mallas, if anything happens to her I'm gonna kill a cop."

"I wouldn't blame ya," said Abe sympathetically. "What goes on here?"

I sat down wearily on Spiotta's running board.

"I donno," I said. "I thought Mattia had me framed for a kill at first. But he got it. So now it looks like Spiotta is the one to talk."

The fat man was waving his hands and weeping.

"But of course," he cried. "The GB. Always the gangsters from the GB. They murder my friend, Spandrelli. Now they murder Leonardo—and if not for my friend Mistair Travis, me, too. Please, you will get them—queeck. They will keel me next!"

"Yeah," said Abe. "There's some guy behind these hoods, all right."

"And he's got Anita," I said. I was beginning to feel pretty helpless.

"Oh, my poor little Anita," said Spiotta, tears streaming down his fat cheeks. "Oh, I cannot stand it. I go home. May I go home? Please, I cannot stand it."

"Yeah, you c'n go," said Abe. "We'll want y' t'morrow. Let's look this over, Dave."

I paused in the doorway and watched Spiotta drive away with much clashing of gears and spouting of exhaust smoke. He was the lousiest driver I ever saw.

I went back into the shambles and rehearsed the action for Abe. In the middle of it something clicked in my mind. It didn't seem possible, but it was there. I checked again to make sure. Then I said:

"Abe, when you clean up here come up to Spiotta's place, will you? Maybe we can clear up a point or two."

"I still don't see how y' could nail both those guys through a door," said Abe, scratching his ear.

"The luck of the Travis's," I said. "See you later."

I grabbed a hack and was soon rapping on Spiotta's door. The store was dark, but I heard him fumbling with the latch on the inside.

I stepped back as the door opened and said,

"Light up, Spiotta."

He came at me, quick as a cat. A nearby arc light reflected something in his left hand. I had forgotten to reload my holster gun, so I sidestepped and went for the derringer. He was amazingly fast. He grabbed my wrist with his right hand and I felt a sharp pain in my right

shoulder as I twisted away.

I hit him with my left and he slashed my arm, but staggered back. It was like trying to fight a tiger. The light was bad, but I had a chance to go for the derringer again. I let him have it twice, once in the body and once in the head. I was honestly afraid the little gun wouldn't stop him.

I went into the store and found some stairs leading up from the back room. I went up and there was a hall and at the end of the hall was a door. I made it, all right, and there was Anita, trussed like a fowl and gagged tightly, her man's suit a mess of wrinkles.

I got the gag out and she said, "It was Spiotta!"

"Yeah," I said. I sat down on the bed alongside her. My arms were heavy and I was drenched with blood. "The fat bird swung a mean stabber."

"I—you got him?" she whispered.

"Yeah," I said.

I tried to untie her. My arms were getting numb and I got blood all over her. She said,

"Poor Dave. You are hurt."

"S all right," I said.

**A**BE MALLAS lounged into the room and said, "I been folleyin' you around all day just too late t' do anything but pick up your dead."

"Give me a hand, will you, Abe?" I said. "I can't untie her." It seemed very important to get Anita loose. I must have lost a lot of blood, because I was getting dizzy.

"Such shootin'," Abe said mildly. "In the dark, too. I don't see how y' do it. Spiotta's on'y got one eye," he confided to Anita. "Yer boy friend shot out the other."

"That is good," said Anita simply. "I am glad."

"It was nice figurin', Dave," said Mallas. "I was right behind ya. I found

there wasn't no bullet holes anywhere's near Spiotta. The finger was on you an' Mattia, not him. They coulda had him if they wanted him. They waited 'til he was out of the way."

"The timin' was wrong," I mumbled.

"An' Mattia couldn't've killed Span-drelli, 'cause when he got his the gun was in his right hand."

"That's right," I said. "A left-handed man killed Louie. There wasn't any argument, so the man hadda be facin' him. The wound was in his right side."

"But how'd you know Spiotta was left-handed?"

"I didn't," I said. "Will you turn that girl loose, you dummy. I'm bleedin' to death."

He got her free of the ropes and she came over and began binding my wounds. They were pretty deep. A cop came up and said the ambulance would be right over.

"I still wanta know how y' knew . . ." began Abe.

"I didn't know anything. I just remembered that all the left-handed people I know are lousy automobile drivers," I said. "And besides, how could those hoods have crashed Mattia's unless someone sprung the lock for 'em?"

"Jeez, Dave," said Abe mournfully. "I was givin' ya too much credit. I thought ya had sense enough t' spring Mattia's locks fer me."

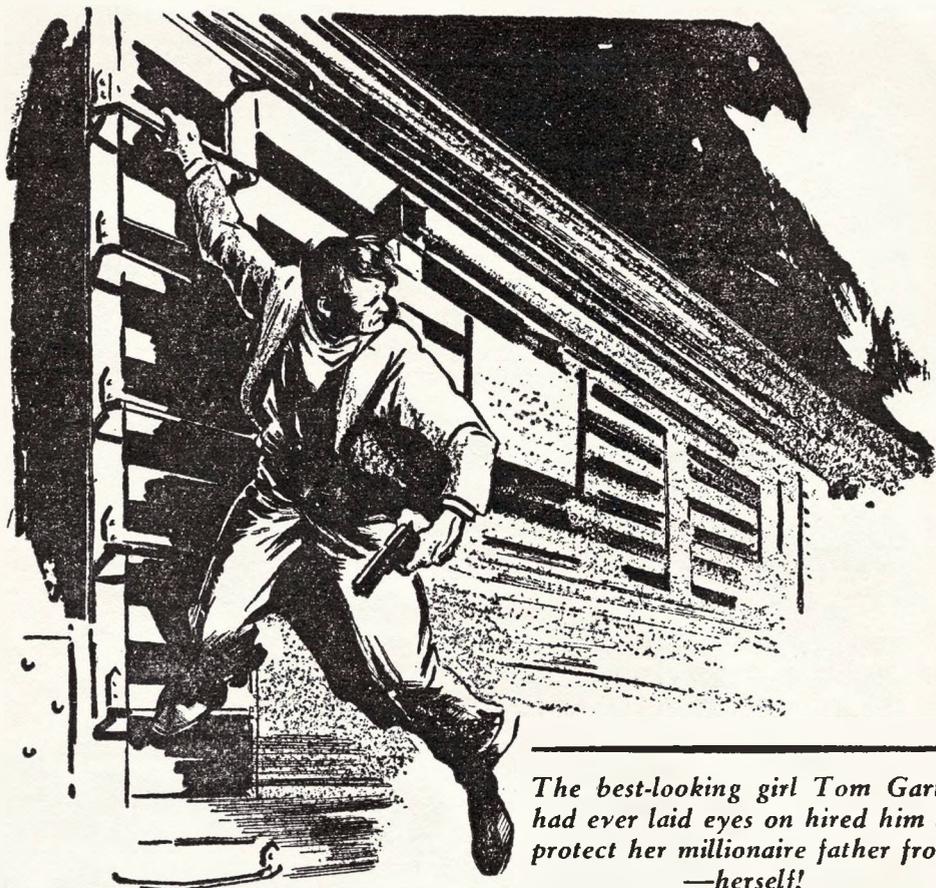
"Aw get outa here y' big punk," I said weakly. "I think I'm gonna faint and I'm damned if I'll faint in front of a copper."

I woke up in the swaying ambulance. Someone was holding my hand. I said, "How'm I doin'?"

"You are with me," said a soft voice.

"Lissen, baby," I said. "Kiss me now, once. Then get those damn pants off before I see y' again. I can't have people thinkin' I'm mixed up with a pansy."





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*The best-looking girl Tom Garth had ever laid eyes on hired him to protect her millionaire father from —herself!*

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## THE NIGHT IS FILLED WITH FEAR

by WYATT BLASSINGAME

**T**HE girl came hesitantly up the dusty stair. Watching her you might have said that she didn't want to come at all, but was afraid to keep away—or perhaps that she wanted to come but was afraid of what might happen. The conflict showed in her face only as a slight quiver to the full, soft mouth, a hunted shadow behind the gray eyes.

She reached the top of the stair and turned left until she found the door marked

Tom Garth

Private Investigator

She paused, her face pale beneath its makeup. Then a deep breath lifted her

breasts. Her face set with determination. She opened the door without knocking and pushed through.

The room was small. There was no furniture except a desk with a swivel chair behind it and two straight chairs in front. The girl stopped, her face a little blank, surprised now. She stared at the man behind the desk.

He had been reading a newspaper and he lowered it slowly and looked at her. He was about thirty, with dark, perfectly combed hair, a sharply cut face with level eyes, a skin that always looked as though he had just got a first coat of sunburn, turning him a ruddy bronze and making him appear younger than he

was. He studied the girl gravely a moment and then one eyebrow went up and he smiled because she was pretty and he enjoyed looking at her.

"How do you do?" he said. "Come in." He stood up and she could see that he was immaculately dressed in a light gray, high waisted suit of rather English cut. The pale blue handkerchief in his pocket matched his tie.

"You are—Mr. Garth?" she asked.

He bowed slightly.

"You're a private—detective?"

"When I can get it," he said. "Won't you sit down?" He took a half step from behind his desk, held a chair for her, then reseated himself. "And now?" he said.

She studied his small, well kept hands resting on the desk top. "You don't look like a private detective," she said.

He sighed. "I don't seem to agree with the usual ideas about the profession, do I? It doesn't help business any either."

She didn't smile. She looked as she had on the stairs, the shadow behind her gray eyes, the mouth ready to quiver. She might have been afraid to talk, afraid to keep quiet. She said suddenly, almost desperately, "I'm Marcia Treadwell."

Garth said, "Yes?" The name meant nothing to him.

"I'm David Treadwell's daughter," she said.

He nodded then. David Treadwell was Montgomery's wealthiest citizen. As a cotton broker he had made, and lost, several fortunes in his younger days, but always he had got money from somewhere to finance a comeback. Years before there had been some speculation about him, but for the last decade he'd ceased to gamble on cotton. He had money enough and he'd gone in for politics. There was talk that he might run for Governor in the next election.

"I want you to—to protect my father," Marcia Treadwell said.

Garth's dark eyebrows arched very slightly. "Protect him?" he said. "From what?"

"I don't know." She noticed the look on Garth's face and she leaned forward, catching the desk with her fingers, whitening them from the pressure. Her face was drawn. "You've got to believe me," she said. "I don't know

what might happen to him, but I know he's in danger. I want you to watch him, make sure nothing happens to him."

"Why don't you go to the police?" Garth asked. "They'll certainly look after David Treadwell."

SHE let go the desk and shrank back into her chair again. He had the impression that she had been waiting for that question, hoping he wouldn't ask it and certain he would. "No," she said. "I don't want to go to the police. I don't want it made public. I just want you to watch him."

"Watch him?"

"Look after him. Be sure nothing happens to him."

"If he wants protection, why don't he come down himself?"

She said, "No!" He wouldn't do that! He doesn't know I'm asking you. He mustn't know! You just follow him and—and be sure nothing happens to him."

Garth took cigarets from his pocket, offered her one, lit it and then his own. It gave him a chance to study her, to try to reach some conclusions. She was pretty: wide gray eyes, a very kissable mouth, brown hair that was naturally wavy and followed the fine shape of her head. But there was something more. She was afraid of something. And she wasn't telling the truth—or at the least she wasn't telling the whole truth.

"If your father's really in danger," Garth said, "the police can protect him more effectively than I can. But if you don't want the police at least you should give me some idea of where the danger lies. I can't look after him very well, not without any knowledge of what might happen."

Her hands were tight on the arms of her chair now. He felt certain that she wanted to be out of here, that she was sorry she had come. "It's because Dad is—" she checked herself, white teeth digging the rouge on her lips. Then, "I told you I don't know what the danger is!" she said fiercely. "It's just that Dad—that . . ." Her voice broke. "You don't have to take the case if you don't want to!"

Garth said, "If he isn't to know I'm —watching—him, who's to pay for the work?"

"I will." She took a roll of bills from her purse, put them on the desk. "Will that be enough now? I'll give you more when—when we're finished."

He didn't count the money. He said, "Under the circumstances I can't guarantee anything. You want me to watch him, and I will. I'll try to see there's no trouble."

"That's it," she said. "He'll be at home until about seven or eight tonight. He's leaving then. That's when I want you to follow him."

"I'll be there," Garth said. He watched her go out, his slim fingers tapping the desk, his eyes narrowed with thought. He liked Marcia Treadwell. He couldn't help liking a girl with a figure like that and a face so openly lovely. But she hadn't told him the whole truth—if she'd told any of it. He wondered . . .

It was six blocks to the *Democrat* building. He drove slowly through the summer heat. In the newsroom he found a reporter that he knew and asked to be let into the morgue. The next two hours he spent checking on the histories of David and Marcia Treadwell.

Tom Garth waited in the dark a half block from Treadwell's huge, white columned home on South Perry Street. He was wearing a blue, double breasted suit that wouldn't show up so easily at night. There was no breeze and the smoke from his cigaret rose straight up across his face.

At seven-thirty the front door of Treadwell's house opened and a big man in dark clothes came out. There was a light on the front porch and even from a half block away Garth could see something of the rugged, craggy face, the mane of graying hair. It was David Treadwell.

There were several cars in the semi-circular drive before the house. Treadwell chose the smallest, swerved into the street and headed toward the business district. Garth followed, nearly a block behind. As he passed the house he saw the dark outline of a girl peering from an upstairs window. Her face was shadowed, but he knew the shape of her head and the close curling hair.

Treadwell was easy to follow. He drove across town and out North Court Street. Lights began to shade off behind them. The freight yards were to the

right of the road; dark, empty warehouses on the left. Out past the old Birmingham highway Treadwell left his car and started walking across the freight yards. Garth drove on a block, swung into a side street. He didn't make it too fast for fear of attracting attention, and when he got back to the freight yards Treadwell was no longer in sight.

GARTH crossed the tracks slowly, his walk natural but his head thrust a little forward and his gaze fighting the darkness. Far down the tracks a freight was making up. He could see the swinging lanterns of the brakemen, the white fierce glare of the headlight along one track, the red and green eyes of switch lights.

And then, half way across the yards, he saw Treadwell—or thought he saw him. There was only a glimpse of a man in dark, well-fitting clothes disappearing over an embankment, and Garth couldn't be certain. He knew the hobo jungles lay in the narrow stretch of trees between the embankment and the river. And David Treadwell visiting the hobo jungles didn't make sense.

Garth went down the bank digging his heels into the cinders, skidding. Through the trees he could see the lights of scattered fires and beyond them the wide empty darkness that was the Alabama River. Mosquitoes began to whine about his face and he slapped at them.

He skirted the first camp fire, coming just close enough to make sure that Treadwell wasn't there. He didn't want to draw attention, and anybody could take one look at his clothes and tell he didn't belong here. He'd pass himself off as a railroad dick, if necessary, he thought.

At one fire two negro boys sat hunched, playing mouth harps. Quite a few bums had gathered around, two or three girls in the group. Now and then someone would sing an accompaniment to the negroes' playing. Garth watched for some time, circling so that he could see all the faces and make sure Treadwell wasn't there.

The fire was close to a muddy inlet from the river and Garth was forced near the group as he passed. For a moment wavering light touched on his body, leaving his face in the darkness. And in that moment it happened.

He saw the man loom up from the other direction, saw the well tailored, dark, double-breasted suit, the polished shoes. Treadwell he thought.

The man must have seen Garth in the same instant. He stopped as though he'd struck an invisible wall, jerked backward. He made a cry, barely audible, that sounded as though he'd started to scream and fingers had closed on his throat.

That backward movement let firelight flicker up across his face. It wasn't Treadwell's face. This man had red, shaggy hair and he needed a shave. His mouth was open, twisting, saliva showing white at the corner of it. His eyes bulged from their sockets. If ever Garth had seen terror on a human face he saw it now.

Then abruptly the fear died. The man stepped quietly backward into darkness and was gone.

An instant Garth hesitated and in that moment several bums came up to join the group at the fire, momentarily blocking his way. He pushed past into the shadows, paused, listening. Behind him the negroes were making a mouth harp duet of the *St. Louis Blues* and making it hot. From a fire off to the left drifted a man's shout, something about ". . . and hit one them gandy-dancer's shacks fer some flatcar makin's and some mud and . . ." The voice faded off. To the right the river lapped quietly. There was no sign of the frightened man.

Garth circled through the rest of the jungle but he didn't see the man again and he didn't see Treadwell. From the freight yards he heard the lugubrious wail of a locomotive. Figures began to pass him, going toward the tracks. "Number twelve's haulin'," somebody said.

It was a half hour before he finally left the hobo jungle and by that time he was certain that neither Treadwell nor the red haired man was there. But Treadwell's car was still parked on North Court Street. Garth waited an hour and there was no sign of the man. He went back to the jungle, searched it, walked a half mile in each direction along the freight yards. But Treadwell had vanished.

At a quarter of twelve he telephoned the Treadwell home and asked for Marcia. "**Your father's got away from me,**"

he told her. "I followed him down to the freight yards, but he's disappeared."

A thin, half choked scream came over the wire, then silence. He waited, said, "Miss Treadwell? Miss Treadwell?"

And then he heard her voice. It was a muffled, awful sound. He knew that she wasn't talking to him, that she didn't even realize he could hear her. "I've killed him!" she whimpered. "I've killed my father!" There was a dull thud as a dropped telephone receiver swung back against the wall.

IT didn't make sense, Garth told himself when he was back in his office. Not one damn part of it made sense. A girl asking him to protect her father and refusing to say what from, lying when she said she had no idea. David Treadwell, millionaire, prospective candidate for Governor, visiting the hobo jungles and suddenly vanishing. A redhaired man with whiskers who for some reason had looked momentarily like Treadwell and who had been terrified at the sight of the private detective. And then Marcia Treadwell's voice over the phone, "I've killed him! I've killed my father!" The whole thing added up—to zero. It was crazy.

"But I'm in it," Garth said aloud. He'd taken money to protect David Treadwell, and he meant to do the best he could at the job—though perhaps it was too late for protection. But that wasn't all he had in the case. He thought of Marcia Treadwell as he'd seen her that afternoon, gray-eyed, frightened, determined. He'd liked her. But he'd long since learned that you can't tell how they'll act by the way they look. The prettiest blonde he'd ever seen had chopped off her sweetheart's head with a hatchet. And Marcia had said, "I've killed him." But there had been heart-break in her voice, grief that was real, not feigned. The whole thing just didn't make sense.

"There's got to be a pattern somewhere," he thought. He set himself to work it out from the information he had.

He didn't get far. Only a hazy plan, but still one that was possible. He telephoned the freight station, asked for Harry Davis, one of the railroad dicks on duty at night, then asked if anything had happened since eight o'clock.

"The mosquitoes are worse than

usual," Davis said. "And it's hot as hell."

"You been down in the jungle along the river?"

"I made it just after midnight," Davis told him. "Wasn't a thing breaking. What's eating you anyway?"

"Just an idea," Garth said. He felt whipped, beaten. That had been his one hope in this case, and now it was shot. He said, "Thanks, Harry. I thought maybe there'd been a bum or two killed."

"You're getting hard up for clients, aren't you?" David said. "A tramp fell off number twelve about a hundred miles south of here a little while ago and got run over. Maybe you want to sue for him."

Garth felt a sudden leap and hardening of his heart. "Number twelve," he said. "That's the train left here around eight?"

"Yep. Why?"

"This man that was killed, you got a description of him?"

"Not much of one," David said. "The report was wired in but half the train must have run over the guy, he was cut up so. Sausage meat."

"But his clothes . . . ?" Garth's voice was tight.

"Overalls," David said. "He must have been around sixty and gray haired. That's all they could tell."

Garth held on to the phone his nails whitening with the pressure. His eyes were black and glittery and narrow. He said, "Where was number twelve headed?"

"Mobile. Say, what the devil are you so excited about anyway?"

"Maybe nothing," Garth said. "Maybe it's a blank. But you better keep that corpse a couple of days. Somebody may identify it."

It was too late to call Marcia Treadwell; he went home, snatched a few hours sleep, then telephoned her early for an exact description of the clothes her father had been wearing the night before. He headed his roadster for Mobile and burned the highway.

He spent three hours going from one clothing store to another before he found what he wanted. "Yes, sir," the clerk told him. "We sold a suit to the gentleman this morning. Two suits, in fact. A gray tweed with a single button coat,

very sporty, and—"

"Okay," Garth said. "Did you get his address?"

"I think so. There were some alterations to be made on one of the suits and we were to deliver it later. He insisted on taking the gray suit with him. He was—"

"I just want the address," Garth said.

It was a second rate hotel, and Jones, that was the name under which the suits had been bought, had a room on the third floor. It was late twilight when Garth came up the stairs and the few lights which hung in the corridor were not yet on. The place was thick with gloom. A worn carpet went down the middle of the hall. Garth toed his way quietly until he found the door marked 225. He went straight past it, turned and came back keeping close to the wall. His right hand was inside his coat, fingers tight around the butt of a .38 special.

For three full minutes he crouched, ear against the door. There was somebody inside, for now and then he heard feet moving about. There were no voices. He wrapped his left hand about the door-knob and twisted. It was locked.

HE let the knob turn back, slow, quiet. He pulled his gun free with his right hand, held it close against his hip. With his left he rapped briskly on the door.

There were five seconds of electric silence. Then a voice said, "Who is it?"

"A suit from Morris Brothers."

He heard the man make a queer sighing noise that might have been relief and might have been disappointment. He said, "Just lean it against the door. I'm in the bath now. I'll pick it up in a moment."

"You have to sign for it," Garth said.

There was a moment's hesitation. Then, "Okay." Steps crossed the room. The lock clicked. The door cracked open. Garth hit it with his left shoulder, smashing it back. He felt it jar hard against the other man, got a glimpse of a gray suit going over backward. There was the gleam of a gun in the semi-dark. Red flame blossomed from it. The room shook to gun thunder.

Garth spun sideways. His right knee cracked a low table and he was falling when the first shot blasted from his .38.

A bullet ripped into the floor beside his face. A flying splinter left thin blood across his cheek. He rolled, got back of a chair, twisted in time to see the other man dive through the bathroom door.

Garth got to one knee, the chair between him and the bathroom. His mouth was curved in a hard smile, his eyes narrowed and glittering. He knew there was no other room adjoining the bath; he'd checked at the desk before coming up. There was no fire escape. The man in the bath would have to come out the door, and when he did Garth had him.

"Pitch your gun out and you follow it," he called. "The hotel will have cops here in two minutes. They'll blow you out."

There was no answer. He could hear the man breathing like a trapped animal.

Garth was concentrating on the man in the bath. He didn't hear the click of heels behind him until it was too late. He twisted, whipping his gun about. There was a glimpse of the figure close on him, a split second in which to fire. His finger squeezed the trigger, then suddenly went slack. He saw a pale, oval face, a soft mouth twisted with fear. He heard a kind of strangled sob. And in the instant he hesitated Marcia Treadwell slashed down with a small automatic.

The blow caught Garth squarely on the forehead. He was already on his knees. He wavered, went to all fours. He tried to crawl. Then the girl struck him twice more and he went face down on the floor.

The hotel dick was kicking him when he came to. He looked as though he enjoyed it. He dug his shoe in Garth's ribs, said, "Get up, Guy. Get up and talk."

Garth pawed at the chair, pulled himself erect. The room seemed to waver. The hotel dick's face showed in a mist of blood. He rubbed the back of his hand over his eyes and it came away blood-stained.

The hotel dick said, "All right. What the hell was going on in here?"

"Let me get my face washed," Garth said. He staggered toward the bath. By the time he had the blood off and had made sure he wasn't hurt except for the lumps on his head the cops had come.

They were openly doubtful of his story. "David Treadwell," the Lieutenant said. "What the hell's wrong

with him? We haven't been notified of any trouble."

"That's because nobody knows what's happened to him. Probably nobody realizes he's really missing yet—not even his family, maybe."

"Yeah?" the lieutenant said. He told one of his men to long distance Treadwell's home. There was no one there except servants, but they hadn't seen Mr. Treadwell since the night before. They didn't know where he was.

"Okay," the Lieutenant said to Garth. "If it's like you say we'll find the guy all right. But what about the girl, the one batted you on the konk?"

Garth put his hand gently to the lump on his forehead, took it away and stood for a moment looking at the faint stain of blood on his fingers. "I don't know who she was," he said. "Probably some woman he's got with him."

"We'll get them," the Lieutenant said. "I'll put a watch on all trains and buses leaving town. You say he's wearing a brand new, gray tweed, single button suit. And the girl?"

"I didn't have a chance to see how she was dressed," Garth said. "Anyway, I've an idea she won't be with him. I think he'll make a break on the first freight."

"By God you may be right," the Lieutenant said. He looked at his watch. "There's one leaving for New Orleans in about half an hour. Let's get down there."

THE railroad's chief special agent was a little man with a thin dark face that could have been used for a paper cutter. "I'll put three dicks on number 19," he said. "They can spot every bum that gets aboard, collar them all and haul them off in Pascagoula. You can identify the right one then, if he's there."

"I'll ride the train with them," Garth said.

The chief agent looked at him a moment, blinked. "If you want," he said. "That suit won't look so swank when you get off."

"It's had hard treatment earlier tonight," Garth said. "It can stand it."

He was riding a gondola when the freight moved out through the yards. A switch engine puffed by. The firebox was open and in the saffron light he could see the negro fireman swinging his shovel.

They passed a string of empties, the train picking up speed now. Several times he saw shadows detach themselves from the empties, run alongside the moving train for a moment, then merge into the darkness of it. But there was no chance to tell if any of them was the man he sought.

The train stopped for a switch, then started again. As the car jerked into motion the sound ran like a galloping horse along the train. Garth's car jumped, hurling him against the gondola's bulkhead, snapping his head back. "Damn," he said aloud. "These things are rough."

They were running too fast for any more bums to catch the train. Garth went to the back of the gondola, climbed out of it carefully and into the next one. Two cars down he found a couple of hoboes, but neither of them was the man he wanted.

He'd seen brakemen walking along the tops of boxcars as casually as along a sidewalk. But the trick's not easy. The cars sway and jolt. He was scarcely able to keep his feet along the broad bottomed gondolas, and on the narrow catwalk of a boxcar he had to crawl. He had just climbed up the side of one, coming up from an oil car, and was balancing on hands and knees on the catwalk when the train passed a switchlight, the white glow flowing smoothly over his face for a moment. Then it was past him, sliding along the car and over the figure crouched at the other end. He had a glimpse of a gray suit, of red hair and fear widened eyes. It was the man he'd seen in the Montgomery hobo jungle!

The man was staring at Garth and as the light slid past, the detective saw the gleam of an automatic.

The gun flamed as Garth went flat on the cartop, left side pushed against the catwalk, left arm circling it to keep from falling off. He heard the bullet ring on steel a foot from his face, ricochet off into the night. Then he had his own gun out.

He raised his head carefully. It was dark and he could scarcely see the other end of the car. The red haired man was on the opposite side of the catwalk, flat, his raised head only a dark blob against the night. Garth tried to brace himself against the bouncing of the car. He fired.

A pencil of flame lanced back at him. The slug lashed the catwalk just back

of his left shoulder, whined away an inch over his back. He fired again and knew the bouncing of the car had sent the bullet wide.

And then they passed another switchlight and the illumination flowed over him. And while he was spotlighted in the white glow the other man fired. The bullet struck Garth's left arm, tore it from its grip on the catwalk, shoved his whole body backward. He began to slide downward along the side of the car. He tried to brace himself, to hold the walk, but his arm wouldn't work.

He twisted, caught the walk with his right hand, still holding the gun, and pulled himself onto it. The action raised him into clear view of the other man. He saw the fellow's gun come up, saw the flame spit from it.

The bullet was a bee humming at his ear, and gone. Then swaying on his knees he had his own gun up. He fired.

The man seemed to bounce with the car. He came up on hands and knees, went flat again. He began to slide along the car, beating at it with his fingers. His feet went over the edge, then his knees. He screamed, an awful throaty cry that reached Garth above the roar and rattle of the train. And then the man had gone off the side and the cry had ended. Railroad dicks were coming along the cars from both directions. Garth let his own gun go. He held onto the catwalk with all his strength.

"I should have told you the truth at the first," Marcia Treadwell said. She hesitated. "It was blackmail. The man was—"

GARTH smiled slightly and shook his head. "I knew that much," he said. "At least I figured that was why you didn't want to explain to me; you didn't want to talk about trouble your father had been in."

"That's it. If it had got out it would have ruined Dad. Years ago this man saw him—"

"I don't need the details," Garth said. "It's too late for that. You knew your father was more likely to fight than to keep paying. You knew he'd be in danger and so you wanted him protected. That's enough. He went to the hobo jungle to meet this man, this tramp who was blackmailing him. There must have been a scrap of some kind, maybe your father

refused to pay. Anyway the man killed him. And he knew that the murder of David Treadwell would cause a lot of investigation which might lead back to him; so he got the idea of making your father vanish. He changed clothes, put his own on your father's body, caught the freight and dropped the body under the wheels."

The girl shuddered as he spoke and put her hands over her face. "No one would have ever known it was Dad," she whispered. "He wouldn't have been identified."

Garth said, "The killer would have got away with it probably except for one thing. After he put on your father's clothes he must have looked around to pick out the best way to the tracks, and he and I saw one another. At first I didn't see his face and for a moment I thought it was Mr. Treadwell. I didn't understand why until later when I realized he must have been wearing Treadwell's clothes. And that, I believe, explains why he was so frightened. He saw only my clothes. Both Mr. Treadwell and I were wearing dark, double breasted suits. Not unusual, but a little out of place in a hobo jungle. The man, keyed up by the murder, thought for a moment he was seeing a ghost." Garth grinned slightly. "I got a good look at his face then. He needed a hair cut and a shave. He looked like a bum. That's why I figured he'd leave Mobile on a freight. He knew freight trains better than any thing else—and a man in danger sticks to the places he feels safest."

"How did you find him in Mobile?" she asked. "You knew he went there on

the train, but how'd you find him?"

"He had your father's suit and probably there was money in it, even if the blackmail wasn't paid. I figured the first thing he'd do was get out of that suit, get clothes that fitted him and that couldn't tie him to the murder. So I went to the clothing stores, asking about a redhaired man wearing a dark double-breasted suit that didn't fit too well. And I found him—and you."

She looked embarrassed. "I'm sorry about hitting you," she said. "He telephoned me that Dad was still alive and that if I brought him the money right away Dad would be turned loose. But he said that if I told anybody, if anything happened to him, the men who were holding Dad would murder him. When I walked in and found you there I didn't have time to think about anything except the man had to go free for Dad's sake."

"I thought it was that way," Garth said. "But one thing I don't understand. Why did you say over the phone you had killed your father?"

"Before he left the house that night I took the cartridges out of his gun. I was afraid he'd kill somebody and get in trouble. I didn't think he'd be killed because this fellow was trying to get money from him. But when you said Dad had vanished . . ."

He nodded understanding. The past few days had been hard on her. But she wouldn't break, Garth knew. She was made of the right stuff. He had liked her when he first saw her. He still did. Give her a while to get over her grief and he'd tell her about it.

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A RED CIRCLE MAGAZINE



# WHISPER, "MURDER," TO THE MOON

by  
**CYRIL PLUNKETT**

**T**HE city roared a block away, the pounding, deafening din of humanity ever moving, pierced by the shrill cry of a newshawk nearby. But the alley was strangely silent. The alley was dark and musty and wet. The alley smelled of death. Sergeant Gene Carveth looked at the luminous face of his watch.

"Ready?" he whispered.

Pete Pillman, grizzled veteran, canny, cautious, but with a lion's heart, edged the sub-machine gun forward a little.

"It stinks, Chief," he muttered. "That zany may be squealing us into a spot."

Carveth, lean and grim and tense, shook his head. "I don't think so. Anyway, we're going in, Pete. I haven't forgotten Mac. The best friend I had, and The Angel burned him down, cut him in two. It's our turn tonight!" He looked at his watch again, snapped: "Time's up, men. Every exit's blocked. Let's go!"

They went softly up the alley, Pillman on Carveth's left, young Johnny Markey at his other side with the sawed-off shot-



*The Angel liked cops a lot and he had a very nice way of showing his affection: he'd crack their spines in two—or just cut off their legs . . .*

gun. Carveth took the lead on the fire-steps. Somewhere above a radio blared, was abruptly silent as they entered the building. The hall stretched dark and still.

Carveth paused a moment, but gradually his gray eyes pierced the gloom and he could see the stairway. He drew

his service gun, rounded the post, and crept quietly up the stairs. He could hear Markey's quickened breath close behind him, and then suddenly a cough just above. The faint aroma of a cigaret touched his nostrils, and eyes level with the upper floor, he saw its glow.

Here, too, was the sound of the radio again, faintly, true, but loudly enough that the unknown watcher hummed its tune, loudly enough that Carveth, despite his near two hundred pounds, stole like a cat toward that glowing ash. He struck once, a foot above and back from the light, other hand flashing for the unseen throat, and the scream was stifled. The body shuddered and lay still.

"Bracelet his hand and ankle," he breathed. Twenty feet down the hall was the room with the radio and the light beneath its door.

He reached that door, confident of his quarry now, touched the knob. It turned, and crouching, head down, he heard its lock release. Markey and Pete Pillman drew up on either side, ready. Carveth tightened his muscles, shoved.

He saw Angelo Zaida near the far door, one hand streaking for the light switch to his right. He saw the Angel's three men twist and snarl and come up shooting. His own gun cracked at The Angel's lightning move. Markey blasted, and Pete's Tommy chattered excitedly—a cameo-like second before the light went out. There was suddenly only the flame of roaring guns. There was suddenly a mad, dark upheaval, with his own body wading through death and toward the doorway beside which Angelo Zaida had been standing. The door slammed as he hit it.

Sirens screamed outside now. A searchlight picked out the window, and men shouted, closing in. Markey cried: "Drop those guns!" and cut loose again with the riot gun. Pete was stumbling, panting, to Carveth's side. Carveth's powerful shoulders struck the door, drew back as it splintered, and drove for it again. A gun, like the beating of a nervous drum, began to pound inside.

He burst through, shooting. He heard Pete curse and fall, and that steady stream of orange ahead licked into his face. He shot at the mark of the gun, spun completely around as slug after slug burned into his chest, crumbled,

dazed, as Pete's Tommy took up the challenge from the floor. After that he heard new voices and new feet racing down the hall, and then nothing at all.

IT was quiet in the hospital, irritatingly quiet to a man who had held life in his hands daily for years. They called him the human sieve, but that was all right, that was part of the game. On the seventh day Markey came in, grinning, limping, one arm in a sling.

"They wouldn't let me come before," Markey explained.

"Where's Pete?"

"Not dead, Chief, but—" Markey's mouth tightened, "well, they had to take off both legs. The Angel did that at the same time he got you. Pete said that last minute, laying there on the floor, he managed to get the Tommy going just in time."

"I know," Carveth murmured, and his hands were clenched. What the hell, even a man could cry! First Mac, close as a brother, the man who had finally tripped up Angelo Zaida's numbers game, who had touched off the spark. The Angel had been debonair, crafty, albeit a killer, up to then. But Mac had got hold of something hot and they'd cut his spine in two with bullets—from the back. They'd disappeared, white-hot, until the stoolie whispered about the room and the alley and the stairs.

"Pete's a swell guy," Carveth muttered. "You could always count on him—like getting in at the right minute with the Tommy. And he's going to walk on wooden legs. . . ."

"Forget it now," Markey pleaded.

"You can't forget things like that. They burn inside you until they're settled, wiped out. Markey, don't stall. I can take it now. Markey, what's the truth?"

Markey flushed and bit his lip. "What truth?"

"You know what I mean. Two of the rats died. I know that, and I pieced the rest together. Two more waiting for trial. Which two, Markey? *What happened to The Angel?*"

Markey cried: "Man, they know how you feel! You're sick! You almost died! Well—" he shrugged, "you got to know sometime. He got away. Dumbwaiter to the cellar, door to the next building, and on and on, dripping

blood. He was dragging himself at the end, but he did it. Maybe somebody helped, somebody had to drive the car, because the block was combed."

"He got away . . ." Carveth whispered.

He thought about that in the days that followed, and one week in the hospital drew into two, then three, and as his strength returned and his body healed, he watched his big hands clench and unclench. He seemed to see everything in those hands, purpose, power, his own life. Up from the streets, pounding a beat, young and fearless, deserving trust and promotion. Paying with devotion to his duty. Duty wasn't hard when you lived for it, when still under thirty you saw dreams realized and the forming of your own squad. Suicide Squad, the papers called it. Men like himself, chosen for their belief in him and their work, and for their courage. The big black Lincoln that went out, siren screaming, straight from Headquarters—whose call was death. Flying, riot, hoodlum squads, all rolled into one. The men who mopped up, whatever the call might be.

He saw all this—and something more. The Angel. The one man who had defied him and twice won. The man he would live to crush! It was good to dream of that, and hard to wait.

And then *she* came . . .

It happened the fourth and last week in the hospital. He was sitting up in bed, reading, when the door opened. For a moment he thought it was the nurse, but he saw, beneath the paper, the tiny black suede slippers with heels like little swords, the slender ankles in sheerest hose, and then the dress, black, too, swelling gently as his startled gaze traveled upward. She wore a silly hat and a silly veil, but it was beautiful. She was blonde, and her eyes behind the wisp of net were dark and wide and lovely. Her lips were parted in a gasp.

"I—I thought—oh, I'm on the wrong floor!"

He didn't know what to say. He was suddenly afraid she would leave. But hand on door, door half open, she paused.

"Aren't you Sergeant Carveth?"

He said he was and he felt his heart pounding when she smiled.

"Your pictures have been in all the

papers. It was tremendously exciting."

He found his voice then. "Won't you please stay a moment? It's rather lonely."

She stayed. She told him her name was Faith Friar. She told him many things, inconsequential things, charming things. He couldn't take his eyes from her.

"I must have seen you somewhere," he said at last. "There's something so familiar—"

"Traffic court?" she hazarded, smiling again. But he knew that wasn't it, he knew he had seen her in his heart, always. And here at last she was.

SHE left after awhile. She promised shyly she'd come back, and after that Gene Carveth's hands would clench—and then lay open while he dreamed. After that he could scarcely wait from one time to another until he saw her.

Sick leave, two additional weeks, color in his cheeks again, and vigor in his limbs. Long drives in the country, with her. Then dinner and the early night, and wonder. He told her of his work, his plans, and she was silent. He told her of The Angel, and her hand tightened on his arm.

"You don't talk?" he asked suddenly.

"I'm afraid," she whispered.

"Of my work?" And she nodded.

He considered that a moment. "But other men court danger and—sometimes other women accept that danger." He forced a laugh. "I—I mean if they love a fellow."

She raised her eyes. "Sometimes other men," she said, so low he could hardly hear, "put danger away—if they love a girl."

Far away, thunder rumbled and lightning shot its jagged course across the sky. The rumbling came again, but Carveth didn't hear, did not want to hear. She was in his arms, and nothing else seemed to matter.

The Lincoln raced the streets again, siren wailing. Markey and the others crouched, guns drawn, ready to leap; or battered doors, guns roaring. Bullets sped with the same frightening whine. Gene Carveth led his men, curt, grim, and implacable as before. But courage shared his heart with something else.

"Faith—" he muttered to himself,

over and over. "It couldn't happen her name is Faith. There must be something else, something deeper, like—destiny. Perhaps I've got to believe she's right, perhaps I've got to have faith in her? Good God, I'm afraid! Not of man; of death! If I die I'll never have her!"

And he saw veiled terror in her eyes also, doubt, misery, all the things he could so well understand. He looked at his hands and remembered the bliss of conquest. He remembered Mac, who had died; and Pete Pillman, who hobbled on crutches and grinned and blinked his eyes strangely when he came down to the House. He remembered The Angel

They didn't speak of Angelo Zaida anymore, he and Faith, they didn't speak of the Force, or of death, or even of their love. It seemed as though a barrier, a sort of armed fort, had come between them, forbidding speech; each waiting, hoping. Each wondering. And all the while the Suicide Squad kept up its work, all the while men keen and trained stuck doggedly on The Angel's trail.

"We'll find him," Markey muttered. "Someday, chief! Your first shot, then mine. It'll have to be with guns. We'll never take him alive."

Carveth stared away, gnawed his under lip.

"Markey—if I were to quit?"

"Quit, man? You can't quit!"

"Why not?" Carveth snarled.

"It's your life! *Your* squad! The finest group of men on any *forcée*, if I do say it myself. Chief, you can't let us down!"

"No," Carveth muttered, and his teeth drew blood, "I guess I can't. But —"

The "but" came four weeks from his return to duty. A night like any other, so it seemed. A night when he and Faith planned a drive up-country to dine and dance. A night of destiny.

He was dressed, ready to leave his rooms. He had his hand on the radio, ready to switch it off, when the music stopped and the announcer's voice broke in. And Sergeant Carveth listened, nerves abruptly quivering. Armored car—half million dollars—guards slaughtered—woman and child spectator killed in machine gun fusillade—ruthless mur-

ders pointing to— He snapped the switch.

"The Angel!" he cried. The telephone rang insistently, angrily, across the room.

He dived for it.

"Headquarters, Carveth. Every man on duty. Sorry, but we need you. Come on the double-quick."

He slammed back the receiver, looked at his tuxedo with a grin, shrugged and grabbed for gun and holster. He ran out of the building. His car leaped from the curb. One minute to tell Faith, and then at last a trail he could follow. To the man he'd waited months to get!

SHE was dressed, waiting. She wore white, clinging to her body, low on her shoulders. For a moment Carveth's heart stopped.

She laughed: "Whirlwind!" And suddenly stiffened.

"I can't stay. Party's off. Call you back later. Every man ordered out, darling!"

"Gene!"

"No time to explain in detail. The Angel's struck again. This time we'll get him!"

"Gene!" He turned, halfway out the door, saw her face, her eyes, her lips. He gripped the knob. "You know we've planned on this night for more than a week?"

"I know." His lips were tight. "I'm sorry, Faith."

"You don't know! It means everything in the world to me! It means more than everything! It's this night or—"

"Don't say that!" he cried.

"I will say it! I love you, I've loved you from the first day I saw you. You've got to choose, Gene." She reached him, touched him, pressed her body close to his. She was sobbing, frantic, trembling violently. "I'll give you love, devotion, everything! I'll give you peace. Darling, you can't leave me now!"

His destiny, a woman. Why not? There could be nothing more wonderful. Another man would and doubtless could fill his shoes; another girl could never fill his life.

Yet could another man fulfill *his* duty? He saw it, stark and cold, curiously tinged with despair. Because of Mac and Pillman, a duty peculiar to himself, to go on and on, until he reached

—The Angel. No other man could pay that debt, no *man* could welsh it and hold his head up, unafraid. But there was Faith . . . And there was love! Tearing at his soul, crucifying him by its very beauty. Could Mac and all the others still come first? Could they really matter more than she?

"Darling—" she sobbed.

He closed the door and held her in his arms.

A night to dance and dine and laugh—while men, his men, crouched shooting. A night to sing of love and joy, to count no cost—while men, *his men*, fought and died. He drove swiftly, for speed alone relieved him. She talked, but he scarcely heard. He turned in on the police wave, cursed, and turned off the radio again. In a minute he turned it back. The armored car had been found. The men had gone on to the sea, and the Coast Guard was in on it now. Planes had already spotted the speedboat, swooping low to mark the kill. Capture was inevitable. He turned off the radio again.

"I'm sorry," Faith said gently.

"Forget it." Why say more? She wouldn't understand. No woman could.

She caught her breath, forced a laugh, taut and sharp.

"Turn here, darling. I've changed my mind. We're going someplace else, a place I know. Where it's quiet. You wouldn't want a crowd tonight, would you, darling?"

He slowed the car, patted her hand as he turned off the main road. "Don't worry. I regret it, I loved that life—but I don't regret you. I never shall."

She laughed again, queerly, uncertainly.

"The road's gotten worse since I've been over it. I think—yes, that's the house, Gene. Stop here."

He looked at the house, lonely and still and dark. He looked at Faith, her eyes staring and eerie-bright in the light of the dash.

"Quiet's right. That's no place to eat."

"Maybe they've quit business, do you think?" Her voice caught, her breath was coming swiftly and he felt her trembling. "I knew the woman well. Let's go up and see. . . ." The words trailed off. She was leaving the car, and he followed her.

The porch creaked. An owl screeched somewhere near, and Faith shivered.

"That means death, doesn't it?"

"There's no one living here, darling," and he frowned, perplexed.

She knocked on the door. A light flashed on inside. He could see a hall and little else, a dim long hall. She was opening the door.

"I don't get it," he said again, slowly.

"There's something—"

"Silly! I know these people. Come on in."

THEY went in the door, down the hall, Faith leading. She turned into a side room, and Gene Carveth followed, took one step, saw her leap quickly aside. Beyond, seated behind a gun mounted on an odd steel swived, face scarred and twisted in hate, eyes glittering yellow, was Angelo Zaida, The Angel.

Carveth did not speak, could not speak nor move. He was paralyzed with dismay.

"You wonder how I got away," The Angel snarled. "A crone, who pitied me. She brought me here, the last but one I could trust. She's at my boat now, waiting to take me away, safely. *She cut off my arm, while I cursed her on!* I knew I couldn't die—until I got you! Squirm—"

Somewhere a clock ticked, four, five, six times. No more—but in that agonizingly brief time, in breathless seconds, Carveth's mind became a blazing thing, lightning clear, lightning fast. He heard The Angel's words apart, knew that Faith stood rigid in the corner, like a statue carved of marble. His destiny—a double crossing wench, toying with him, making him love her, tricking him, marking him for death. He remembered that she had seemed familiar from the first, knowing now the reason. She, or someone like her, had been a member of The Angel's mob. He knew, too, despairingly, that regardless of everything, he had given her his love, forever.

There was no stopping his mind, impossible though it seemed that it could function now at all. He saw, understood completely, sweepingly, everything before him. The Angel, sick and helpless, mob crushed, with no man he could use; with one arm gone at the shoulder, thumb and stub of forefinger, like a horrible claw, alone left on the other wrist

. . . curving, quivering ecstatically in that instant before it tightened on the trigger of the automatic. And paralyzed from the waist, legs twisted, lifeless; living on only for revenge. Oh yes, he saw it all, like a great unfolding picture—and the clock ticked *seven*, then *eight*.

Carveth wanted to laugh, blindly, hysterically. Counting the ticks of the clock! Counting the seconds to doom! *Nine!* "Squirm—!"

Zaida screamed that word, threw it maddeningly after those which had tumbled from his working lips before, his eyes blazing, mouth slobbering. It seemed as though he could no longer breathe. Carveth saw a vein pounding in his temple, and Carveth remembered the blood pounding in his own temples, and suddenly the numbness went out of him. His shoulders hunched forward, his fingers opened. Subconsciously he counted the tenth clockbeat as that horrible claw spasmodically jerked, as the Angel finished:

"—damn you, Carveth, *squirm!*"

Simultaneously Carveth's hand flashed for his gun. He heard Faith's shrill cry, he heard the blast of The Angel's automatic and tasted its flame. His own gun began to crack, three, four times, and The Angel's arm dropped from the swivel gun carriage, torso arched in the chair, quivered, fell again with a groan. The grinning head gurgled, and chin sank to chest.

Carveth whirled, saw that Faith lay crumpled on the floor.

Heart pounding, he knelt beside her, raised her shoulders. Her lids fluttered.

"*Gene!*" she gasped. "You're all right?"

**T**HROUGH no fault of yours! he wanted to shout. Killers daren't make mistakes. You did. I see it now, planned long ahead, waiting till he recovered, till I was off duty so I wouldn't carry a gun. But I was called back to duty tonight. I had my gun! I wish—oh God, I wish you'd gone too!

He wanted to say all this, he wanted to crush her in his trembling hands, but he couldn't say a thing. And lips parted, she stared at him.

"But Gene, haven't you looked at his gun?"

The muzzle still breathed smoke. He looked at it dumbly, and her voice, swift, pleading, came again.

"I didn't dare tell you I knew The Angel. You wouldn't have believed in me, loved me as I loved you. Gene, you must listen! My sister died because of him, killed herself, and I swore revenge, wormed my way up to him.

"Tonight I knew you loved me more than anything in life. I hate myself for testing you, but—tonight *had* to be the night! *He* was ready, and you were off duty, unarmed I thought. Gene, I didn't want him killed—but in prison, for life! I swear that's true! Am I a—a murderer?"

Her eyes searched his face, and still he did not talk.

"Darling, can't you understand?" she stbbed. "He couldn't *move* alone! I filled and placed his gun—the woman had already gone. He couldn't even break the gun to see that I had loaded it with blanks!"

He held her close. Faith—his destiny, riding ever with the squad, in his heart, his work, his life!

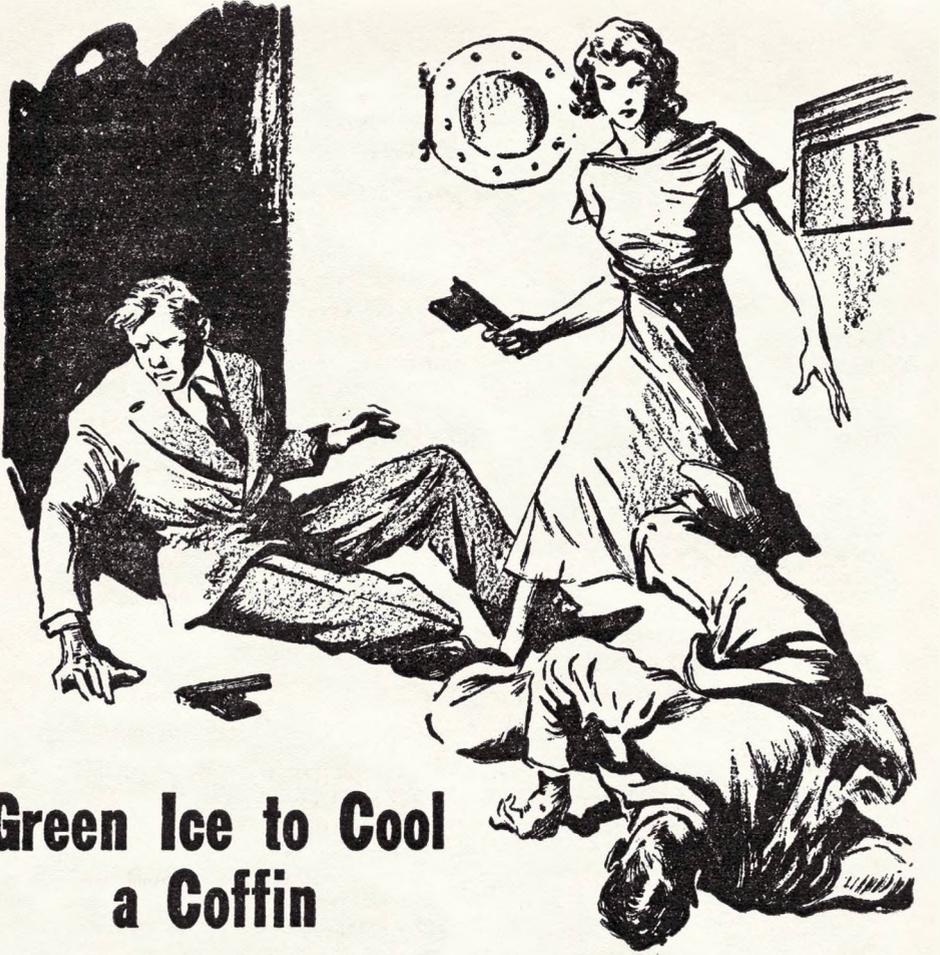
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A RED CIRCLE MAGAZINE



# Green Ice to Cool a Coffin

by  
**JAMES DUNCAN**

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*An Eerie Pulse-throbbing Novelette of Murder on the High Seas!*

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*Death stalks the high seas . . . in the guise of love!*

## CHAPTER I

### MURDER SHIP

**T**HE rain came like thin mist from out of the east, felt like fog. The liner, S. S. *Atalantus*, New York-bound, ran before it, her high, sharp prow knifing doggedly through the oily, heavy swells. Up on her bridge two junior officers paced back and forth, their snug oilskins momentarily illuminated as they passed abreast the glow-

ing binnacle light.

Ben Steele, first-grade detective attached to New York Police Headquarters, climbed the canvas-lined companionway, hat brim pulled down against the drifting rain, coat collar turned up. As he reached the top, a uniformed sailor came forward on the jump and barred the way. "No passengers allowed here, sir."

"Sure, but Captain Farrar asked me to drop in on him."

One of the junior officers came up,

peered at the detective. "Oh, it's you, Steele. The old man's in his cabin. It's all right, Anderson. This way, Steele."

Steele was popular with the officers. He ate at the same table with them, for once aboard the liner he had nothing to do but loaf. He had been assigned the task of bringing back from France, Oscar "Big Dee" Doremus, wanted on a charge of murder. The extradition proceedings had gone off without a hitch. Big Dee reposed now in one of the ship's neat and modern dungeons. Steele merely had to drop in on his prisoner once or twice a day to see that he was comfortable, which he was. For the rest, the detective's time was his own.

He went long-legged after the officer, who opened a door on the lee and stood respectfully aside. "Right in here, Mr. Steele."

"Thanks, Tighe. Dirty weather."

Junior Officer Tighe grinned. "The wind howls all right but she'll be all clear by morning. Go right in. The old man must be in his study."

Steele closed the door behind him. Captain Farrar did not seem to be about. Steele took off his hat, smoothed down his rain-dampened collar. A door was opposite him. He crossed to it and knocked. He looked lean, smooth and competent in a blue serge suit, his face neither hard-bitten nor amiable but capable of being either. He had rusty brown hair that was well-kept, save for a thatch on the top which no brush could tame; his eyes were like bright blue ice against his brown skin.

He knocked again. There still came no response. He hesitated, then turned the door knob. It was wrenched from his hand by someone pulling from the other side. The door swept open and a woman stood there—a tragic white-faced figure, her eyes round and eloquent with horror.

But horror could not rob her face of its essential purity of line, its classic beauty. She was young, no more than twenty-two or three. For a moment she stared straight at Steele unseeing, unable to force her frozen lips to speak. Then she stumbled so suddenly that Steele barely caught her in his arms.

He looked past her shoulder to the floor of the room beyond. A gasp of sheer amazement rocketed forth from his lips.

Captain Farrar lay on the floor in a

grotesque position, one arm and one leg doubled under him, his eyes staring up at the ceiling. He appeared to have three eyes, in fact. The third was in the middle of his forehead.

The girl clung to Steele. "Oh," she shuddered. "Oh!"

There was a cushioned locker set against the transverse bulkhead which formed the forward wall of the cabin. Steele unceremoniously pushed the girl down on this. In an instant he was in the other room and kneeling down beside the sprawled figure of the captain. His examination was brief. He rose and let his eyes flick about the room. The room contained an easy chair, a desk, a rack of books and the captain's safe. Nothing seemed to be disturbed. Two doors opened from the room, one to a tiny shower stall and the other, opposite the single porthole, to a flight of steps that led to the fore-and-aft corridor of the lower deck. Steele stared down the steps for a moment, then re-crossed the room to where the girl sat.

"Are you all right?" he asked.

She straightened up, gave him a warm and grateful smile. "Thanks," she said. "I . . . I'm all right . . . now. The shock of seeing him like that . . . Is he . . . ?"

"Dead? Very much so."

Steele went to the door that led to the bridge. He stuck out his head, called, "Tighe!"

The wind tore the name from his lips but the urgency in his voice made his summons heard. Tighe and the other junior officer, Martin, came on the run. "Get Chief Officer Jamieson," Steele clipped. "Captain Farrar has been murdered!"

STEELE banged the door shut, faced the girl, cutting short the two officers' exclamations. She sat huddled on the cushioned bench, a peculiarly appealing and wan figure.

"Well," he said, "why did you kill Captain Farrar?"

For a minute he thought she would faint again. But she leaped up, amazement, fear, horror, written large on her lovely face.

"No!" she cried. "I didn't . . . I didn't kill him."

"Well, what were you doing here?" She raised harried eyes, looked confused.

"I went to—to speak to him," she said.

"What's your name, miss?"

"Madelon Mill. Oh, please, try to believe me. I didn't kill him. I—I couldn't possibly. Why, he . . ."

Steele cut her short with a gesture. "How did you get up here, Miss Mill, by way of the bridge or by the inside flight of steps?"

"I—I came up the steps from the lower deck."

"Um. And what did you see when you opened the door?"

"Captain Farrar was lying on the floor—shot through the head."

"And the door was not locked, was it?" He spoke casually.

She passed her hand over her forehead, swallowed hard. "I—I don't know."

Steele strode forward, grabbed her wrist. "What's that key in your hand?"

Slowly the fingers of her hand unclenched to disclose a key in her palm. She stared down at it in forlorn misery. "I might as well tell you," she said hopelessly. "The door *was* locked. I opened it with this key."

"Um, so the door was locked, you say, and you opened it," Steele went on. "Where did you get the key?"

"Captain Farrar gave it to me." She looked up at him definitely; a vivid scarlet had replaced the former pallor of her cheeks.

Steele's eyes were very somber. "Why did he give you the key? What did you come up here to speak to him about?"

"I can't . . . Oh . . . I'd rather not explain, please. . . ."

"Look here, Miss Mill, a man has been murdered, a pretty important man, too. Get that through your head. If you refuse to talk, I'll just have to draw the obvious conclusion and say you killed him."

"No, no! What are you saying? Captain Farrar is . . . an old friend of my family's. He gave me the key at the start of the voyage so I could come up to see him whenever I wanted."

Steele stared sharply at the girl. "And is that all the explanation you have to offer?"

"It's the truth! Captain Farrar was helping me to secure some information which would help someone I . . . love."

The door flew open and Chief Officer

Jamieson, rugged, gray and square-jawed, came in followed by several other younger members of the ship's commanding staff. "Mr. Tighe just told me . . ." Jamieson began.

"Yeah," said Steele. "In there. Take a look but don't touch anything." He waited while Jamieson went in. The officers were staring transfixed at Madelon Mill.

"Tighe," said Steele, breaking the curious silence, "how long had you and Martin been on watch on the bridge?"

Tighe stepped forward. "Why, three hours. We took over at eight bells." He glanced at a watch. "It's a bit past eleven now."

"During that time did anyone come up to see Captain Farrar, excepting myself?"

Tighe and Martin exchanged glances. "No, sir."

"Could anyone get by the bridge to this door without being seen by you?"

Tighe shrugged. "I suppose that's possible but not very likely. Besides Martin and me, there's three or four men always about. You remember how you were challenged when you came up, sir."

Steele nodded, staring at the girl with cool and vigilant eyes. "Did you hear any shots?"

"No, of course not. If we had, we'd have reported it long ago. But, of course, the wind accounts for that."

Steele went into the adjoining room and confronted Jamieson. "Any idea who did it?"

Jamieson shook his head. "I was just going to ask you that. Who's that girl in the other room?"

"A Miss Madelon Mill." Steele rapidly sketched what she told him. "So if we believe her," he concluded, "the inner door was locked and the only access to this room would then be the bridge. Yet Tighe and Martin swear they saw no one."

"You don't think the girl killed him, then?"

Steele shrugged expressively. "She came out of this room," he said. "And Farrar's body is still warm. Well, you're captain now and in charge."

Jamieson nodded gloomily. "I was hoping you'd help me."

"Sure, be glad to. But on the high seas, y'know, I'm no more law than Buf-falo Bill."

"You have the backing of my authority. Then you wouldn't arrest the girl?"

"Of course not! Give her free rein." He laughed. "Perhaps she'll lead us to the right party."

"Hope so." Jamieson gazed down at the gaping hole in the dead man's forehead. "Farrar wasn't the sort to commit suicide."

"It was murder, sure enough," Steele said bluntly. "There're no powder marks . . . no weapon . . ."

"And no clues," added Jamieson.

STEELE shook his head. "No crime was ever committed without clues being left behind. But sometimes the clues are hard to find." His eyes darted over the small desk, the rack of books, the safe. They came back to rest on the safe. "B'jeepers, I wasn't talking through my hat! Look, the safe door—it's open and I'd thought it was locked!"

It was open, barely an eighth of an inch. Steele raced over, squatted down beside it, held off Jamieson with one hand. "Don't touch the knob or door. There may be prints on them." He shielded his fingers with his handkerchief and pulled the heavy iron door wide.

Nothing seemed to be disturbed inside. There was a cash box with its contents intact, several sheafs of papers, bills of lading, three ledger-like books, one of them the log in which the daily diary of the ship's happenings were recorded. Steele flipped the pages. "What's this?" he exclaimed suddenly. He carried the log over to the shaded light on the desk. "A page has been torn out!"

"What!"

"There's the clue I was talking about," Steele said calmly. He lifted the volume, slanted the blank page in several directions. "This is a break! Captain Farrar wrote with a heavy hand and he pressed hard. Here's the impression he left—part of it anyway, part of the page that was torn out!"

"What does it say? Can you read it?"

"He pressed hard on some word, soft on others. It's hard to get the meaning. But I can make out this much: 'I followed him—' and then there is a blank. But here later on: 'Everything

centers around Cabin 313—' and then the page is blank again. Hey, listen to this: 'They will not stop even at murder—' and that fades. Three lines down is this: '—confession is not what—' it skips a few words here and continues: '—are after even if Dale believes so.' A couple more lines are blank and then the last words are: '—wantonly destroy life.' " He handed the log over. "Take care of this. It'll be handy later on." Jamieson stared at Steele. "That second line you read: 'Everything centers around Cabin 313—' There's something to work on!"

"Listen!" Steele pointed to the door opposite the porthole. Footsteps were climbing the inner staircases. He pulled out his Police Special .38 and as he faced the door, cocked the trigger. The door swung open and a slender man, white-haired and distinguished, stood in the doorway.

His eyes, bright and quick, darted from Steele to Jamieson to the gun in Steele's hand. But Steele could not see the man's eyes. They were hidden by a pair of smoked glasses, which somehow managed to convey a dread and very sinister impression.

Steele replaced his gun, stepped to one side. The movement cleared the way and permitted the newcomer to see into the room.

As his gaze fell upon the silent figure on the floor, he darted into the room with a cry, his face suddenly as white as his crown of snowy white hair. "Good God! Captain Farrar has been murdered!" he exclaimed.

Steele nodded. "You catch on quick."

"Who are you?" Jamieson demanded. "And why did you come up here?"

"I—I came to see the captain. My name is—uh—Dale, Howard Dale. I occupy Cabin 313 on 'A' deck."

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## CHAPTER II

### THREE-ONE-THREE

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"DALE, huh?" Steele said softly. "And you occupy three-one-three. Sit down, Mr. Dale.

Do you always wear smoked glasses, Mr. Dale?"

The biting quality of Steele's tone was apparently not lost on Howard Dale. His jaw shot tremulously over to one

side, his lips quivered. "I . . . My eyes are very delicate."

"Uh. Now what did you want to see the captain about?"

"It isn't . . . well, you see, nothing really important. Farrar and I were old friends from college days. I've been in the habit of dropping in on him for a chat."

Steele was regarding the old man quizzically. There was something about his face that suggested to the detective that he knew him. Yet he could not place him.

"Mr. Dale, would you mind taking your glasses off for a moment?"

"Really, I . . ."

"Take them off!"

The old man reluctantly did so, blinking uncertainly up at Steele. The detective looked keenly at him but there came no click of recognition in his mind. As Dale replaced the glasses, Steele suddenly said, "Do you carry a gun, Mr. Dale?"

Dale was instantly flustered. "I . . . why yes. That is . . ."

"Let me see it! And I might warn you to wear it in an inside pocket next time. Then the bulge wouldn't be noticeable." Steele chuckled drily.

Dale slowly drew out a Smith and Wesson .38 from his coat pocket. Steele took it from him, sniffed the barrel and spun the cylinders. With a look of disappointment he handed it back. "Hasn't been fired, no smell of cordite. Okay, you can go now, Mr. Dale. Uh-uh. Not the way you came. This door, please."

He opened the door to the adjoining room where sat Madelon Mill surrounded by half the ship's officers. He drew aside to let Dale pass, his eyes flicking rapidly from the old man's face to the girl's. As Dale stepped over the coaming, the girl half-started from her seat, her hands clenched and color fled from her flushed cheeks. All this was not lost on Steele. But no sign of emotion was displayed by the old man. He threaded his way to the deck door and disappeared. Thoughtfully, Steele closed the door, his hand resting on the knob. Jamieson said, "You think that pair know each other?"

Steele nodded. "I'd bet anything on it."

"There's certainly something fishy about the whole thing." Jamieson let

go a huge sigh. "Listen to this. It may be nothing at all but Farrar's writing, 'Everything centers around Cabin 313,' brought it all back to me. We've had trouble with that cabin before."

"What! What kind of trouble?"

"It happened over a year ago. Cabin 313 was occupied by two men traveling under the names of Hugh Murray and T. S. Ogden. Those were aliases, however, and when the boat docked at New York, Customs inspectors were waiting for the pair. Their real names were Tim Healy and Sam Cable, a couple of smooth con men, gamblers and smugglers with a long, long record."

"Healy and Cable!" Steele exclaimed. "Sure, I know 'em. They worked in New York for a time about four or five years back."

"Yes, they were well-known enough," Jamieson agreed. "You see, there was some kind of tip that Customs got that the two were smuggling dope. The inspectors walked in on the pair just as they were packing and sure enough concealed in the inner lining of their trouser cuffs were packs of heroin. That settled their hash then and there. They were taken off in handcuffs and I understand got a stiff prison term."

"But how does that connect with what happened tonight—the murder of Captain Farrar!"

Jamieson shook his head. "I didn't say there was any connection. Just an idea, I guess. The fact that Dale now occupies three-one-three, that his name and the cabin number were mentioned in the log and that we once had trouble with the same cabin in the past."

"H'm. Yet Dale and Madelon don't look like people tied up with smugglers. Still, you never can tell." Steele strode up and down the little room. "You can tell the girl she can go now and you'd better radio the home office what's happened. I'm going to go over the furniture and safe door for prints." He raised a forefinger. "And don't let anyone in here."

Jamieson sighed. "That's swell of you, Steele. You don't know what this means to me, having your help. Farrar—well, he was the best friend I had in the world. A great old man, Steele, one of the best."

"Yeah, he was okay." Steele moved to the staircase door. "I'll go to my cabin and get my print outfit."

He was back in about fifteen minutes and with his coat off went methodically to work. Whistling softly to himself, he covered the desk, the backs of the chairs and the safe door. It was tedious, painstaking labor. At the end of an hour he had uncovered a half dozen or so clear prints; the rest were too smudged to be of any value.

It was nearly one o'clock when he finally left the room. Dancing was still going on in the ball room. He drifted in to the bar. "Hello, Mr. Steele," the barman said. "Have you heard about Cap'n Farrar?"

"Yeah. Hot Scotch toddy, Eddie."

"The passengers ain't heard yet. There they are dancin' like nothin' at all happened. It's terrible, Mr. Steele, terrible. Cap'n Farrar was the whitest skipper I ever sailed under."

When the toddy was placed before him, Steele sipped slowly. A plan of attack was revolving in his mind. The first step was to get specimens of the prints of Dale in three-one-three and of Madelon Mill. He left the bar and went down to the purser's office. "What cabin does Miss Madelon Mill occupy?" he asked.

THE purser, who had been checking on a lot of lists, looked up with a quizzical smile. "She must be a popular young woman."

Steele looked sharply at him. "What do you mean?"

"Well, you're the second person within the past hour asking for the number of her room."

"Who was the other person—a man?"

"Why, yes."

"Do you know him?"

The purser nodded, puzzled. "Oh, sure. He's a Mr. Albert S. French in number 652. Is anything wrong?"

"No, no. Of course not. Number 652, huh? What about Miss Mill?"

"She's in the very next room—654."

"Thanks. Can I use your phone?"

The purser nodded, shoved the instrument toward him. Steele put the receiver to his ear and asked for Chief Officer Jamieson. He was connected and he said, "Steele speaking, Jamieson." He talked rapidly for a few minutes, then handed the phone to the purser. "Jamieson has some orders to give you," he said. The purser took the instrument, listened, nodding his head. "Yes, sir.

Of course, sir. Mr. Steele will have the free run of the ship. Right!"

He hung up, took a ring of keys from his pocket and selected one. "This is for you," he told Steele. "It's a master key that will open every cabin aboard the boat. Jamieson is acting captain now and his orders are that you are to be given every possible aid from the crew."

Steele took the key, weighed it in his palm. "Thanks. You've helped me a great deal already."

The ship's bell struck three times just as Steele was leaving the office. He glanced down at his strap-watch—one-thirty. Number 654 was aft on the starboard side. The corridors, well-lit, were empty, deserted. Steele's heels were muffled by the thick carpeting. He came to number 654 and knelt to the keyhole. There was no light within. He got out the master key and opened the door quickly, slipped inside and clicked up the light.

The bed was smooth, unruffled. He opened a closet. Feminine clothes hung in neat array. Apparently, Madelon Mill had not returned to her cabin after leaving the bridge. A flat ebony cigarette case lay on the dresser. Steele picked it up with his handkerchief, slipped it into his pocket. It was a perfect object from which to secure a sample of the girl's fingerprints. Then he clicked the light down, went out and locked the door.

The corridor was as empty and deserted as before. Steele moved over to number 652 and again knelt to the keyhole. It was also dark. Mr. Albert S. French was not in. Steele rose, shrugging. French could wait. There were other things to do first. He walked the length of the corridor, turned the corner and sought out Cabin 313.

This time a light showed from within. A steward went by bearing a tray. Steele waited until he was no longer in sight, then he rapped hard knuckles on the door panel. A minute went by and Steele knocked again. He looked at the door, at the sliver of light escaping from beneath the coaming. He pressed his ear against the panel. There was not a sound within. Then he transferred the Police Special from his hip holster to the pocket of his coat, took out the master key and opened the lock. He got the key back into his pocket quickly and

turned the knob just enough to free the catch. He stood back from the partly open door, his face taut and watchful, his hand on the gun in his pocket.

The slit of the door showed him the cabin was indeed bright with light. He stood listening for a moment. The sound of water splashing in a basin came to him, faint and muffled. He hit the door with his palm and sailed into the room.

He stood in the center of it, staring around him. It was empty. He shut the door behind him and let his eyes flick about the room. The noise of running water was louder now. There was a doorway near the foot of the bed; the noise came from behind the door. Steele stared at it with narrowing eyes. Two holes had been punched neatly through the panel at about the level of his eyes. He knew what they were: bullet-holes.

He crossed the room on tip-toe, stood before the door, drawn gun rigid in his fist. Suddenly his left hand shot out, turned the knob. He flung the door wide. It was a bathroom, just as he had figured. He stepped into it and stood stockstill, rooted.

The open door had hidden the body of a man.

The water running from the basin tap made a roaring sound in Steele's ears. Without looking at it, his hand reached out, closed the faucet. His eyes were riveted on the figure lying on the floor. A ribbon of blood stained the white tile floor beside it. The figure lay quite peacefully, quite naturally, as though asleep. But it was not Howard Dale, the rightful occupant of Cabin 313. It was dressed in a blue uniform, trimmed with gold braid.

It was Junior Officer Tighe.

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### CHAPTER III

#### RUNAROUND MURDER

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HE was dead from a bullet hole in his forehead. He had bled a lot from another hole in his chest. There was a gun in his right hand—a Mauser equipped with a silencer. Kneeling beside him, Steele gently loosened his fingers and the gun clattered to the floor. Steele inspected it with an expert eye. There was only one bullet left. The gun was still warm to the touch. Steele looked down at Tighe with a chill blue stare. He frowned, shook his head.

Where did Tighe fit in? Why had he come to Dale's cabin with a silenced gun? And where was Dale?

Under Tighe's body lay a leather wallet. Apparently it had fallen from his pocket when he had hit the floor. Steele picked it up. There was a number of bills in the money fold—currency of many nations; dollars, pounds, francs, marks. The detective laid them aside. Suddenly he snatched them up again, staring at the uppermost bill—a hundred franc note. At the very edge had been written in ink figures and words. It might be nothing more than the markings sometimes made by people on paper money to see if the same bill would circuitously reach them again. But Steele's mind was working fast. These were English words written on a French bill. He read them aloud:

"6 up 4 across 2 down."

That might mean anything or more likely, nothing. He repeated the words and figures in his mind. They didn't make much sense. He laid the bills aside reluctantly, his eyes straying to the hundred franc note again and again as he let his fingers sort through the papers with which the rest of the wallet compartments were wadded. The papers were all of a personal nature, letters, an advertisement, a few bills from a tailor. He thrust them all aside, seized on two clippings, folded and pinned together.

The date on the first one was more than a year back. The paper was yellow, the printing blurred by rubbing. Steele removed the pin and unfolded the strip.

#### CUSTOMS INSPECTORS NAIL TWO FOR DOPE SMUGGLING

"In a dramatic raid aboard the S. S. Atalantus, customs officials yesterday arrested two men, Tim Healy and Sam Cable . . ."

Steele skipped down the paragraphs hurriedly.

"The inspectors acted on an anonymous tip and caught Cable and Healy redhanded. The two men were in the act of packing their luggage when they were apprehended. Officials were disappointed, however, in the smallness of the haul. Only a dozen ounces of heroin were found on both men. . ."

"Healy and Cable were taken completely by surprise. This was their first venture in smuggling, they told inspectors. It is believed they will plead guilty

and petition the court for clemency. Although they have a long record of arrests, neither of the two was ever convicted of a felony. The smallness of the amount of heroin which they were attempting to smuggle in may also weigh in their favor. They will be arraigned Wednesday before Circuit Judge . . ."

Steele finished reading, then thoughtfully laid the clipping aside. When he took up the second, his eyes suddenly widened and his lips spread in an explosive oath. Hastily he scanned the column. It was a "stick" of about ten lines.

#### PAROLE BOARD RELEASES HEALY, CABLE

"The federal Parole Board meeting in Atlanta yesterday granted freedom to Timothy Healy and Samuel Cable, cutting short their three-year term of imprisonment after only one year and a month had been served. The board in issuing the pardon stated that the exemplary conduct of the prisoners plus the fact that they were first offenders made their release almost mandatory . . ."

Steele laid the clippings down, looked at the immobile face of Tighe almost as if he wished the junior officer would come to life and speak to him. He took the clippings up again and thrust them into his pocket. His eyes lit on the hundred franc note. Musingly, his lips repeated what was written there.

"6 up 4 across 2 down."

Now what could that mean? The fact that Tighe carried the two clippings in his vallet signified clearly that he had more than a passing interest in the affairs of Messrs. Healy and Cable. This business of 6 up 4 across . . .

"I'll be a ring-tailed baboon!"

Steele was suddenly grinning, kneeling by the door on all fours. What had excited his interest was a tiny mound of plaster on the floor, no more than five or six chips. He looked up, his eyes now focussed on the square tiles which formed the bathroom walls, his face tense with interest. Seeing the chips of plaster had drawn his attention to the tiles. He was counting them from the floor up. ". . . four-five-six up, . . . two, three, four . . . um . . . across . . . well, here goes . . . one, two down! Of course! It couldn't mean anything less. Cable and Healy occupied this cab-

in. Customs found only a dozen ounces of H on them. Cable and Healy were packing when they broke in. Which could mean that if anything else were concealed in the cabin, they wouldn't have had the time to dig it up. They just let it lay. And that's it—6 up 4 across 2 down . . . not a code, but directions, like the combination of a safe."

The tile which Steele touched had had its plaster edging chipped away. He got his fingernail against it and pried it out.

It disclosed a square of dark space. Steele peered into it. He thrust in his hand. It was empty.

His mouth became hard, the corners of his lips turning down. He replaced the tile, stood up, scowling. He left the bathroom, went into the cabin and stood beside a table near the bed where there was a telephone. After a moment's thought he lifted the receiver, was about to ask for Jamieson when he hesitated, murmured, "Never mind," to the operator and hooked the instrument. He glanced into the bathroom briefly, then went to the door. His idea was to speak to Jamieson face to face. He didn't want to give his information over the telephone lest the operator listen in and broadcast it.

For the time being at least he wanted the murder of Tighe kept quiet.

HE went out, closed, locked the door. His breath was pumping faster and his face wore an impatient, excited look—the look of a man-hunter. He strode swiftly down the corridor, yanked open the heavy storm door and stepped out on deck. Fog had replaced the rain. Thick streamers of it cushioned the overhead deck lights, smothering their rays at ten feet.

There was the sounds of footsteps somewhere along the deck but the fog hid his vision. From the bridge sounded the muted mournful fog-horn. Steele could not see over the rail; he could only sense the near presence of the water. Suddenly, he cut short his long strides, stood still. The sounds of footsteps had subtly altered to become sound drumming swiftly on the deck—sounds of someone running. Then there were other steps pounding in a fast run as though in pursuit.

The running ceased and there came the noise of a scuffle. Steele's eyes widened; he strained forward to see

through the curtain of the fog. Then his hand darted to his coat pocket, snaked out his Police Special.

A sound had reached his ears, coming from behind a lifeboat no more than twenty-five feet from him. It was a scream of human terror, high pitched and ghastly; it slashed like a knife-thrust through the ghost-like darkness.

For the space of a pulse beat Steele stood poised. Then he ran blindly towards the sound, struck against the lifeboat and bounced off it to collide with the dark, hulking figure of a man. He had a momentary glimpse of two figures struggling at the rail before he went down. The collision had brought the other man down on top of him. But before Steele could grab hold, the man bounded up like a rubber ball, yelled something unintelligible and slid into the fog.

The detective scrambled to his feet, swearing viciously through his teeth. He saw the two figures at the rail separate suddenly. One remained put but the other dissolved out of sight. A report sounded, no louder than the pop of an air-rifle, and Steele heard a bullet whistle by his head. He dropped back on the deck, the gun in his hand outstretched. Another pop sounded but was less distinct. Steele sent a shot barking at the spot where he judged the sound to come from. He heard the *ping!* of lead against steel plate and that was all.

The figure at the rail cried suddenly! "The door—the corridor door. Quick!"

Steele whirled about. Light, diffused and gray, appeared some thirty feet away from him. His gun twitched again and the light jerked, grew narrower. As it all but disappeared, Steele pawed erect and plowed through the fog toward it. He barked his shin against a deck chair; he whipped out a curse, ran around it and came to the door. He jerked it open. The corridor stretched before him—deserted. He listened. There was no sound. There was a slash of scarred varnish across the door's inner surface where his bullet had hit. He crouched, whirled about with the door still open, its light pouring down on him. A figure was coming out of the fog toward him. He recognized it at ten feet away. A crazy, crooked grin creased his face.

"Hello, Miss Mill," he said.

A gasp came from her lips. She was

white to the lips, choking back sobs. She looked at him, apparently did not recognize him. Words tumbled from her lips. "You . . . you saved my life. Those men wanted to throw me . . . overboard!"

Shouts sounded from the corridor. Steele's shots had attracted attention. He snapped the door shut, caught the girl's arm. "Come on! We'll get away from here before anyone comes to ask fool questions."

Only the propelling might of his arm forced her to move. She was still half-hysterical, unable to speak coherently. Steele made her run with him. They ducked around a ladder, safe from prying eyes.

"Wh-where . . . who are you?" she blurted.

"Don't you remember me? I'm Steele. We met in Captain Farrar's room."

A shudder shook her frame. He felt her trembling. "You!" she whispered. "Oh, you don't know what you've done for me. You saved my life!"

He peered into her face. "They wanted to pitch you overboard, huh? Why?"

"I don't know."

"Who were those men?"

He felt her withdrawing, pulling away from him as if she meant to take flight. His hand fell on her wrist, tightened.

"Who were they?"

"I—I don't know."

"Listen. Before we go any further you've got to pull yourself together and tell me everything. It's too late to hide things now. I'm your friend; I can help you. I ask you again: who were those men?"

"Oh, don't you believe me? I wish I knew but I don't. I don't, I tell you!"

"Well, how did it all start? Where did they grab you?"

"I—I was going to visit Cabin 313 . . ."

"Howard Dale's room!"

She nodded slowly. "Yes. Howard Dale's room. I knocked on the door. There was no answer, so I tried the knob. The door was not locked and I went in. The lights were on but before I could take a step into the room, I was grabbed from behind, a hand was clapped over my mouth and another placed over my eyes. I could hear voices, however. A man said, 'What on earth can we do with her?' Another voice answered,

'Take her to the unoccupied cabin, you fool.' Then I felt a gun pressed against my ribs and the second voice said, 'This is a silenced gun. Unless you do exactly as we say, you will be shot. Walk slowly along the corridor and do no turn your head.'"

"Then you didn't see what the men looked like!" Steele's voice was grim.

"No. They marched me out of 313 and down the corridor to the other side of the ship. We met no one. Then they stopped me before a door. I had enough presence of mind to notice the number. It was 732. A hand reached around me with a key to open the door. I knew that as soon as they pushed me inside, they'd shoot. I had to summon all my courage. I knocked the hand aside, butted the man behind me with my head and ran."

Steele looked at her with new admiration. "Gee, that took nerve! Did they shoot after you?"

"No. I twisted around a turn in the corridor and made for the deck. They chased after me. The fog was thick. I thought I could get away but they caught up with me. Even then they didn't shoot. One of them said, 'This time she gets the business. Over she goes to feed the fishes.' Then I screamed."

Steele nodded somberly. "When you were in 313, you didn't see Dale, did you?"

"N-no."

"You didn't get a glimpse into the bathroom?"

"Oh, no." Then she tensed, whispered, "What was there?"

"That will come later," he told her quietly. "Let's go!"

She clung to his arm. "Where?"

"To cabin 732."

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## CHAPTER IV

### THE EBONY CASE

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She padded fearfully alongside him. Whenever he glanced down at her face, he saw it was white, set and tense. But she asked no more questions. She hurried as does one who knows that dire events await. Passing the saloon, dark at this hour save for a single wall light, Steele told her to wait. The ship phone booth was to the side of the light. Steele entered it and asked to be connected with Jamieson. After

a wait of some minutes, he was informed that the chief officer was on the bridge. A few seconds later, his voice boomed through the receiver.

Steele spoke rapidly. "Jamieson, here's something for you. Down in Cabin 313 is a dead man . . . Junior Officer Tighe . . ." He waited while Jamieson let off expletives. "I was no less shocked than you are. Sure! Better go down there and take charge. Here's something else. A couple of men tried to murder Madelon Mill." Swiftly, he recounted what had happened. "I'm going with her now to have a look at 732. I'll join you in 313. Step on it."

He hung up, rejoined the girl. The throbbing of the ship's gigantic motors was the only sound in the narrow corridors. The girl walked ahead of him. Steele kept a wary eye alert for a sign of trouble. They moved quickly to the port side, to the 700-line of cabins.

"This is it," the girl said at last in a whisper.

They had stopped before Cabin 732.

Steele slipped his gun out. With his left hand he tried the door; it was locked. He got out the master key the purser had given him, fitted it into the lock, then gripped the knob and turned it slowly to the right. Presently the door gave inward. He opened it wide, so that the light from the corridor, seeping into the room, revealed a piece of dark tan carpet, an end table, a chair. He groped, found a button on the wall inside the door frame. He clicked it and the room lit up.

The girl pushed by on his right, was the first to enter the room. He saw her stop short, put a hand to her cheek, nails digging into the flesh, sway as if about to faint. She uttered not a sound. He stepped into the room.

Howard Dale lay on the bed, fully clothed. A bloody pocket-knife lay on his chest. There was more blood soaked into the bed-cover. It was not a pleasant sight.

Dale's arms lay outstretched, hands held palms upward. Veins in both wrists had been slashed wide open. His blood had gushed and poured from there. But grisliest of all—his smoked glasses covered his eyes like a mask.

Madelon Mill began to shake violently. Horror made strange shadows in her enormous eyes. With a choking cry she ran across the room, dropped to her

knees beside the bed and locked the snowy-white head of the dead man in her arms. Steele followed her, strangely moved by the enormity of her grief. Sobs shook her. He touched her shoulder.

"Then you do know Howard Dale pretty well," he said somberly. "I thought so. What is he to you?"

"My father!"

Steele's eyes grew round. "Gosh, that's tough." He leaned over, removed the colored glasses. "The first time I saw him he looked familiar. But I still can't place him. Howard Dale isn't his real name, is it?"

"No." She lifted her eyes defiantly to his. "He's Philip Warren and my real name is Madelon Warren!"

"Of course!" Steele said softly. "Judge Philip Warren—the man who was missing five years, who disappeared after the Teasdale bankruptcy racket investigation. No wonder I thought I knew him. But he changed so much, looks so much older!"

"Those five years in exile made an old man of him!"

"Put his head down!" Steele said gently. "Now get up. That's fine. Now tell me. Why did your father commit suicide?"

"Oh, he didn't! He wasn't the kind. To go through all the misery he went through in those five years and then at the very end when he was close to his goal, close to his dream of clearing his name—to commit suicide, end the struggle! No, he was murdered!"

Steele nodded. "You sound pretty sure. Well, he could've been. Why was he traveling under a false name? Why didn't you let the world know you were his daughter?"

She shrugged hopelessly. "That was his idea. He was afraid, you see. Oh, you don't understand anything. You don't know why Captain Farrar was murdered or why this happened."

"Suppose you tell me."

**M**ADELON WARREN was white-faced, her eyes fixed on the corpse. "He knew he would come home a dead man. He always said his enemies were too powerful." She sighed brokenly, moistened her lips. "It goes back five years ago to Senator Teasdale's investigation of bankruptcies. You remember it? Dad was a judge then. Most of the bankruptcy cases went through his

hands. He appointed receivers, things like that. He refused to play with the men who made a racket of fleecing bankrupt firms under the protection of receiverships. He made many enemies. His hands were clean. He had never done an underhanded trick in his life. But his clerk, a man named Richard Hardin, falsified the records to incriminate Dad. It was a frame-up but Dad had no way of proving it. Just one of those things, you know.

"He wanted to stand trial but I wouldn't let him. He was doomed if he stayed. His friends urged him to run away, too. Against his better judgment, he did it. He went to Europe. You remember the sensation his disappearance caused. People took his disappearance for guilt. That nearly killed him. For five years we wandered about Europe, from capital to capital, homeless and exiled, using assumed names.

"Then two months ago came a break—one of those miraculous happenings. It happened in Paris. We were low in funds. I had taken a job as a nurse in the American Hospital. One of my patients was a man dying of a severe illness. He was—yes, you guessed it—Richard Hardin. He recognized me. He knew he had but a day or two to live. He told me to bring Dad to see him. Before our eyes he wrote out a document—a confession, clearing Dad and naming the guilty parties."

"And you were traveling home with the confession. Why did you hide behind aliases?"

"The men named by Hardin are powerful. Dad feared they might try to get at us, that they might have heard of Hardin's dying statement. We chose this boat because Captain Farrar was an old friend of Dad's. We thought it would be safer. He knew we had the confession, he did all he could to help us. He gave me a key to his cabin. Dad had one, too. We could go there, you see, if any danger threatened. There was trouble from the first day. We lived in dread. The boat was only a few hours out when Dad, going to his cabin, discovered an intruder. The man struggled with him in the dark and escaped. We were certain then that our secret was known. Captain Farrar gave Dad a gun to defend himself if need be." She looked down at the dead form of her father, bit her lip. "Oh . . . God! He

knew he would never live to see home again, that he would be carried across his own threshold a corpse!"

Steele's chin was sunk to his chest. "Where's the confession?"

"I hid it in a place no one would think of looking.

"I didn't dare let Dad carry it on his person and we didn't even trust it in Captain Farrar's safe."

Into Steele's mind leaped a couple of lines gleaned from the torn page of Captain Farrar's log-book: ". . . confession is not what . . . are after even if Dale believes so."

But he didn't mention them to the girl. He said, "Have you got it on you?"

She shook her head. "It's hidden in a secret compartment in an ebony cigarette case of mine. It's in my room."

His hand slipped into his pocket. "No," he said, "I have it right here. You see, I cased your room and I took this," he drew out the case, "to check your prints. It was careless of you to leave it just lying around."

"That was the best method of concealment. It looked so innocent right out in the open. If I'd hidden it anywhere, anyone finding it would know it was of value. But carelessly placed on the dresser, it would escape notice."

He handed it to her. She opened it and touched an inner tiny screw-head. An inner compartment sprang open. Folded within it was a sheet of paper. Steele took it, unfolded it and read:

"I, Richard Hardin, who am about to die wish to right a grievous wrong, may God forgive my crimes. Philip Warren, unjustly accused of criminal malfeasance, is entirely innocent of the charges against him. . . ."

There followed facts, dates, names. Steele read the document through to the end. One name, underscored as ring-leader, was Jerry Graham, political boss of the city. Steele's lips pursed in a whistle. This stuff was dynamite, all right!

He folded the paper, slipped it into his breast pocket. "I'll keep this, Miss Warren. Even with your father dead, we can still clear his name."

She looked at him vacant-eyed. Then suddenly fear grew large in her eyes, inflaming and widening them.

That flashed a signal to Steele. He pivoted about. The door was open. Two guns were in the opening, coming for-

ward almost on the same level. Both were equipped with silencers. One was a shiny Colt .45, one small—a .32. Two men stood behind them. They were both mustached, one a light blonde, one dark-haired.

"Okay, sport," the dark-haired one said. "The ceiling is over your head. See if you can touch it."

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## CHAPTER V

### HOT ICE

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THEY moved slowly into the room, almost abreast. Steele did not stir, did not raise his arms. His Police Special was in his hand, resting against his thigh, muzzle pointed downward.

The dark-haired one spoke again. "Hoist 'em, folks. Make it pretty now. You-with-the-gun, shed it!"

Steele said casually, "Which one of you gentlemen is Albert S. French of Cabin 652?"

There was a silence. Then the blonde man said between his teeth. "You get around, hot shot." In a stir voice that barely involved use of his lips, he muttered to his companion, "I told you we'd find 'em here. The skirt's wise to the whole lay. We only got one thing to do with 'em now. Rub 'em out so they won't talk."

The guns drew back, grew rigid. "If you think the girl here is the only one in the know, you're crazy," Steele said in a tight drawl. "You can kill us but that won't save you. Jamieson knows all about the pair of you and Tighe. He's looking for you now, not as Albert S. French and some other phoney moniker, but as Tim Healy and Sam Cable."

Something in his voice steadied the two men. They looked at him. "So you've been peeking behind our mustaches," the dark man said. "Sam, cover the floosie. I'll take smarty. Hello, Mr. Smarty. Stand still while I unrod you."

"Take him, Tim," said the blonde-haired Sam. "Take him good. I'll pour lead into beautiful. You're gonna like this, Beautiful."

Both men started to move simultaneously. A wide crazy grin covered Steele's face. Out of the corner of his eye he saw Madelon Warren stiffen, fists clenched. Then suddenly her fist shot out, as Sam was a foot away from her, straight for his jaw. It landed, barely

jarring him. But Sam was rattled. He was rattled because a girl had braved his gun and used her fists. Had a man done the same thing, he would have shot him to ribbons.

His gun popped and a bullet chipped the ceiling. Madelon fell on him, kicking.

Steele dropped to one knee and fired at Tim Healy. There was a roar from his gun but only a faint, apologetic snort from Healy's weapon. A slug burned Steele's ribs. He went back a yard, nearly flat on his back. He threw himself to his right, fast. A bullet sailed by him.

A few feet across from him Sam Cable had fought clear of Madelon. He was measuring her now for a kill-shot.

Steele jumped across the intervening space like a frog, took hold of the man's ankle and yanked hard.

Reflex action fired the gun in the killer's hand. He yelled. Steele jerked his gun and shot Cable in the calf just below the knee. He went down exactly as if an ax had sheared off his leg. Madelon fell on him, got his gun.

Bullets from Tim Healy's silenced weapon were searching for Steele. He felt them whizzing by his head. Cable yelled in a stricken voice, "They got me, Tim! They got me!"

Steele dived behind a chair fired around it at Healy, saw Healy jerk spasmodically, then spin half-way around and make headlong for the door. Steele's gun boomed again but somehow Healy got the door open and was through it. Steele bounded to the doorway. Healy was speeding down the corridor.

"Stop!" yelled Steele. "Stop!"

Healy did not stop. His was the speed of desperation and panic. Steele stopped. He knelt down on one knee, raised his left arm, laid his gun over the crook of his elbow, target-practice fashion, aimed. Twice the dark muzzle spewed forth jets of flame and hammers of sound. The echoes banged violently in the narrow passageway. Healy halted on one foot, pivoted slowly and cautiously, looked back at the detective as though he wanted something explained to him. The torrid gleam in his eyes was masked suddenly, filmed. He shivered like a mast in a gale of wind, folded to the floor without bending his knees.

From the other end of the corridor a group of men appeared suddenly headed by Chief Officer Jamieson. Steele was already lumbering toward Healy. He

knelt beside him as Jamieson bore down, pale, his uniform flapping about him.

"The shooting, Steele, the shooting!"

"All over but the shouting," Steele said. His mouth was tight, savage. He pawed through the dead man's clothing. From an inside pocket he drew out a small chamois bag with a corded throat. He loosened the cord, poured the contents into his open palm. Liquid fire blazed out of the bag, nestled in his palm. A dozen huge emeralds, perfectly faceted, deep translucent green, shimmering with an inner glow. He handed them to Jamieson who was making strangling noises of astonishment in his throat. "You take charge of these."

Jamieson gulped, "My sacred aunt! What on earth—Who is this man?"

"Tim Healy," Steele said. "I'm sorry I had to kill him, but we got one live one who'll talk—his pal, Sam Cable. Madelon's in there covering him with his own gun. But he isn't going far—no with the lead in his pants."

Gray dawn was outside his porthole window when Steele was finally able to relax in the comfort of his own bed. Healy's slug had only nicked his ribs. The ship's doctor had treated and bandaged the wound. Jamieson, a briar between his teeth, said, "I can't believe Tighe was mixed up in it."

STEELE shrugged. "Crime finds strange bed-fellows. The torn page out of Farrar's log-book tells the story, though. Tighe murdered Captain Farrar, shot him while he was on duty on the bridge. He just slipped away from Martin for a second, barged into Farrar's cabin and killed him with that silenced Mauser. The doctor dug a Mauser bullet out of Farrar's body. It fits Tighe's gun. Tighe probably had had a glimpse of the log-book. Farrar had found out his secret. Therefore Farrar had to be killed and that page torn out. Luckily, he did not destroy it. Healy and Cable took it and we found it on Cable."

His eyes roved over the torn sheet of log paper lying on a taboret beside his bed. In Farrar's bold, up-and-down script was written:

"Tighe is allied with Healy and Cable. I followed him to their room this morning. The two men are traveling under the names of Albert S. French and Louis Crosby. Luckily, Detective Steele of the New York force is aboard. I will get him

to arrest them the instant the boat docks. Everything centers around Cabin 313. Dale is in danger. They will not stop even at murder. He told me today that his room was rifled again. He thinks they want his confession. His daughter believes so, too. I gave them keys to my cabin so that they could come up at any time and feel safe.

"But the confession is not what Tighe, Healy and Cable are after. It is something else, probably something left behind by Healy and Cable when they were arrested some time ago. They have come back to get it. These men must be stopped before they wantonly destroy life."

"Farrar was about to crack down, you see," said Steele, "when Tighe cut him down. Oh, Cable talked plenty when I showed him the jewels and this page. The heroin that was found on him and Healy when Customs took them in custody was only the tiniest part of their loot. The big dough was in the ice. They were wise monkeys. They had buried it behind a tile in the bathroom. Tighe was in on the smuggling. He had a share in the ice. The anonymous tip to Customs came from him. He expected to get the whole boodle for himself. But he didn't know where the stuff was hidden, and so he was stopped cold. When his partners got out of Atlanta, they made like birds for this boat. The first thing Tighe did was lift the secret of the hiding place from them. He still thought he could pull a fast one. The directions were written on that hundred franc note I showed you. Finding it missing, Healy and Cable were nearly frantic. They didn't suspect Tighe, had no reason to. But they started watching Judge Warren, only they knew him as Howard Dale. Pretty soon they caught on that the girl calling herself Madelon Mill was closely connected with him. In addition, she had a room right next to Cable—they thought in order to spy on them.

"And there you have it. Judge Warren thought enemies wanted to get his confession document from him and Healy and Cable thought smoothies were trying to horn in on their hoard of pretties. And finally one faction succeeded in frightening the other.

"Tighe in the middle touched off the fireworks. First he murdered Farrar. Then he attempted to get at the hidden cache. At the same moment, Healy and

Cable decided to have a fling at getting their loot back. They all met in three-one-three. Guns went off and Tighe was killed. A few seconds later Judge Warren came to his room. He was surprised to find his door unlocked, lights on. The bathroom door was closed. Healy and Cable, busy getting their paws on the ice, didn't hear him enter. Warren opened the door. He saw Tighe dead, had a good solid look at Healy and Cable. That settled it as far as that pair were concerned. They cracked him over the bean and held a council of war. Healy cooked up a clever plan. Let Tighe lie where he was. They'd take Warren to an unoccupied cabin and kill him in such a way as to make it appear a suicide. Get it? Warren murdered Tighe, then wandered off to take his own life. At least, that was the way it would look.

"That part was okay. But after they got through with Warren in Cabin 732, Healy got the notion that he'd left his hat behind in the bathroom of 313. Well, they had to go back and check up on something as important as that. When they were back in there, Madelon popped up out of nowhere and they had to make a pass at another murder to keep themselves clear." Steele hugged a smile. "The third try was too much. Their strong-arm act didn't take."

"Um," grunted Jamieson. "By the by, your prisoner was asking after you. It seems he heard the shooting—everybody on the boat did—and he knew you were mixed up in it. Showed a lot of solicitude for your welfare, says he'd hate to miss your daily visit."

Steele clapped a hand to his forehead. "Big Dee Doremus! I'd forgotten all about him!"

Jamieson laughed. "Don't worry about that. You did a remarkable job, Steele, I'll see that your inspector and all the papers hear about it." The laugh died on his lips, became a heartfelt sigh. "Poor Farrar . . . and poor old Judge Warren. His daughter is all broken up over his death but at least she'll have the satisfaction of clearing up his name. Then she can proudly call herself Warren again."

"Not for long—I hope."

"Eh? What do you mean?"

"Well, that girl doesn't know it yet but I'm thinking she's gonna be Mrs. Benjamin Francis Steele one of these bright **June** days!"

# THE FIERY FINGER POINTS

by  
**NAT SCHACHNER**

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*From somewhere in that college auditorium a Fiery Finger pointed at Professor Perozzi . . . the note had sworn the professor would die during his first lecture . . .*

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CAPTAIN STEVE LAMONT did not in the slightest resemble the popular conception of his tribe. He was lean and gray and scholarly looking. His clothes were baggy and his manner absent. In short, he fitted most unobtrusively into his present environment.

Not so his companion, Sergeant Nick Bodan. The hatless young men who swarmed the campus spotted him at once for what he was. He fairly shrieked his calling. *Cop!* yelled his burly form, the black derby perched arrogantly on glossy black, pomaded hair, the fat, strong-reeking cigar pendulous from thick lips, the bold self-assurance of his olive-dark features.

They swung quick-strided past the lions who guarded the portals of the university, up the long stone steps to the fountain, shouldered their way through the young thirsters after knowledge.

Lamont said wistfully: "It's a long time since I've been to college, Bodan."

"Ain't got nothing on me, Cap..." Bodan grunted. "In the old country they didn't bother much with schooling. An' I was too old when I got here."

Lamont shook his head thoughtfully. "Well, you managed to get along all right. Detective-Sergeant in one year's time is pretty good."

"Sure," said Bodan. "Runnin' the Alien Squad's duck soup fer me. I know them wild-eyed reds like nobody's business. Most of 'em come from my own country, like this Perozzi for instance. I met a lot of 'em when I went back coupla years ago. That's why the Commish put me on this here case with you, I s'ppose."

"I suppose so," Lamont agreed.

They left the dormitories behind them, and thumped up the steps of Merriweather Hall. A man lounged nonchalantly on the top step, eyeing the students as they poured in. His right hand flicked toward a salute, reminded itself and dropped quickly down again.

"Hello, Price," Lamont greeted him. "Anything suspicious?"

"Nary a thing, Cap," the detective growled disgustedly. "All these college guys look alike."

"Well, keep your eyes open for a student who looks the part too thoroughly. That'll be your man."

They went down the marble hall, leaving a very bewildered detective staring after his superiors.

"Good man, Price," chuckled Lamont, "but no sense of humor."

"Yeah!" Bodan muttered a bit uncertainly.

Room 105 was a lecture hall. A thin stream of young men and young women were entering its single open door. But there seemed something wrong. A husky, efficient-looking individual half blocked the way. He compelled the students to file past him, one by one. On each he made a similar demand. From each he received the same startled, half-angry look, and a consequent hurried searching of inner coat pockets and pocketbooks. He examined the fished-out pasteboards carefully, scrutinized uneasy applicants with cold piercing eye, and permitted them to enter with manifest reluctance.

One rumpled young man was thoroughly peeved.

"This is an outrage," he said loudly. "I'm telling you for the tenth time I left my card in the dorm. I'm registered for this course and I'm going in. I don't know who the hell you are, but everybody knows *me* around here."

The husky gent shoved him back. "Nix," he said wearily. "For the hundredth time I'm telling you yuh can't come in. No ticket, no lecture, see!"

Lamont smiled quietly. Blake could be depended on to obey instructions to the last detail. He stepped forward. "It's okay, Blake," he said. "Let the forgetful young man in."

Blake said reluctantly: "You're the doctor, Cap."

The lad glared at him and hurried

into the room. The stream thinned, dried up. The great University bell rang the hour.

"Everything according to schedule, Blake?" Lamont asked.

"Everything, sir. That is, aside from this fresh guy. Not a soul who ain't been accounted for."

"Swell," Lamont approved. "Bodan and I are going in. You stay out here during the lecture. No one's to crash the gate, not the President himself. Do you understand?"

Blake saluted. "Right, sir."

THE two detectives heard the door slam behind them. Lamont's gray eyes covered the room without seeming to do so. It was a rather small lecture hall, seating not more than a hundred or so, with the curved wooden seats rising in tiers like a theater balcony.

The hall was crowded. The course of lectures had attracted a heavy registration. In the first place the subject was timely: *Revolutionary Forces in Modern Europe*; in the second and more important place, the professor announced as the lecturer was Anton Perozzi.

Perozzi had not yet entered. There was a low buzz of conversation and a very definite tenseness in the atmosphere. Fresh young faces, most of them, young men and young women, with notebooks open on the seat arms, and pencils poised. The searching interrogation at the door, the presence of certain obviously non-university strangers was curious, to say the least.

Lamont picked out the four plain-clothes men lolling nonchalantly in scattered parts of the room; nodded imperceptibly. Then his eye flicked to the third row on the left. A woman sat in the end seat, a woman whose personality blazed and coruscated. Her jet black hair was combed smoothly behind two small proud ears. Her face was a perfect oval and her mouth a ripe red gash of color. The modish gown she wore revealed rather daringly the perfection of her form. She was listening with an enigmatic smile to the low earnest whisperings of a darkly handsome man in the seat next to her.

Bodan said with brittle intonation: "What the hell, Cap! They shouldn't be here. The good looker's Madame Anna, Perozzi's wife, and the bird with

her's Mike Starogin. There's a price on his head too in the old country."

Lamont said: "Sure, I read the papers! They got a right to be here." His eyes roamed to the farther end of the hall. "Ah! There's Professor Benedict, the man who called us in. Come on, Bodan, I want to talk to him."

Bodan said: "Okay, Cap!" turned and caught his superior's arm with a hard grip.

"Jeez, Cap!" His voice was low but excited. His black eyes burned with a sudden discovery. "I know him. An' that little guy with him is—"

Lamont nodded. "Sure, I know! Georges Kolya, Professor of Languages of Southeastern Europe, a compatriot of Perozzi's."

"But, Cap," Bodan persisted, "you don't understand—"

"Benedict's signalling to us," said Lamont. "Perozzi'll be coming in soon, and we've got to get set."

The gray haired, distinguished looking head of the University's Department of Public Affairs was in fact trying to attract their attention. Bodan shrugged burly shoulders and followed his mild-mannered superior.

Benedict shook their hands warmly. Underneath his aristocratic presence Lamont sensed tremendous excitement, fear.

"I'm so glad to see you, Captain Lamont," he said. "It would be a terrible thing if any—if anything should happen to Professor Perozzi. The University would never get over it."

Lamont's voice held a faint edge. "He'd never get over it either." Out of the corner of his eye he had noted the quick paling of Kolya at the sight of Bodan, and wondered mildly. "But I'm inclined to think the scare's overrated. Hundreds of threatening notes like that are brought to Headquarters, and hardly anything ever happens to the threatened party."

"But this ees different, M'sieu Gendarme," Kolya interrupted. He was small and dark like all Transylvanians. What attracted attention immediately to him was the concentrated passion in his voice, the snapping fanaticism of his eyes. "Perozzi ees—what you call heem—an outlaw in my country. He try to make revolution against Hees Excellenz, the Leader. There was much trouble

and he run to thees country, weeth hees wife and that fellow conspirator of hees—Michael Starogin. The Leader has people here—they don't like thees traitor—when they say sometheeng, they mean it."

Benedict said agitatedly. "If I had known of this, I would never have invited Professor Perozzi to lecture at our University. I met him when I was Exchange Professor, and was impressed with the man. But I never dreamt—the authorities would never forgive me if . . . To think that the writer of that note actually dared to boast that he would kill Perozzi during the very first lecture, why—why—it's outrageous!"

Lamont said, "We'll do our best to stop him, Professor Benedict. But Perozzi is late, isn't he?"

"Yes. I advised him to take his time; to give you a chance to make your dispositions."

"Thanks! Bodan, you take that empty seat behind Madame Perozzi; I'll park myself here in the fifth row."

Bodan said: "All right, Cap." But first he shifted closer. "If you ask me, that note was a stall. I know my people. They strike without fancy warnings. And they don't call themselves National Fascists, neither, like the bird who signed it. That's a tag what your newspapers put on 'em. At home they say, *The Old Patriots!* If Perozzi's gonna be bumped, it won't be here, an' it'll be by someone else who has a pet grudge and wants tuh throw off suspicion."

"It sounds reasonable," Lamont admitted mildly. "Meanwhile keep your eyes open and your gun handy. Nail the first suspicious move."

"Okay!" Bodan hesitated, whispered hoarsely: "Watch that bird Kolya!" and walked quickly away.

LAMONT took his seat, a bit puzzled. His eyebrows were arched in a faint frown. The students were getting restless at the undue delay on the part of the lecturer, and they were expressing their displeasure in the traditional fashion by stamping their feet in unison.

A door to the rear of the lecturer's podium opened suddenly. Unconsciously Lamont loosened the gun in its leather holster. There was a sudden cessation of sound, a quick straining of necks. Anton Perozzi had been headline news

for months; thousands had died in bloody revolution at his command, and now they were about to see the firebrand in the flesh.

A small spare man flitted onto the platform with quick, birdlike movements. His thin hair was neatly combed to cover evident bald spots, his little black beard was nicely barbered. Thick lenses obscured pale watery eyes, and his darkly sallow features were nondescript. Behind him, shadowed in the dark of the doorway, dimly alert, Lamont descried Keegan. Everyone was in his proper place; everything was proceeding smoothly.

An audible sigh of disappointment rose from the audience. Was this colorless individual the European portent about whom the newspapers had screamed; who had almost unscathed the Leader, last and most unscrupulous of the new breed of Dictators? But Lamont was interested only in the reactions of a certain select few. He watched them with veiled eyes, like a hooded hawk.

Madame Anna, the revolutionist's wife, leaned coolly back in her seat. She knew her husband's life was in danger, yet she seemed calm and casual enough. Lamont was not sure, but it seemed to him that those smoldering eyes held the least touch of weariness, of contempt even. Starogin, Perozzi's lieutenant, on the contrary, leaned forward. The knuckles of his left hand showed white as they gripped the seat arm. His right lay hidden in his lap. Curious emotion seethed on his handsome, swarthy face. Behind them, alert, hand hovering near holster, was Nick Bogan. He had a reputation as being fast in action.

Lamont shifted his gaze to Benedict and Kolya in front of him. He had seated himself so as to get their profiles. Benedict was laboring with suppressed excitement; he seemed a little white around the nostrils. Kolya on the other hand was smiling. It was a stealthy expectant grin, and he was licking his lips incessantly.

All this Lamont saw in one swift glance of appraisal. His fingers closed on the comforting butt of his gun as Perozzi bent over the sheaf of notes on the stand and surveyed his audience.

There was no question about it, Lamont decided—the man was nervous. And he had a right to be. It took con-

siderable bravery to stand up there, waiting, waiting for the promised shot. He swung his head from side to side with little jerks, steadied imperceptibly on his wife and co-outlaw, darted over to Kolya. He jerked his head front then, paler than before, and commenced his lecture.

At first his voice trembled a bit, and he seemed to halt and search for words. Then, as the minutes fled, and nothing happened, he took a new grip on himself, and his thoughts flowed out on sonorous wings in English that was impeccably precise.

He paced restlessly back and forth on the circumscribed area of the platform, playing on his auditors with the practiced ease of a master orator. He sketched with rapid fluency the forces that underlay European politics, the discontent of the masses. He held his audience in a sure grip; he led them on step by step to his point of view.

Even Lamont was fascinated, following his close-knit argument. Yet never for an instant did he relax his vigilance, and as he listened, his never-resting glance enveloped every nook and cranny of the hall, on guard for the slightest suspicious move.

Half the hour was up, and nothing untoward had taken place. Lamont relaxed his tense body just the least bit. Evidently the assassin, if the note had not been a hoax, had been unable to penetrate the cordon he had flung around the building.

Then something dropped with a loud clatter at the back of the hall. Lamont flung himself around in one flashing movement, gun already half out of the holster.

A book had fallen in the very last tier, and a girl was bending for it. Her head came up, scarlet and flushed at the noise she had made, at the attention she had attracted.

Lamont exhaled slightly at his own taut nerves and was turning front again in his seat when he heard the little *plop*. Like a cork making suction sound out of a bottle of vintage wine.

Perozzi's resonant voice broke off on a particularly impassioned period. For the slightest of pauses there was silence. Then Lamont's head was front, his eyes full on the lone little nondescript figure on the platform.

THE man was swaying, his hand clutching at his heart. Dark red surged over the light gray of his vest. There was a gasping sound, a hoarse strangled cry, and he sprawled headlong, crashing against the stand that held his notes, sending it thudding to the floor, and his papers fluttering like wounded white birds across the well before the first tier of seats.

Anton Perozzi lay limp, a huddled bag of clothes, face downward, arms angularly extended.

It had all happened so suddenly, so quickly, that it took time for full awareness to come to the student audience. But Lamont was already on his feet, gun in hand, darting sword-like glances at the open-mouthed people. He did not even look twice at the motionless revolutionist.

Perozzi was dead, murdered, and the assassin was somewhere in the audience. It was with the living that his task was now.

A girl to his right shrank from the swing of his gun, opened her mouth, and screamed shrilly. That unloosed the frozen horror.

Shouts, screams, exclamations, the crashing thud of hinged seats as panic grew. High above all other sounds came the piercing shriek of Anna Perozzi. She clutched at her beautiful bosom with both clenched fists, half rose from her chair, and sank back, fainting, into the arms of her companion, Michael Starogin. The man's face was livid as his head pressed close to her pale, motionless features. He whispered rapidly, urgently.

A bit too dramatic, Lamont decided, as the swift panorama of emotions unfolded to his all-embracing gaze. Bodan had jerked to his feet, and was tugging at his gun. His heavy face was black with rage; his fuming eyes were riveted on the couple in front of him.

"Fine!" thought Lamont. That took them off his own hands. Benedict was limp in his chair, mouth wide, breathing heavily. Kolya jerked stumbling against the seat next him, fell over a boy who was trying to get up. Both went down between the seats.

Lamont swooped on the entangled pair like a hawk on a hen roost.

"Get up!" he ordered, "and keep your hands where I can see them." His

voice was not loud, yet it penetrated the rising confusion like a whiplash. The lad rolled over and came up on hands and knees. He looked dazed. Professor Kolya sprang to his feet lightly, like a cat. His hands were empty, and his snapping black eyes met the detective's stare with something of defiance. Very deliberately he stood there, brushing off the dirt from his creased trousers.

Someone made a break for the door. Panic-stricken, other students followed.

Lamont raised his voice a notch.

"No one is to move. Stay just where you are."

Dread-haunted faces turned toward the lean, spare figure, noted the calm authority in his voice, saw the carelessly held gun, and froze into immobility. A deathly hush fell where there had been pandemonium.

Keegan was already in the room, bending over the sprawled still figure. Blake had slammed in at the first scream, his bulky frame spraddled against the door. The four plainclothes men in the room were at their posts, watchful, wary.

"That's better," Lamont approved. "Professor Perozzi has been killed. We had known an attempt was going to be made on his life. That is why we are here. He was shot down in spite of us, but the murderer is in this hall. He is one of the hundred odd people here. Remember that, ladies and gentlemen. Everyone of you is a suspect now. We want your cooperation. The more you help us the quicker you'll be out of this. Keegan!"

The red-headed detective said: "Yes, sir!"

"Perozzi's dead, of course."

"Couldn't be deader, sir. Right through the heart."

"Snap to a phone. Get Headquarters. I want Dale, the fingerprint man, and Lefcourt, the Examiner, up here on the run.

"The wagon too, Keegan."

The detective saluted and went out. Blake held his position at the door.

"Bodan!"

"Right here, Cap." The sergeant's dark features were even darker than usual. "That woman, Anna . . ."

"Save it," Lamont snapped. "We've got to find the murder gun first. It had a silencer. Take the squad and search everyone in the hall. And I mean every-

one! Blake and I'll watch the doors."

Bodan growled something and went to work. He was efficient, there was no question of that. He went up the center aisle, working up to the topmost tier, with two men in each aisle keeping pace with him. Each frightened student, as he was searched, was hustled down into the well and herded into a compact group under the watchful eye of Blake.

The students took it submissively enough, but Starogin, dark eyes flashing, started an impassioned protest when it came his turn. One whispered word from the woman was sufficient, however, to cool his wrath. After that he was merely sullen, glowering. She seemed to be the calmest person present. Her tragic anguish was quite forgotten.

**B**ENEDICT was too dazed to object as quick hands moved over his form. Kolya offered himself willingly. Too willingly, Lamont thought, observing the faint triumphant smile that accompanied the patting of his slender figure.

Bodan came lumbering down the aisle, hands spread wide.

"No luck, Cap. Nary a one's got even a knife on 'im."

"Search the floor, Sergeant," Lamont snapped angrily. "Take the room apart, if necessary. That gun's in here, and we got to find it."

"Sure," Bodan flushed dark red. "I know that. But first I hadda get the people outa the way."

He spun on his heel and growled out orders. He went up the right-hand aisle, snapping up seats, finecombing through abandoned briefcases, searching every square inch of territory. His men went similarly along the other aisles.

Donegan, working up the center, suddenly dived under the seats. Over a hundred pair of eyes followed his crashing progress. It sounded startlingly loud in the sudden silence. The body of the murdered man lay unregarded, a forlorn twisted lump of flesh. Not even his wife, his fellow revolutionist, had cast a second glance its way.

Donegan came up redfaced, panting, but triumphant. In his right hand, held carefully by its blue-glinting barrel with a handkerchief, was a gun. The awkward looking mechanism that jutted above its firing chamber was a silencer.

"Got it, Cap," he crowed. "Under the first seat to the left, second row."

Lamont nodded and frowned. He did not seem at all pleased at the finding of the gun.

"Let's have it, Donegan."

He took the murder weapon, still wrapped in the handkerchief, with long delicate fingers.

"A thirty-eight Colt," he murmured, "equipped with Maxim silencer."

He lifted it and sniffed at the muzzle. "Recently fired, too. No question, Bogan, this did the trick."

"Yeah!" There was surprise on the sergeant's face. "But how did it get over there?"

"What do you mean?" Lamont was alert with interest.

"Well," Bodan admitted reluctantly. "I was gonna tell yuh when yuh cut me short. That there noise in the back got me lookin' round. When I switched back after the pop, I saw Starogin's hand going outa sight. When I jumped up, there was nothing in it."

Lamont whirled. "Waring!" he called.

A tall lanky detective with good natured eyes came on the run.

Lamont fixed him severely. "You searched Starogin?"

Waring said: "Sure, Cap."

"Thoroughly?"

"Of course," the detective answered in some surprise. "I counted every button on his underwear."

"Ah!" Lamont leaned forward and asked softly. "And Madame Perozzi?"

Waring gulped, stammered. "Why—why, Cap, she—she's the wife of the murdered guy. I didn't think..."

Lamont's calm was deadly. "You didn't, didn't you? And who asked you to do the thinking around here? I said *everyone* was to be searched; *everyone!*"

"Jeez, Cap!" Waring commenced miserably. Lamont cut him short. He seemed tired. "That's all, Waring. Herd all the students into the next lecture hall; you and Donegan and the rest of the squad. And keep your eyes on them. And make sure you use your head next time."

Waring, manifestly glad to get from under, hurried to his task.

Lamont said with a sigh: "It's all balled up now. Kolya put on a good act just after the shooting. He tripped

and fell sprawling. The gun could have slid over to where it was found."

Bodan's eyes widened. "I thought you was watching 'im, sir."

"That pat dropping of a book in the back caught me off guard, too," Lamont admitted dryly.

"Think the girl was coached to do it, sir?"

Lamont shook his head. "No. Just a lucky break for the murderer. Chances are he was waiting for some distraction like that."

The students were being hustled out of the side door that connected with another lecture room. Lamont raised his voice.

"Will Professor Benedict, Professor Kolya, Mr. Starogin and Madame Perozzi kindly remain?"

"That's a command, isn't it," Starogin snapped.

"I prefer that you consider it a request," the captain said pleasantly. Madame Anna glanced meaningly at her companion and he subsided. The others said nothing.

"As I was saying," Lamont went on conversationally to Bodan, yet keeping the sullen group under surveillance, "Kolya could have dropped the gun. But so could Benedict, while I went after Kolya when he pulled his act. And Madame Perozzi, whom of course that fool Waring was too chivalrous to search, walked directly through that second row when she came to join the rest of the crowd. Only Starogin couldn't have thrown it there. I watched him. He not only was searched immediately, but he walked wide of the well."

"Yeah," Bodan growled. "But he coulda passed it t'the Madame. They're sweet on each other."

"So I observed," Lamont said calmly. "Okay, here come the works."

**T**HERE was a sudden irruption of men in uniform and men in mufti. Dr. Lefcourt, fat and pudgy, bustled in, black bag in hand. He was the Medical Examiner of New York County.

"Hello, Lamont, you're a bird of ill omen," he greeted. "I never see you except in the company of a corpse."

Lamont grinned. "Your own fault, Doc. Why don't you drop around to the house and hoist a glass of beer with me?"

Lefcourt glared. "You know I don't drink beer. Bad for the waistline. Come on, where's the corpus delicti?"

"Under your nose."

The Examiner dropped to his knees and went to work.

"Humm! Dead about forty-five minutes, I should judge."

"Exactly thirty-nine minutes," Lamont offered.

Lefcourt glared goodhumoredly. "You know too much. You'll be shoving me out of a job soon." He probed skillfully in the bullet wound.

"The shot went upward at a slight angle, evidently piercing the left verticle. Death was practically instantaneous. It will require an autopsy to recover the bullet; it's in too deep; but off-hand I'd say a thirty-eight did the trick."

"Pretty good guess, Doc," Lamont smiled. "It was a thirty-eight."

Lefcourt rose, made washing motions with his pudgy hands. "I never guess," he said severely. "Okay, boys, take him away." The silent attendants from the Morgue lifted the body and were gone. Madame Perozzi followed its pathetic progress with unruffled, enigmatic gaze.

The Examiner stopped at the door, flung over his shoulder. "Now if you'll have Chateau Lafitte, 1921, instead of that vile brew you mentioned, Captain, I'll be up to see you Tuesday, at nine-thirty sharp."

Without waiting for an answer he was gone.

Dale, the finger print man, came over with the gun. He shook his head negatively.

"Nary a print, sir," he said. "She was wiped clean before she was dropped. But she's been fired. One shell's exploded."

"I expected that," Lamont said absently. He seemed to be thinking, and his thoughts were evidently not pleasant. He roused himself with an effort.

"All right, Dale. Take the gun to Headquarters. Tell Potter Lefcourt'll furnish him with the bullet. Then he can make his tests. Now I want only Sergeant Bodan and Blake to remain. The rest of you men clear out."

Five minutes later the four who had been held sat in a row in the front seats, looking uncomfortably like schoolchildren in for a grueling examination.

Lamont stood in front of them, mild, unimpressive, legs slightly spraddled, hands clasped behind his back. Bodan hulked at his side, a little to the rear. Blake guarded the door.

"Now gentleman, and," he turned courteously to the murdered man's wife, "Madame, I detained you for separate questioning because I think the truth lies somewhere between you four."

Benedict swelled with injured dignity. He had lost the dazed helplessness that had seemed to overcome him immediately after the shooting.

"You don't mean to insinuate, sir, that you are suspecting me of this awful crime?"

Lamont tilted his head a little. "It is my duty, Professor Benedict, to suspect everyone until he or she is shown to be innocent," he said quietly.

Benedict started to his feet. "This is an outrage, and I won't stand for it. You are making yourself ridiculous by holding us. Two Professors of a great University, and the—the dead man's wife and most intimate comrade. How about the hundred others whom you dismissed so lightly?"

Lamont said: "Sit down." He said it sat down abruptly. "I repeat," Lamont went on, "I believe the truth is between you. I checked every registered student's record as soon as the death note was turned over to me. None of them tie up in the slightest with Perozzi or with Transylvania. But for your information, Professor, they are still being held."

"Now," he continued with a faint smile, "since you feel most put out over what is after all routine questioning, suppose you tell me a few things. For instance, you met Perozzi in Transylvania, did you not?"

"Yes," Benedict answered unwillingly. "I was Exchange Professor for a year in the University, and he was on the Faculty."

"And it was because of your acquaintance with the man that he was invited to lecture here when he had to flee for his life?"

Benedict hesitated, then said without any assurance: "Yes."

"That ees a lie!" Kolya burst out. His black eyes glowed on his colleague. "Professor Benedict used every underhanded means he can to prevent the Fac-

ulty from issuing thees invitation. Not openly, you understand."

BENEDICT turned a mottled gray. "Why, you—you—dirty—"

"Keep quiet," Lamont said sharply. He leaned toward the Professor of Languages. "Why would he do that?"

"Because," Kolya said triumphantly, ignoring the glare of the man at his side, "he wass afraid—afraid for hees Chairmanship, hees prestige. He know Perozzi to be the mos' brilliant man in hees field. In six months he would have been—what do you call eet—cast in the shade."

Starogin raised his head quickly. "I can add something," he said with clear mockery. "Anton told me about it. He had been responsible for Benedict's leaving Transylvania at the end of a year. The Chair had been for two years. He said that not only was Benedict a pompous windbag, but that he had exposed him as the secret agent of an American munitions firm. Anton had proof that he had bribed high officials to get orders for war materials."

Benedict glared savagely at his accusers. "They're a pack of liars," he shouted in a thick choked voice. He turned furiously on Kolya. "And you, you, Georges Kolya, I've been a fool in trying to protect you! I'm going to tell what I know."

The Transylvanian looked at him calmly with that secret, withheld smile of his. He shrugged expressive shoulders.

"What ees there to tell?"

"This, you dirty little spy!" Benedict roared. He swung around to Lamont. "Georges Kolya is a Transylvanian."

"I know that," Lamont murmured.

"Ah, but you didn't know this," Benedict said triumphantly. "That he is the Leader's chief agent in this country. It's his job, under cover of his position at this University, to organize and direct propaganda in favor of the Leader. He hated Perozzi."

Bodan grumbled in the captain's ear. "I knew that. I was trying t'tell yuh that before the killing."

Lamont said nothing. He was watching and listening. It was his habit not to interrupt the flow of accusation and counter-accusation when exasperated tempers went by the board. From much

heat and smoke there usually issued some light.

But Kolya did not seem perturbed. "It ees true that I wass in charge of Transylvanian educational information in thees America. It iss legal—no? As for Perozzi," his fanatical eyes blazed suddenly, "I did not like the man. I am glad he ees dead. He wass a traitor, a traitor to the *Leader!* But I haf not keeled him; you cannot proof I did."

Lamont seemed to be considering this. "Proof?" he repeated softly. "Yes, that is the difficulty. Suspicion, motive, are not enough, as you have quite logically pointed out."

He turned suddenly, and his voice was softer than ever, even gentle.

"That," thought Blake, a veteran, "is when the Chief is hot on the trail."

"Madame Perozzi," Lamont said regretfully, "you will forgive me, but—you understand—it is unpleasant work at best, trying to solve a crime."

The woman looked squarely at him. Long lashes veiled her eyes. Her face was tranquil, beautiful, like a tinted cameo.

"I understand, M'sieu Detective," she said in her husky, vibrant voice.

Lamont sighed audibly. "You were very much in love with your husband?"

Behind him he could hear Bodan's hoarse whisper. "Make 'er come clean, Cap."

For a long moment Madame Anna did not speak. Starogin's features were dark with savage rage; his long powerful hands were balled into tight fists.

"But of course, M'sieu Detective," she said finally. No trace of passion, of fear, showed in her inscrutable expression.

"I am sorry," Lamont said even more gently. "But that is not so."

Starogin sprang to his feet. "What do you mean by that insult?" he demanded furiously.

"What everyone knows," interrupted Koyla. He was quivering all over at the sight of the enemy of his beloved leader. He fairly screamed out the words. "That you and that woman were lovers! *You* his best frien'! Bah! You laugh at heem behin' hees back; you make sport; you betray heem like you did His Excellenz, the Leader."

Starogin turned on him with a curse. Murder was writ large in his face. Bo-

dan took a quick step forward. Lamont did not stir.

But Anna Perozzi put black-gloved hand on his arm. Her face was suddenly tired.

"What is the use, mon cher Michael," she said. "They must know. It is common knowlédge, our friend Kolya says." She lifted her head proudly.

"Very well, M'sieu Detective, it is true."

"Anna!" Starogin cried out. "What are you saying?"

"Hush!" She turned on him eyes that were suddenly tender. "It does not matter any more. Let the whole world know. Yes, I never loved Perozzi. He was older than I. He is dead now. I cannot say I am glad, I cannot say I am sorry. I have always loved Michael."

**T**HERE was a hush on the little group. Still Lamont said nothing, waiting, it seemed, like a patient priest in the confessional, for more soul cleansing.

The thick silence was broken by Sergeant Bodan's raucous voice.

"She done it, Cap. There ain't no question about it. Perozzi musta gotten leery, and she put him outa the way. She or her sweetie sent the note, tuh throw suspicion on Kolya here. They knew he was the Leader's representative. Then she plugged him. I kinda thought the *pop* sounded close." He swung snarling on Starogin, lashed out suddenly: "Didn't it?"

The revolutionist thrust back his head as if from a physical blow. "Why, I—I—" Then he recovered himself. "Certainly not," he cried heatedly. "You're trying to find a victim. Well, you can't . . ."

"Oh yeah!" Bodan sneered. He grinned with satisfaction. "Suppose I was to tell you Madame Anna was pricing guns in a pawnshop last night. I got a report about it on file."

Starogin turned desperately, blindly. For the first time the woman's ironclad calm seemed shattered. She shrank away from her glowering accuser. Her gloved hand went to her throat. Kolya was watching Bodan with a sort of horrible fascination.

"It—it's not so," she gasped. Then, wildly: "Suppose I did? If you know that much you know I didn't buy it. I—I thought I needed protection. My—

my husband's life had been threatened."

And still not a word, not a movement from Lamont. He seemed a disinterested spectator of the drama that was being unfolded. But Bodan was arrogant, hot on the trail.

"A lovely story," he sneered. "Yuh didn't buy it there. But there're other places. My man lost yuh after that. Well, Cap," he grinned heavily at Lamont.

"There's your case."

Starogin thrust forward, face pale and drawn. "All right," he said dully. "It's no use. I'll confess. I did it. I shot Perozzi because I hated him. He was getting all the glory, and I was just another in the ranks of the revolution. Because he yearned for power, he bungled the revolution, brought it on too soon. He was responsible for the deaths of brave men, and I killed him. Madame Anna knows nothing of this. I loved her, but it was innocent.

"I swear it."

Then Lamont spoke. "Sorry, Mr. Starogin," he said not unkindly, "but your attempt to shield Madame Perozzi won't work, even if it is in the best tradition. You could never have dropped the murder gun on the other side of the hall. I was watching you. You remained in your seat until you were searched—I'll give credit to Waring for that, he knows how—and then you walked across at the farther end of the well, under my eye all the time.

"No, Starogin, that confession won't wash, unless, of course, you passed the gun to Madame Perozzi, and she dropped it. She had the opportunity."

Starogin went deathly pale. He staggered a little. With a convulsive effort he said, very low: "Then I retract my confession. I made it up. It's a pack of lies."

Lamont looked at him speculatively: "Come now," he urged, "tell us the truth. The reason you confessed was because you thought she did it. You had turned your head when that girl dropped her book, away from Madame Perozzi."

Starogin was suffering. Globules of sweat beaded his swarthy, handsome face. "No, no! Not Anna!" he cried.

Lamont probed further. "You deny, of course, but in your heart you feel sure. Why?"

STAROGIN thrust his hand over his head as if to ward off an anticipated attack.

"Leave me alone!" He sounded strangled. The woman watched him with eyes that were once more inscrutable. Only the slow, deep rise and fall of her bosom showed what was seething within.

Lamont shot hard and brittle words at him. The velvety softness had completely disappeared. "Isn't it because you too heard the faint noise of the silenced gun close to you?"

"Oh!" Starogin gasped and looked wildly around. Bodan nodded and grinned. "There y'are, Cap."

Lamont nodded too, as if the case was now completely closed. His face was hard and set, seemingly steeled to a most unpleasant duty. He whipped out his big forty-four.

"I arrest you," he said very clearly, "Sergeant Nicholas Bodan, alias Bodani, for the murder of Anton Perozzi." His gun pointed squarely at the chest of his burly detective.

Georges Kolya made choking sounds and fell back in his seat. Stunned silence filled the lecture hall.

Bodan looked at his superior with fumbling, uncertain eyes. "What the hell," he growled. "You're kiddin', Cap."

"I wish to God I were," Lamont said slowly. "It's a big blot on the Department. But there's no doubt in my mind about it. You're another of the Leader's men in this country, even as Kolya. You joined the Police at his command. It was a strategic place to have a spy. You were promoted to the Alien Squad just as anticipated, because of your special knowledge. Kolya recognized you when you came in with me. I saw him start and turn pale. He was not in the plot; in spite of his so-called patriotism I think murder was beyond him.

"The word came for Perozzi to be killed," Lamont went on remorselessly. "You were chosen. You wanted him to die publicly. You wanted to throw suspicion on others. Knowing of the affair between Starogin and Madame Anna, knowing of Benedict's personal motives, you decided on a place where all would be congregated. The opening lecture of the season was obviously the proper occasion. But how could you get in?"

"You solved that very prettily. You

sent the threatening note. That meant a police guard for the proposed victim. You were sure you'd be included because of your special knowledge of your countrymen. Once again you guessed right.

"You sat behind the people you intended to denounce for the crime. You planted deft seeds of suspicion in my mind. You even warned me to watch Kolya. There again you were clever. It would keep my attention focussed, and at the same time would furnish a complete alibi for your co-worker."

The hush deepened as Lamont ticked off his points. "I'm not positive—but I think Waring will remember that it was something you said that made him leave Madame Perozzi alone. You watched her walk through the second row of seats and you dropped the gun there while pretending to search the students along the center aisle. Then, when the second search commenced, you shifted to the end, and left Donegan to

make the discovery. The game's up, Bodani."

The accused detective had been standing, hands limp at his sides, as the damning voice went on. Now he cursed suddenly, savagely, in a strange foreign tongue. His big hand dived for his holster. Madame Anna screamed, Blake jumped for him, yelling: "Look out, Chief!"

"Drop it," Lamont whiplashed, gun snouting in front of him.

But the man was beyond hearing. His face was that of a trapped animal, vicious, snarling.

His service revolver came lunging upward.

Not until then did Lamont shoot. The thunder filled the room. Bodan groaned and went down in a heap.

The captain looked at the fallen man with something of relief in his eyes.

"It's better this way," he said very low. "Better for the Department."

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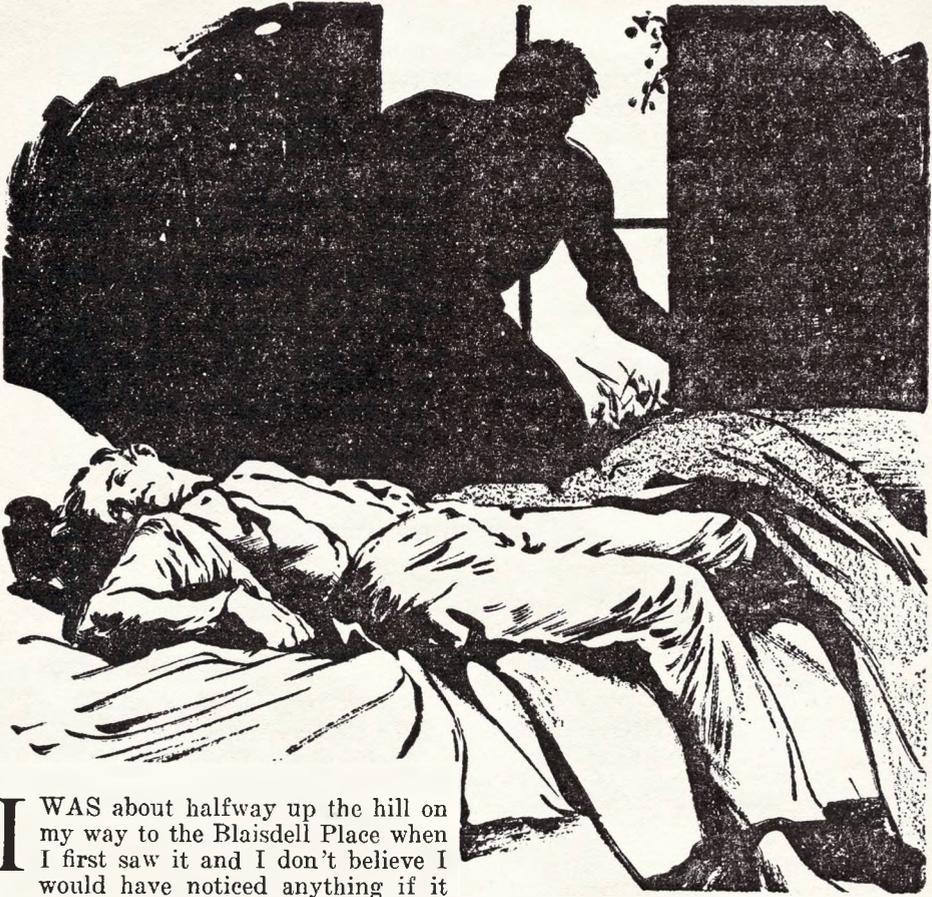
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**5 SPINE-TINGLING EERIE SHORT STORIES**

- HEADS, I LOSE**.....by **HARVEY JACKSON**  
*A mad monster feasts his eyes on the white body of a lovely girl . . . and plans a strange unnatural MURDER!*
- TERROR WEARS A LEOPARD SKIN**.....by **LESLIE B. LUECK**  
*In the dark prison of his bridal bed, Dal Warnow fought for sanity . . . for he felt the burning kisses of his bride change to the moist caress of a mewling jungle-cat, and every lustful curve of her body filled his soul with Horror!*
- RING OUT! YE BELLS OF HELL**.....by **JONATHAN SCRIVENER**  
*Dead men stirred in their new made graves, and the mad gods laughed at the sight they saw as the Bells of Hell pealed out an awful hymn of hate!*
- CREEP SHADOW**.....by **JOHN LESLIE**  
*Prisoners in the House of Pain, John Carter and Joan Leigh could accept the hospitality of a samaritan from the pit of Limbo . . . or terrors of a dreadful bubbling death!*
- TRYST WITH THE UNKNOWN**.....by **WYATT BLASSINGAME**  
*James Hillman came back from Hell itself to lead a squealer down the grisly path of death . . . BUT THERE WAS NO RECORD OF HIS PASSAGE!*

# BLOOD OF



I WAS about halfway up the hill on my way to the Blaisdell Place when I first saw it and I don't believe I would have noticed anything if it hadn't been for the sudden feeling I had about something being very wrong. That's not a very good description. It was more a feeling that danger was close, very close.

The rain was beating directly into my face and I had my coat collar pulled up and my hat pulled down, and because of this and the storm, I don't believe I could see more than ten feet ahead.

And so I almost passed by the body.

It looked like a log lying alongside the road.

I was almost passed before I saw clearly and then there was no mistake possible. It was a body and a girl's body at that.

And then I thought I saw the killer.

I heard a rustle, so faint that if I hadn't been tensed I would have missed the sound. I looked up and saw a shape fade into the dark but the shape bore no resemblance to anything human. It was more like a black cloud and looked as wide as it did high. It wasn't imagi-

nation because I could hear brush crackle as the thing went through bushes that lined the road.

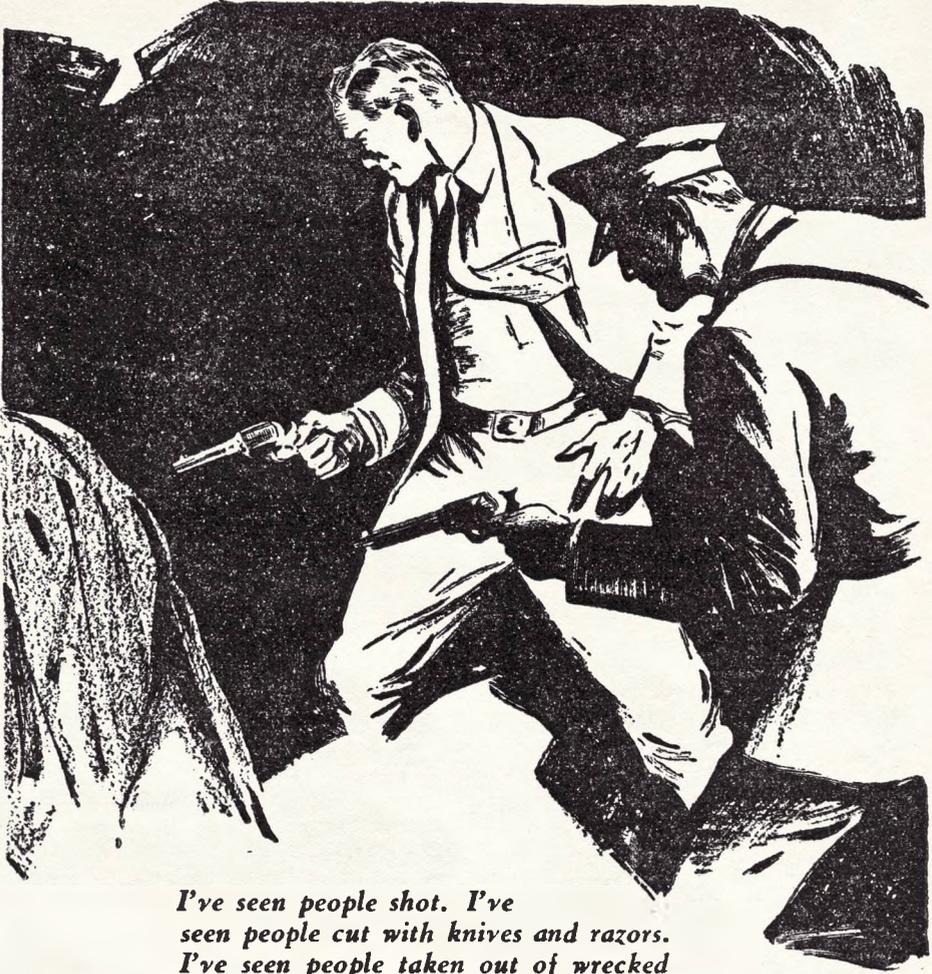
I didn't take time to unbutton my coat. I just ripped the front open and grabbed for my gun, but when I got it I realized there was nothing to shoot at. I couldn't just blaze away into the darkness with any hope of hitting anything and I had nothing but instinct to tell me I'd seen the killer.

And a private detective can't shoot blindly with only instinct to guide him. The gun might be pointed in the wrong direction.

I felt better with it in my hand, I'll admit that. I had thought I'd left nerves behind when I'd opened my agency but I knew better right then. I still had them and plenty of them. I knelt down by the girl and found I couldn't see any better that way and tried to light matches.

The first two just fizzled out in the

# THE BEAST by ROGER TORREY



*I've seen people shot. I've  
seen people cut with knives and razors.  
I've seen people taken out of wrecked  
cars—people that looked like raw meat. But the way this girl's body looked  
was a new one on me . . .*

rain but the third one lit.

For a second I felt sick. Very sick. The girl was facing toward me and her throat was torn and hanging open and blood was still spouting from the big artery there. Even in the few seconds the match flickered I could see this flow grow weaker and almost stop.

I just knelt there and shivered and it wasn't from the wind and the rain. If it had been broad daylight I don't believe it would have hit me as hard, but at that, I don't know. I've seen people shot. I've seen people cut with knives and razors. I've seen people taken out of wrecked cars; people that looked like raw meat. But this girl's throat was *TORN*. Just ripped open as though by

a giant hand.

It couldn't have been more than a few seconds I knelt there but it seemed like hours. It took actual will power to get to my feet. I knew I couldn't do anything for the girl; knew she was dead; knew that I must go on to the Blaisdell Place and telephone. Yet I couldn't seem to stand. The sense of danger and of the kind of danger I couldn't fight was so intense and oppressive it seemed to hold me there on my knees. In those few short seconds I thought of all I'd ever heard and read of were-wolves and vampires and that sort of thing. And during those seconds I believed it.

I had the proof before me.

When I finally got to my feet I went

up that road with my gun in my hand and cocked and once I almost turned it loose at a stump that seemed to jump at me.

And me with no nerves.

THE Blaisdell Place sat right on the crown of the hill; trees and overgrown shrubbery hemming it closely. So closely in fact that tree limbs rubbed the upper story, though I found this out later. I rounded a turn in the road and found it looming above and in front of me, a big square affair and built in a particularly ugly manner. A wide porch went around both front and sides and pillars from this upheld a balcony of equal size. The windows in both the lower and upper floors were small and set at even distances from each other and every window showed light. The same kind of light; dim and disheartening.

I went up the steps to the porch and knocked once before I found there was a bell. One of the old-fashioned chain-pull kind. I yanked this and heard a dismal clatter from inside and then waited for at least two minutes before the porch light was turned on. And then I waited some more. I could hear talking inside, but very faintly. I was chilled through and through, partly from rain and partly, I'll confess, from fright and this didn't help things a bit. I yanked again on the chain and really did a job of it.

The door opened enough to let me see it was held by a chain. Then a voice, an old and tired voice, quavered:

"Who is it?"

"William Kelsey," I said. "Are you Mr. Blaisdell?"

He didn't answer. I could hear more muffled talk and then a younger, stronger voice asked: "What's the gun for?"

For the first time I realized the picture I must have made. A wet and buttonless coat, whipped around me by the wind. A cocked revolver in my hand. I said:

"Never mind about that now. Let me in."

There was more talk and then the first man said: "How do we know you're Kelsey?"

I said: "Listen, if you're Blaisdell. You sent for me and I'm here. If you want me to stay, open that door and do

it now. There's something happened down the road."

"What's happened?" he asked.

I didn't think the particular kind of murder I'd just seen was anything to be discussed through a half-opened door and lost my temper. I said:

"Listen, mister! There's a dead girl lying along the road, part-way down the hill. I want to phone the police. Are you going to let me in or do I kick in a window?"

I got in. They unhooked the door and held it just far enough open for me to slip in. I did. And then looked at what had let me in.

An old man and two young men. The old one dressed in a shabby old dressing-gown that, poor as I am, I'd have thrown away rather than wear. The two young ones wearing dinner clothes and looking as though they were just off a hotel dance floor. The old man said:

"I'm Wilbur Blaisdell." He pointed at the dark young man and said: "This is my son, Paul." Then at the blonde one. "This is Richard Towers."

I shook hands all around; decided I didn't like either Blaisdell or his son or young Towers, and then asked for the phone. They showed me an old-fashioned rig that had to be cranked, then crowded around asking questions while I took half an hour making a dumb operator understand I wanted to talk to State Police Headquarters.

And during this time I didn't answer any of the questions.

I finally got Headquarters and the Sergeant in charge and told him who I was and what I'd found. He said he'd be right out. I found he knew where the place was and then I said:

"You'll have to walk up from the bottom of the hill. A car can't make it. Mine is stuck right where the road turns up the hill."

He said he understood and I hung up. The phone was in the hall and there was a cold draft blowing and I was chilled to the bone. And I wanted to find out why Blaisdell had sent for me. I said:

"D'ya suppose you could scare me up a drink? I need it."

He nodded.

I said: "And while I get dried out you can tell me why you wanted me."

He nodded again and led the way into a room across the hall from the phone.

WHILE he did this I got the impression that neither his son or this young Towers wanted me to be alone with the old man. And the fact that they'd hung around while I telephoned backed this up.

The room he led me into was furnished like a library. Or had been, rather. There were few books and these few looked mildewed. The walls were paneled and in two places on one side and one on the other the panels had cracked and fallen away and showed exposed joists. There was a draft from these. I was to find out after that the entire house was that way. All fallen apart and all drafty.

There *was* a fireplace and a good fire burning. And old Blaisdell produced a bottle of very old and very good Scotch. We sat in front of the fireplace and I poured a drink and offered him the bottle and he said:

"Oh no. I never do."

I said: "I do when I'm as cold as I am now. For that matter, any time I feel like it."

I wanted to find out whether he was against liquor. Just curiosity. I did. He waved his hand and said "It's all right if it's not abused. I tell my son that but he ignores me."

Then I said: "D'ya suppose somebody could go down to my car and get my bag? I wasn't sure this was the right place and I left it there."

This got a rise. He said: "My God, no! Do you think anyone in this house would leave it after dark?"

I asked: "Why shouldn't they?" and he waved his hand and stammered out: "There's something outside after dark. We've all seen it." He leaned closer to me and almost whispered "How was this girl killed?"

"Her throat was all torn out."

He took a drink then. I poured it down his throat. He put both hands over his heart and pitched to the floor from his chair and I picked him up and held him so his head would be lower than his knees and slapped his face until he came out of the faint. Then I poured a good stiff drink and held his jaws open and poured it down him. He sputtered and gagged but he swallowed it.

Then we talked, but I didn't learn anything that helped me. He said he'd had a warning letter dropped in his mail

box, telling him he'd be killed by having his throat torn open. I asked:

"Was this signed?"

He said: "No."

The way he said it made me sure he was lying. He proved this for sure when he told me he'd destroyed the letter. I asked "Was anyone else in the house threatened?"

He said: "No," again.

I said: "Then have I got this straight? You want me to protect you against someone who means to just tear you to pieces? That right? And all of you have seen something hanging around outside and are afraid to leave the house after dark?"

He leaned over and whispered: "Something or someone. That's the terrible thing about this."

I could remember how I felt when I saw the shadow by the body, but now that I was in front of a fire and had a couple of drinks inside me, I didn't feel the same way. I'd lost most of my fear and was more than a little ashamed of the panicky way I'd come to the house. Blaisdell saw how I felt and said:

"Wait until you've seen it."

I said: "I have."

I told him how it had happened and he kept nodding his head and then told me I'd seen the same thing everyone else had . . . just a shadow and a shadow that didn't look human. And the more we talked about this, the more distinctly the feeling of something that was dangerous came back to me.

More to break this feeling than anything else I suggested I meet the other people in the house. Blaisdell had offered to borrow me some clothing from young Towers, as he was more my size than either of the Blaisdells, and he wanted me to see his bedroom and get a line on the house itself. I had agreed to sleep in the same room with him.

So we left the library and started toward the back of the house.

BLAISDELL had turned and was closing the library door and I just happened to glance down the hall. It ran the length of the house and we were right at the front, so there was probably seventy or eighty feet separating us from the back door. And I swear I saw the same dim shape that had been hovering over the body in the road.

I grabbed for my gun and must have made some noise as I did because Blaisdell turned and said:

"What!"

He saw my hand come from under my coat and went to the floor.

And right when he did, this shape, whatever it was, went out the back door and a .45 slug from my gun went into the wall right above it.

I'd had almost all the squeeze off the trigger when I remembered I couldn't take any chances on killing a possibly innocent person . . . or thing. I thought I knew in my own mind; thought I knew I wouldn't be killing an innocent person . . . but the law wouldn't and I had no proof.

So I tipped the barrel up just as I shot.

The shot brought everyone in the house into the hall and to Blaisdell and myself, but I was too busy trying to bring Blaisdell out of his faint to see who was there and who wasn't. It took me ten minutes and for a while I thought he was gone. He came around finally and I carried him into the library and hauled a couch around so he would be in front of the heat.

And then sized up the rest of the people.

Young Towers did the introducing. The first was Blaisdell's daughter Mary. She was small, dark like her brother. Outside of that there was no resemblance. Her brother had a sullen, ugly look; she was open and friendly. Or would have been if it wasn't for the fright she carried so plainly and bravely.

There was a tall dark man named Wyatt. Towers introduced him as Blaisdell's lawyer. Not a bad looking man and the only one in the crowd who didn't act scared to death.

An old man name Corliss, who was the butler, and a colored boy named Jonas made up the rest of it. Jonas was the chauffeur. A kid about twenty, maybe twenty-one, and so frightened he was almost a shady white. So frightened that he couldn't talk but could only chatter his teeth like a rattle. The butler was almost as bad but was trying not to show it. The butler also did the cooking; I gathered most of the meals came from tin cans.

I asked them all if they'd seen anything and none of them had. I told them

what I had seen and young Towers said:

"Well, that ties it. As long as it was outside I felt fairly safe. Now I'm leaving." He turned to the girl and said: "Mary, we're leaving in the morning. We'll all stay up tonight and all stay together. Just for protection."

And this mind you before they knew just how the girl had been killed. Only old Blaisdell and I knew that.

Of course they all knew about the warning he'd had.

I said: "Just a minute, Towers. The State Police will be here very shortly and I doubt if *anyone* leaves for a while. How long should it take them to get here?"

He said: "Probably an hour . . . maybe an hour and a half because of this weather. Why won't they let us leave?"

"They're going to want to know who killed the girl down the road."

"The *thing* did," he said. "We were all together, here in the house."

"Of course you'll have to prove that. Do you mean you were all in one room together?"

He hesitated and I told him: "Now before you start to make any alibi about it, let me give you a bit of advice. If you lie, and the police prove it, it's not going to be very good. Of course that applies to all of you as well as Mr. Towers."

Wyatt, the lawyer, nodded and said that was right. The rest of them started to tell me where they were and all about it and I stopped them and told them to save it for the police.

Wyatt again agreed this was right.

The old man started to feel better about then and I told him I'd missed what I'd shot at. I didn't tell him I'd done this on purpose because it would have started an argument and I couldn't see any reason for one. After all, it would have been me, Bill Kelsey, that would have had to explain any killing like that to the police.

And loose shooting is always hard to explain.

WE'D gotten this far when the State men got there. A Sergeant named Barnes and two troopers named Olson and Moynahan. And did those blue uniforms look good. I took the Sergeant to one side and told him who I was and

he said he had heard of me. We got along all right from the start. He even said he was glad I was there, and that from a State Policeman to an Agency cop, means something.

I told him what I'd learned, or rather what I hadn't learned, since finding the body, and he wanted to know if the man I'd shot at was the same one I'd seen close to the body. It was dark in the road and very dim in the hall and I told him I was fairly sure but would hate to have to testify to it under oath. He grunted at this and asked:

"What do you think killed the girl?"

I said: "I know what killed her. Her throat was torn out. I saw it."

He said: "So did I. The Coroner and his helper are there now. I didn't mean that. What do you think tore it?"

That was what had been puzzling me ever since I'd seen that gaping wound. I said: "I've been around quite a lot, Barnes, and it's new to me. It was ripped, as though by a dog's teeth."

"You're wrong there, Kelsey. It was torn, not mangled."

"Maybe the Coroner will have an idea."

He said: "He's the local undertaker. He never had an idea in his life."

So that was that. He tried to find whether everybody had been in the house all evening and they all said they had been. I think he believed them, thinking they were all too scared to venture outside. None of them had any pretense of an alibi . . . the three that had let me in the house could have hurried up the hill and got there before me. And all had been separated before I got to the house; my ringing of the bell brought the three men I'd first met together. Wyatt, the lawyer, had no more of an alibi than the others.

Barnes, the Sergeant, let this line go finally, and went away, leaving the two troopers guarding the house. He also left orders that no one was to leave.

By this time it was late. It was around seven when I'd come to the house and by this time it was almost two. Just before I went upstairs with old Mr. Blaisdell I looked around and told each of the troopers what to expect, that is, if they should by chance see anything.

I wouldn't want any man to see what I'd seen without a word of warning.

Blaisdell's bedroom was in just as

bad shape as the rest of the house; tattered wall paper and rickety furniture and a rug that was worn so thin the bare boards showed through in spots. There were two beds, however, and I was so tired I wouldn't have cared if mine had been in the barn. I took off my coat and gun harness and put my gun under my pillow and then went to the window and started to raise it. He'd been watching me. He said:

"My God, no! Leave it closed."

I said: "I want fresh air when I sleep. What could come in through there?"

He said: "Look!"

I opened the window and looked out. The balcony that circled the house was about ten feet wide and the trees stood so close that some of the limbs overhung the balcony. He said:

"The thing could climb one of the trees and crawl out on a limb and drop to the balcony."

I said: "Nerts! I'll split the difference and let the window down a little way from the top."

He didn't like it but I explained no one could crawl in through a five inch opening at the top of a window and do it without waking me and finally convinced him this was truth. Then I went to bed and must have gone to sleep inside of a minute.

I didn't sleep long.

Sometimes, when you're startled out of sleep it's impossible to tell what did it, but in this case there was no chance for a mistake. It was a gun-shot and I could hear echoes of it racketing through the halls. I came out of bed with my gun in my hand and said:

"Blaisdell! You all right?"

He said: "Yes!" in such a quavering way it took half a minute, it seemed like, to get the sound out.

I was half-way through the door by then. He cried out:

"Kelsey! Don't leave me!"

I said: "Come along then. There's trouble."

He came along. He was afraid not to.

I WENT down the stairs and into the front hall and saw the two troopers by the back door. One of them on the floor and the other bending over him. And before I got to them I knew what

I was going to see and had braced myself for it.

The man on the floor, Moynahan, had his throat ripped open the same way the girl had . . . just wide open. He was still conscious and was trying to talk, but the part of the throat he used to talk with just wasn't there. Blood was streaming from this throat in regular spurts and air was whistling through his windpipe. His eyes were wide open and had the most agonized look I ever hope to see. Or rather, hope not to see.

His partner, Olson, and Blaisdell and I watched him die, and it didn't take long. Then I said to Olson:

"Was it you that shot?"

He still held his gun in his hand.

He said: "Yeah! But I don't know what at."

"What did you see?"

He said: "I heard a little noise back here. I was by the front door and Jim was back here. I looked around and saw Jim on the floor and something big and black bending over him. I shot, but he was out the back door by then."

"You didn't hit, then?"

"I don't think so. It was like a big bat. Not like a man." He looked behind him then and whispered: "Listen, Kelsey, I don't think it *was* a man."

I looked at the back door and it was unlocked but closed. Olson saw me do this and said: "I closed it myself. The wind was blowing rain in on Jim."

I must have looked as though this wasn't the proper thing to have done because he said, very apologetically: "Jim was lying here. I didn't spoil any prints."

By this time the rest of the people in the house were down in the hall and we covered the dead trooper with his own overcoat. Then I found that Sergeant Barnes was quartered at troop headquarters and spent another half hour getting him on the line. I told him what had happened and said:

"Listen, Sergeant, when you come out see if you can bring out a watchdog that will really watch. If you can't find a mean one, maybe one that will bark might help."

He said he'd be out as soon as he could make it and would bring the troop mascot. Just before he rang off he added:

"And don't worry about the dog. He'll bite."

Nobody went back to bed. It would have been a waste of time because no one would have slept. We all sat in the library, the trooper Olson with us, and he kept his gun lying on his knee and his hand on it.

I never want to put in such a night again in my life but, at that, I guess the following night was worse. It's just a question of whether worrying about a thing happening and *having* it happen is the worse.

The Sergeant got out about seven and he brought the biggest dog I've ever seen with him. Partly Great Dane and partly Airedale. It was bigger than most men. He left it in his car and came in and said:

"The Coroner will be here about nine. Where's Moynahan?"

We showed him Moynahan and he stood there, after we'd pulled the coat back, for what must have been five minutes. But all he said was:

"Jim and I had been working together for almost three years."

I believe it hit him harder than it did Olson because he felt himself more or less responsible. It was no fault of his, though.

After the Coroner came we were all busy, too busy to pay much attention to what the family and Towers and Wyatt were doing. So it must have been an hour or more before we knew Towers and the girl had made a sneak. Barnes got on the phone and told his headquarters to pick them up and they were back just about the time he was ready to begin asking questions. They came in with a trooper and young Towers was complaining about being picked up on the highway like a common criminal and all that, but Barnes cut him off with:

"I told you to stay here so you've got no kick coming."

After Barnes had seen his trooper stretched out on the floor like that he was in no mood for fooling and Towers saw that and shut up.

THE questioning got just nowhere at all. We found that Blaisdell had Wyatt up there because of transferring some property he owned and that explained him. It didn't clear him with me; he was a big man and could have

been the shape I'd seen. Young Towers was the girl's fiancé and that took care of him. The boy, in the same fashion, only he was home because he'd spent his allowance and would rather live at home until he got more money. Everyone had a reason for being there. The dead girl had been the maid, but had left her job and started to walk to where she could catch the bus to town. That explained her.

Barnes tried another tack. Blaisdell had told him about the warning letter and about having destroyed it and I could see Barnes didn't believe this any more than I did. He asked the old man if he had any enemies and the old man told him he had lots of them; that he'd ran a loan company and had been threatened by people he'd foreclosed mortgages on. He and a man named Young had been partners in this. Barnes asked:

"Did you and Young have any trouble?"

Blaisdell said: "We broke up the business because of trouble. But Young is dead, so he could have nothing to do with it."

Barnes said: "Did Young leave any family that could make trouble?" and Blaisdell said: "Only a boy that's crippled. It couldn't be that."

This wasn't much but it was the best lead he'd dug up, so Barnes found Young had lived in Hamilton, only fifty miles away, and telephoned the State Policeman nearest there to make inquiries about this Young family.

He also set a State investigator after Blaisdell's past history but put this call in while Blaisdell couldn't hear him. I suggested he check on the lawyer, Wyatt, also.

The Young business came to nothing: the trooper called in from Hamilton said Young had died the month before and the boy was huge but hopelessly deformed. The boy had disappeared the day after his father's death and probably had died in the swamp a mile from the house. But the body hadn't been found and I didn't forget it.

Barnes was stumped and didn't like it. He knew Blaisdell wasn't telling him all he knew but he couldn't do anything about it. Blaisdell had been in some shady deals but had got clear with them because of Wyatt's advice. There was

nothing definite on either of them but there was a decided odor.

Nothing happened the rest of the afternoon except that young Paul Blaisdell was caught at the front steps. He said he wanted to get away before dark and I don't know that I much blamed him.

He probably had a hunch. People sometimes do.

We went to bed that night with four troopers instead of two on guard. And with the big dog roaming around outside. And one of the troopers and myself made the rounds of the house and saw that every window and door was fastened and locked. Blaisdell was in bad shape from nerves but slept all right until about three. Then he said:

"KELSEY!"

I was nervous myself or I wouldn't have heard him. He didn't more than whisper. I whispered back:

"Yes!" and then heard the same thing.

The big dog was barking and growling at the same time. He sounded as though he couldn't make up his mind which to do. He was right outside the back door, from the sound. I put on my trousers and gun and went to the head of the stairs and listened and could hear one of the troopers moving around in the hall. I knew they were on watch and went back in the bedroom with Blaisdell.

The dog had made up his mind. He was growling. With the window open as it was we could hear him distinctly.

And then we heard the growl change into sort of a strangled yelp and then heard the back door slam open and one of the troopers shout:

"Stop! Stop, you—!"

Then a shot, and from the roar it made, a shot from a service gun.

I forgot about Blaisdell and went down the stairs so fast I don't believe I touched more than three of them on the way down. The back door was standing open and two of the troopers were still in the hall and running toward it. I joined them.

Olson, the same trooper that had been on guard the night before, was standing peering into the darkness. He was holding his gun cocked and poised. The other three were asking him questions but I didn't bother.

THE dog was lying on the ground and *his* throat was torn the same way the girl's and Moynahan's had been. And this dog was a trained police animal and weighed at least three hundred and sixty pounds. It looked as though the killer had just thrown him in a heap after ripping his throat out.

Olson was jabbering so incoherently it was all I could do to understand him but I finally made out what he meant. He had heard the dog and he and his partner had crouched close to the hall wall, in case the killer should get inside. When he heard the dog yelp he rushed outside, too late to save the dog but in time to get a snap shot at the killer.

He didn't know whether he'd hit him or not so I knew he hadn't. Anytime you shoot and hit what you shoot at, there's a certain sense that calls *HIT*. He was probably so excited he didn't take time to aim. Then I remembered Blaisdell had been left alone so I hurried back into the house and upstairs.

Blaisdell was all right except for fright. I forced him to take a drink of whiskey and quieted him down and then said:

"I'm going to see that everyone is all right."

Barnes' last order had been for everyone to keep in their rooms, no matter what happened, and I thought it would be only kindness to tell them everything was safe. But I took Blaisdell with me . . . I had to. He wouldn't let me leave him.

Olson, the trooper, was outside in the hall. He took me to the side and said: "What in God's name is it? Nothing human could do a thing like that."

I said: "Don't get off the track. At your age, you should know there isn't anything that can't be explained in a natural way. Stick here and watch the hall."

He said he'd do this and looked as though he felt a bit better.

I knocked on the girl's room and said: "Are you all right, Miss Blaisdell?"

She said: "Perfectly. What's happened?"

I didn't want to tell her about the dog at that time of night. I said: "One of the troopers shot at a shadow. Good night."

I would have given a lot to know

what he *had* shot at but I didn't say it. By that time, Wyatt seemed the logical suspect to me; at least he didn't belong to the family. I saw the butler and the chauffeur peering out from their doors, clear at the end of the hall, and called to them to go back inside their rooms and keep their doors closed.

All that was left was the boy Paul, Towers, and Wyatt. Paul's room came first.

I knocked on the door and he didn't answer. . . . I tried it again and louder, though I knew the racket downstairs would have kept anyone from sleep. Then I tried the knob and found it locked.

There was only one thing to do. I backed to the wall across from the door and smashed into it with my shoulder as hard as I could. It took three of these but it opened. And remember, Blaisdell was with me. As the door came open I got a look at the bed and stopped him at the door. I said:

"You're going back and stay in your daughter's room."

He started to argue but I took his arm and led him to her room and knocked and told her to keep him inside. Then I called Olson and we went in the boy's room.

He had no throat, either. I didn't look at him any more than I could help, and probably for that reason, first noticed the odor in the room. The smell of the blood was sickening and strong but this stench cut through it. I asked the trooper if he noticed it and he said:

"Smells like an animal."

It was a sickening, dirty smell. Unclean.

I kept the trooper with me and we went to Wyatt's room. I thought I might need the trooper. I knocked on the door and heard something moving inside and called:

"Wyatt! Wyatt! Open up."

He didn't. Then, all of a sudden, I knew that Wyatt wasn't making the noise, and that he wasn't the thing, whatever it was.

I SMASHED into the door as hard as I could and it broke on the first lunge. I'd hit it so hard I went half into the room before I could stop myself. I couldn't see the killer but I could smell him, rank, unclean.

I was clawing for my gun when I felt him. He brushed me and in that same second took me by the shoulder.

I carry my gun under by left armpit, like most right handed men do. I had loosened the harness when I'd gone to bed, but hadn't taken it off, and this probably saved my shoulder.

It was as though a giant talon had gripped me there but the stiff leather in the gun holster prevented the claws from going too deep. Of course this locked the gun in the scabbard and all I could do was try and wrench clear. I twisted and managed to turn just far enough to see the trooper, standing in the doorway and holding his gun ready to shoot. Then the killer just turned me away from the door, as though I'd been a child, and I'm bigger than the average man.

He lifted me clear of the floor and threw me in a corner clear across the length of the room, and I landed all doubled up. I straightened and got my gun clear but the shock of the fall had slowed my action too much for me to use it. I saw a dim shape hurtle toward the window, saw the light from the window blotted out.

And then Olson, the trooper, shot. Twice, as fast as he could pull trigger.

I got to my feet and got to the window the same time the trooper did . . . and saw nothing. Heard nothing. But we could both smell that rank odor hanging in the air.

We turned on the room light and saw a variation of what we both expected to see.

Wyatt was lying on top of disordered bed-clothes. He was wearing a suit of vivid blue pajamas but the top had been ripped off. One side of his body, right below the ribs, had been ripped out in the same way the killer had ripped throats before. Another victim instead of my logical suspects.

The shock I'd had and seeing this was too much. I imagine the smell of the killer didn't help me, either. I was sick, just deathly sick, right then and there. I stayed in the room and sent the trooper downstairs for a flashlight, and when he came back with it, we started to see if we could follow the killer.

At first I thought the trooper had missed with his two shots and then I wasn't sure. We found two or three

little splashes of blood. And then I thought of the blood that must be hanging to the killer's claw and decided it might mean something and might not. Where he had gripped my shoulder was blood-spotted and my shoulder itself was just a solid ache.

Then we found something that puzzled us all the more. There was a small pool of rain-water in a depression on the balcony floor and apparently the killer had stepped in this. There were tracks leading away but the tracks were huge and shapeless . . . just big blotches leading away from the pool. But these died away before we could follow them ten feet. The trooper said:

"What makes tracks like that?"

I said: "I wish I knew."

By this time we'd followed the tracks almost to Tower's window.

The trooper said: "You know . . . I . . . ugh . . . it'll take a silver bullet to kill it."

I said: "Don't go screwy on me. The thing's human."

He said: "People don't make tracks like that. Don't tell me."

And I was in such a shape I just about agreed with him.

After we found we couldn't follow the tracks any more we went back inside and I left him on guard in the upper hall. We'd searched the balcony and I wanted to get to Towers.

With Wyatt dead, and out of the picture because of it, Towers was the only one in the house that didn't belong to the family. It hardly seemed reasonable he'd kill his future brother-in-law, but I couldn't get away from facts.

**T**HE young fellow was big and strong, for one thing. The shapeless tracks we'd followed stopped by his room, for another. He could have made them and just stepped inside his room, from the balcony.

And I didn't forget that I had no way of knowing whether he'd been in his room or not, at the time the killer went for me. His room was beyond Paul's and Wyatt's.

But then I couldn't figure motive and there has to be a reason for murder. And there was no way of getting over the fact of the thing we'd all seen; the box-like figure that had been fitting around the place.

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"That's the thing all right. He'd get those hooks into flesh, then close the handles and yank at the same time. It would rip out whatever was fastened to it."

Everybody was stooping over looking at this but Olson. He said, in a hushed voice:

"Oh my God!"

I looked up at him and he was staring over us and the expression on his face was something I never want to see matched in the rest of my life. It carried sheer horror.

And then I saw what had caused it.

Not over ten feet away from us, full in our lights, was the thing itself. Human, if you could call it so.

Imagine a man weighing at least three hundred and fifty pounds and built as square as a box. Imagine a head on top of this tremendous body that came to almost a peak and was no bigger than a ten year old child's head would be normally. A head so small it looked oddly funny. Like a hooligan hat. And then the most horrible part of all . . . imagine this thing having but one arm and that arm developed to a monstrous size.

This arm was actually as big as one of the creatures legs. It hung well below his knees. And it terminated in a hand that more than matched it in size. I honestly believe if this hand had been spread flat on the bottom of an ordinary chair it would have covered it.

We just stood staring for a moment and then I saw Olson had his gun out and was leveling it at the thing. I knocked his arm up just as he shot. The thing turned, started to run, and I raced after it and tackled it around the knees and brought it down.

It was no trick. In spite of it's size it was as weak as a child. I held it while the troopers came up and said to Olson:

"You damn fool! This isn't the killer. This is Young's crippled boy. It's an idiot."

There was no doubt about this last. The thing just laid there on the ground and gibbered at us. And smelled to high heaven for lack of a bath. I told two of the troopers to take it in the house and give it something to eat and then said to Olson and the other:

"Come on and I'll give you the murderer."

They still thought the idiot was the

killer and argued with me about it while I led the way back into the house and upstairs. Then I knocked on Towers' door and told them:

"Take care now. This guy's bad."

He opened the door and this time he was fully dressed. I said:

"It's over, Towers. We've got your pet."

"What d'ya mean?"

"We've got Young's crippled boy. What did you do; keep him closed here where he could scare people? While you did the killing? Did you figure to leave him to take the blame after you were through?"

He kept his face blank, said again he didn't know what I was talking about.

I told Olson: "Hold him, trooper. I'll look around."

Olson did.

It was ridiculously easy to find what I was after. That is, once I knew what to search for. I found a heavy cape, black woolen material . . . and I could see how the thing could be held out with the arms and make the bat like impression we'd seen. How it would make Towers look square and solid . . . like the idiot boy looked in the dark.

There were two bath towels, both covered with mud and dirt, and I pointed these out to Olson and the other trooper and said:

"He had these wrapped around his feet. That's what made the funny looking tracks."

But it was in the bath-room that I found the clincher. Just a little bottle, but when I opened it the same dead unwashed body smell that had been around the murdered people came pouring out. I took this back to Towers and said:

"Let me make a guess. Some chemist made it up for you. Your ape man smelled like this because he didn't bathe and you wanted to make the set-up perfect. Isn't that right?"

HE didn't say anything but he knew the game was up. He broke away from Olson, moving like a flash, and dove for his open window. I was in his way, but he caught me, just as he'd done before, and spun me around.

We saw him leave the balcony, head first going to the ground, and we heard the solid crunch his body made when it

hit the gravelled walk below. I got out to the balcony with my gun, kept it lined on what I could see of him on the walk, and shouted back to Olson:

"Get down below there and get him. If he moves, I'll shoot. Get down there."

The troopers did. Then Olson peered up at me and said:

"He must've landed on his neck, Mr. Kelsey. It's broken."

I said: "Call Sergeant Barnes then and tell him we've got his murderer. Though it's a little late; he's killed all the family except the girl, and he was going to marry her."

We got motive and proof enough from the old man's desk the next morning. Towers was jammed for money and had been bleeding old man Blaisdell for it. He had evidence that Baisdell had crooked Young, his partner. But the old man didn't pay enough and Towers decided to kill him and the son and marry the girl. Both the son and the old man had insurance in the girl's favor.

While we never knew for sure we figured Wyatt must have been suspicious of Towers and had probably said something to give Towers that idea. And so was killed. The same explanation was the only answer to the maid's death.

Killing the dog was just to add to the general effect of horror and to throw added suspicion on the idiot.

As I say, some of this was guess work,

but it all fitted in the general plan. After he'd married the girl, he'd have let someone discover the idiot who in all probability would have been blamed for everything.

Barnes even checked this; found Towers had been in Hamilton at the time of Young's death and that he'd had every chance to spirit the idiot away and to the Blaisdell place.

One of the most sickening things about the deal was when Barnes and I talked with the idiot. Barnes asked him what he was doing wandering around the house at the time we caught him, and the poor thing patted it's middle and made foolish sounds at us. Barnes said:

"It must be able to understand a little. It means it's hungry."

I looked at it and wondered whether it had been an act of kindness when I'd knocked up Olson's gun. After all, a thing like that might be better dead.

The Blaisdell girl took the thing in the right way. It seemed she was only going to marry Towers because of the pressure her father was bearing on her. I saw her six months after that and she acted as though the whole thing was just a bad dream.

But me. This happened a year ago and, right now, when I walk down the street and see I'm going to meet a one-armed man I cross over.

And me with no nerves.

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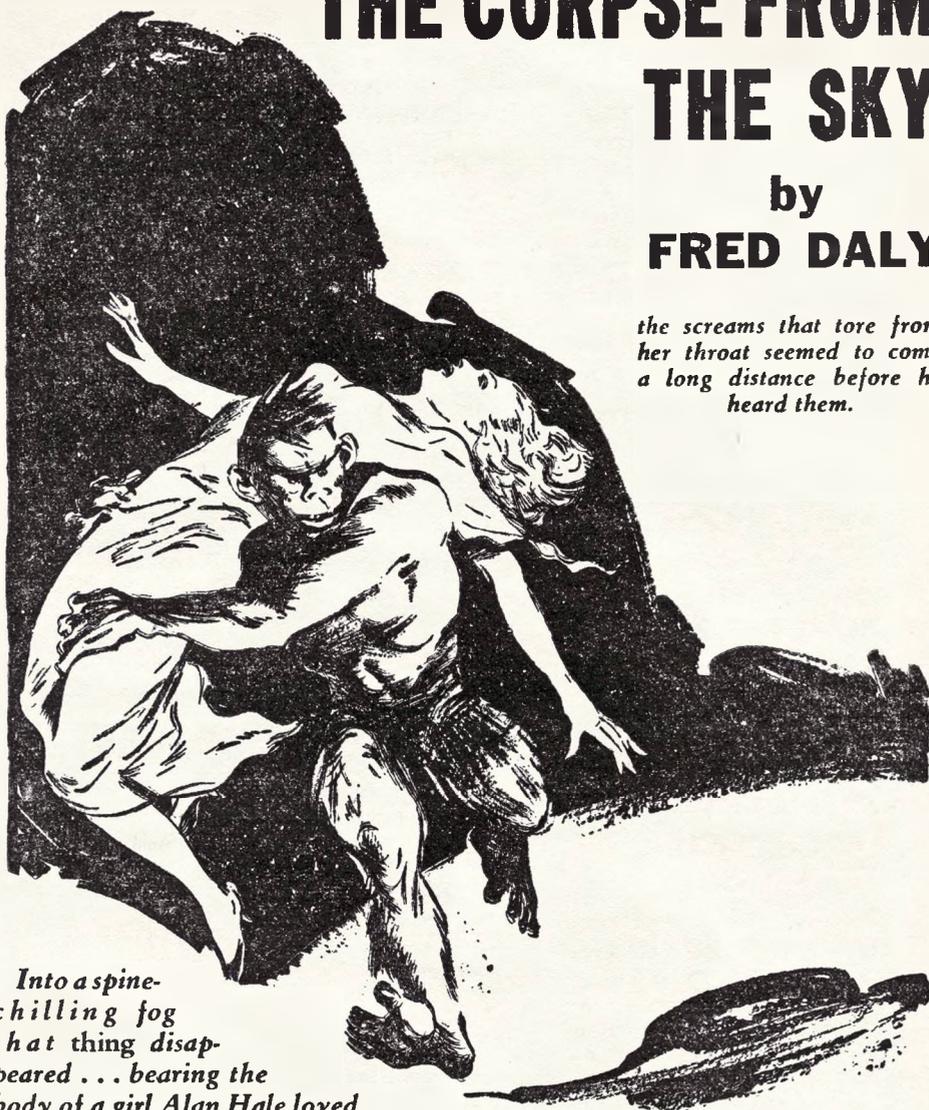
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**A RED CIRCLE**  **MAGAZINE**

# THE CORPSE FROM THE SKY

by  
**FRED DALY**

*the screams that tore from her throat seemed to come a long distance before he heard them.*



*Into a spine-chilling fog that thing disappeared . . . bearing the body of a girl Alan Hale loved more than life itself, a dainty, blond little girl with a very full, kissable mouth . . .*

**W**ACE SENTAL glanced from the reporter to the three men and said hesitantly, "Do you think that anyone else should be present when . . .?"

Bill Mardan said, "I certainly do." He put his hand on Hale's shoulder. "This boy's practically kin to me. He's going to marry my daughter. And I think it best that we have some fourth person present, somebody unconnected with the movement."

Alan Hale had not spoken since entering the room and didn't now. He sat

slightly away from the others at the edge of the shadows where he could study the faces of the three men before him.

These three men represented no cohesive political party, but rather a movement to reform the city government. Together they were powerful enough to put that move across despite the opposition that was certain to arise. Wace Sental had recently been elected to the City Commission, the other two members of which had held their offices for more than a decade. He was a small, oily, handrubbing man who generally man-

aged to be on the winning side. It was on his advice that any mention of the proposed reforms had been kept from the public.

Kane Parker was the City Engineer. He was a big, hard-jawed, hook-nosed man with hard eyes and a high forehead from which a slight fuzz of blond hair was pushed backward. Hale figured him as ruthless, hard, and not afraid of hell itself.

Bill Mardan was the unusual figure among them. He was a misfit in politics, constantly running for some office and never being elected because he was too viciously and bitterly honest in expressing his opinions. Yet he always had a great deal of influence with the electorate. And he always seemed to have plenty of money. Where it came from no one knew certainly, not even Hale and he was engaged to Mardan's daughter.

And now, even before the reforms were made known to the public, the opposition had appeared. Each man had received a note telling him to drop the idea for his own good and that of his family. They had met to decide on what to do. Sental had no family. He had tried to bluff, to appear brave but his skin looked yellow and more oily than ever. Hale figured he was afraid and ready to drop the plan if someone else would suggest it.

Kane Parker laughed deeply. "It's some idiot," he said. "To hell with him."

Mardan was admittedly afraid. "It didn't sound like anything really human that was making the threats," he said. "It promised not death, but horror and evil. And it seemed aimed at my family more than at me. If anything happened to my daughter or wife . . ." He swallowed. "That note gave me a creepy feeling, as if I had touched something slimy."

Parker snorted with disgust. "Sure, it wasn't exactly human. It was some crackpot, some guy who ought to be in an asylum."

"But how did he find out what we were going to do?" Sental asked. He was rubbing his small hands nervously, frightened.

Parker said, "Maybe the nut didn't know. He made his threat at my boy more than at me, as in your case." The

big man nodded at Mardan. "But he didn't say what plan. He just said drop 'The Plan'. The three of us have been seen together. We've met before tonight. Somebody might have figured out we were planning something." He glared at the other two, said, "Well, what are we going to do?"

FEAR showed plainly in Bill Mardan's face, but behind his eyes was the hard, intense light of determination. "We're going ahead," he said shortly.

Parker snorted, said, "Good."

Rubbing his hands Sental took five minutes to say he agreed despite the threat. Parker interrupted. "Save that tripe for the public," he snapped. Then he turned to Hale, "You came on your word not to break this story until we give you permission."

For the first time Alan Hale spoke. He said one word, "Yes."

"Okay. We'll have the details out of the way in two days. Then you can cut loose."

Mardan turned to the younger man, said, "You'll be going over to my place before long, I expect."

A quick grin came on Hale's face. "I expect to."

"I won't be there for awhile. You can tell Dot and Mother I stayed down at my office to clear up some details."

"Sure." Hale turned and went out of the room. He was a rather small, but well made young man with a quick smile, a quick frown. He was the sort of man who bought expensive, excellently tailored suits, choosing them with care; and then forgot to have them pressed.

He was thinking now of what Bill Mardan had said about the threat. It had promised not death so much as horror and evil. And it had threatened Dorothy rather than Mardan himself. A chill went down Hale's spine as though an icy shadow had passed over him. "If something happened to Dot . . ." he said the words half aloud.

He checked at his paper, but there was nothing for him and he headed his coupé toward the Mardan apartment on the South Side.

Dorothy Mardan was slight, almost dainty, and very blonde. She had a heart shaped face with wide and level eyes, a full mouth that was very kissable and likely to break into a smile. She made it

pout when she said, "What's wrong with you, Alan? You're about as cheerful as an overturned coffin and you jump every time the cat goes down the hall. Is somebody's husband looking for you with a shotgun?"

The quick grin came to Hale's face, and faded. "No," he said. "No husbands chasing me tonight."

He had been here nearly an hour, but he couldn't forget what Bill Mardan had said about the letter threatening this girl. It was absurd to think that anything could happen to her in her own home. The apartment was five stories from the ground. The hall door was locked. She was as safe as though the National Guard were camped outside. Probably the threat was a hoax anyway. But the cold stiffness stayed in Hale's spine.

"What is wrong?" she asked again. "Dad left here looking like he'd swallowed a ghost. He told me to be sure the door was locked. I don't know what's in this apartment that a burglar would want."

"Maybe he'd want you," Hale said. He tried to make his voice light but his lips were cold and awkward on the words. He was looking at her, thinking for the hundredth time that night: "I love her. If anything should happen to her . . ." And unable to finish the sentence, afraid even to imagine any more.

The thing happened totally without warning. A window directly in front of them crashed like broken thunder. Glass and window frame splintered, hurled into the room as though a shell had exploded against them. And while the noise of falling glass still struck at his ears a figure seemed to form out of darkness upon the window sill.

It stood there in the shadows beyond the pale light of a floorlamp. It was a creature out of a nightmare. With the first crash of glass Hale had jerked half erect, Dorothy had cried out. And after that they both stood motionless, silent, sheer horror freezing their bloodvessels into rigid spikes that held them transfixed.

Hale felt his eyes bulging, aching against their sockets as he stared at the thing in the window. It was more ape than human. The head was too large and hair covered the face. The lips were

pulled back in an animal smile, showing pointed white fangs. Small insane eyes glittered through matted hair. The creature was no more than three feet tall and almost as wide in the shoulders. Its feet were bare but it seemed unconscious of the glass fragments on the window sill. It stood there, swaying with gibbering laughter as it looked across the room at the girl.

SOMEHOW Alan Hale was erect. His mouth was open as though he were inside a vacuum, fighting for breath. His lungs ached and fear had wrenched his heart from its place. He stumbled, stiff-legged. His brain was too frozen by shock and incredulity to think, but instinct pushed him between Dorothy and the creature.

The thing laughed with horrible softness. And jumped.

It was more than twelve feet away but it cleared the distance in a single headlong dive that was more like flying. Hale cursed hoarsely, swung at it with all his strength. His right fist smashed full into its face without stopping the flowing laughter. And then the thing struck him, hurling him backwards. His knees hit a chair and he crashed over. He heard more than felt the cracking jar of his head striking the floor.

There wasn't any pain at first, but he seemed to lie there a long while before he knew that he should get up, and when he tried to move he couldn't. Through a dim, hazy darkness he saw the thing toss Dorothy over its shoulder, saw her beating at it, her legs kicking. The screams that tore from her throat seemed to come a long distance before he heard them. He saw the thing sidle toward the window. And then with Dorothy over its shoulder it leaped out into the night—and vanished.

Somehow Hale got to his knees. He was bleeding at the nose from concussion. The room seemed to spin with sickening speed, but he crossed it, crawling. Bits of glass cut his fingers. And then he reached the sill and pulled himself up, head and shoulders hanging over it.

Outside there was gray fog. Streetlights were almost invisible five stories below in a sheer drop. There was no fire escape. He looked upward to fog and darkness. Nothing else.

The thing had come out of the night

as though able to fly. It had taken Dorothy—and disappeared.

He heard the door of the room bang open and turned to see Mrs. Mardan, a dressing robe over her nightgown, her gray hair wild around her face. Her mouth was working, her eyes horribly distended as she stared at the broken window, the blood dripping from Hale's face and hands. "What—what happened? Where's Dorothy?"

Hale stared back at her. His mouth was open though he didn't speak. What could he say? Tell her a monster had flown out of the night, smashed the window, carried away her daughter? It sounded insane even to him.

"Where is she?" Mrs. Mardan cried. She stumbled across the room and caught Hale by the lapels. "What's happened to her?"

He tried to explain, gently, forcing her to a seat on the sofa. But she fought him off, hysterical. "I knew something was going to happen!" she screamed. "I knew it when Bill got that letter!" She flung Hale aside and started for the open window as though to leap through it, but all at once her knees buckled. She went down in a faint.

Hale telephoned the family doctor, told him to come quickly. Then he called Mr. Mardan's office. There was no answer.

When the doctor came Hale left. He couldn't stay and explain what had happened. There wasn't any explanation that a sane man would accept. "I've got to find Dorothy!" Hale thought. "I've got to find her!"

But how? Where could he look? "I'm acting crazy," he told himself. "I've got to be calm. I've got to think." He forced himself to stand motionless. He raised his open hands in front of him, held them palms-down until his fingers ceased his nervous twitching.

But how could he track down a thing that smashed through a fifth story window, then vanished again through that same window into dark space. How had it got away?

"But I've got to do something," he said aloud. "I'll go mad if I don't. I can't just sit still." His hands clinched slowly. His mouth was a pale and furious line across his face.

"It promised to strike at Kane Parker's son and at Sental," he said aloud.

"Maybe I can be there when it comes."

He went by his rooms and pocketed a small .32 automatic. Soundlessly, monotonously he cursed himself for not having taken it to Dorothy's earlier. He had been afraid something would happen, aware of the cold premonition of danger, and yet it had seemed so absurd that he had tried to shrug it off and had gone without the gun. "But maybe I'll see that ape-thing again," he muttered, and turned his coupe toward the home of Kane Parker.

It was a huge apartment house, built on the top of a sharp hill so that it gave an impression of tremendous height. Hale knew that it had four turrets topped by blue lights, but looking up he could scarcely see them through the fog.

THE apartment where Kane Parker lived alone with his fourteen year old son was on the top floor. The elevator took him up with a sickening rush that almost left his stomach behind, halted so swiftly it was a jerk. "The second door to the left," the operator said. "Mr. Parker's not there, but his son is."

Hale said, "Thanks," and went down the hall. He thumbed the bell and waited, listening. There was no answer and he pushed the bell again. His face was dark now, the eyes narrowed, the nostrils pulled wide with his breathing. He put his ear against the door and when he rang could hear the bell clearly, but when he took his thumb from the button there was only silence.

"The elevator boy said the kid was here," Hale thought. There was a feeling like a tight wire around his chest that made it difficult to breathe. He tried the knob and found that the door was unlocked. He stepped through into darkness, closing the door behind him. His right hand was on the gun in his pocket. His left hand groped for the light switch, found it, cut it on.

It was the sort of living room that a fairly wealthy, forty year old widower would have. A door let out on the far side into a darkened hall. Hale went down the hall. He didn't mean to go silently, and yet he found that he was tiptoeing.

Light came from under one of the doors. He pushed on it and stepped through into a boy's bedroom. But Alan Hale did not see the pennants on the

walls, the pictures of ships. He was staring with eyes that hurt across the room to the window. It had been smashed open, so that glass lay scattered over half the room.

He was too late. Once more the monster had called and escaped!

He crossed the room, cursing hoarsely, continuously, under his breath. Below the window, pale squares of light marked lower windows, fading down into the blurred mist far below him. The sheer height made him half dizzy. There was no fire escape here, although there was one on the next window to the right. But it was impossible for a human being to cross from one to the other.

Yet something had come in this window and carried the boy out!

There was no sound at all before the thing struck. Something that looked no bigger than a thread flickered before his eyes. He blinked, thinking that he hadn't really seen anything. And then flame circled his throat. It seemed to lash through the flesh and into his brain. It choked him, cut like a knife into his skin. He was lifted and jerked through the window by a small wire that circled his neck!

It seemed to Hale that he swung there in space for hours, rocking in long strokes from side to side. His head was tilted back but the choking was so terrible that his eyes were bulging and he saw only a red hazy mist that wavered and danced. And through this mist came soft hideous laughter—the laughter of the monster who had carried away Dorothy Mardan!

Hale knew that he had the automatic out of his pocket and was firing. But he could see only a tortured mist before his eyes. His left hand clawed at the wire that held him, tried to grip it and pull himself up, releasing the pressure from his throat. But the wire was too small to grasp. It cut into his hand and his fingers slipped. A great roaring started under his skull. His eyes seemed to have popped from their sockets although he had dangled in space less than three full seconds.

The laughter chuckled softly above him. The pressure vanished from the wire. Hale went plunging down through space toward the ground so far below it was lost in the fog!

He thought he was falling for hours.

He had a sense of turning over and over in the mist. Thoughts seemed to float slowly through his brain. "I'll die without pain," he thought. "Strike the ground and be dead. But Dorothy . . ."

His feet struck with a terrific impact that doubled his knees toward his chin. His arms flayed out, struck iron and clung to it. Something was jabbing into his stomach and he rolled along it. He had dropped the gun and now with his right hand he tore at the wire still around his neck.

Full consciousness came slowly. He was on the iron fire escape one floor below the Parker apartment. A group of white faced men and women stared out of the window beside him and one of the men was pulling him inside. He had fallen one story, but at the end of a pendulum-like swing which had carried him over to the fire escape. He had struck it feet first, clung to it unconsciously, and rolled over the rail inside.

He stood up, swaying, pulling the loose wire over his head. His hand and his neck were bleeding. The men and women faced him in shocked silence.

"One of you got a gun?" Hale said. "I got to have a gun. Quick!"

**T**HEY did not answer. They stared as though they believed a madman had fallen from the sky.

Kane reeled past them. He was in the kitchen and on the table lay a long carving knife. He picked it up and half running, stumbling, went out of the apartment. No one tried to stop him.

He went up the stairs, reeling, falling, going on hands and knees. Then he was on the roof, circling it like a hunting dog, the knife in his hand. He knew that this was the only stairway by which the monster could have reached the ground, and there would not have been time for it to get down two flights before Hale had started back up. He could see several flights of each fire escape, and they were empty.

There was no way the monster could have left. And yet the roof was empty!

He left the roof and rang for the elevator, asked if the operator had carried down anything that looked like an ape. The man stared at him as though he thought Hale was insane. "Nobody who looks like that," he said. "Nobody except regular tenants and none of them

in the last ten minutes. I didn't bring up anybody and nothing like that could have got on the stair without being seen by the guy at the switchboard."

"Could he have climbed the fire escapes?"

"It ain't likely, without being seen. The fire escapes go right by a lot of windows."

Yet somehow the creature had reached the roof and vanished again!

Outside the building Hale searched until he found his automatic. It had fallen on soft earth and was apparently uninjured. He thrust it in his pocket, headed for the drug store on the corner and a telephone. There was still one person at whom the threat had been aimed. If he could get to Wace Sental in time there would be a chance.

But Sental didn't answer and the operator in his building said the little politician hadn't been home since noon. Hale called other numbers, but Sental seemed to have vanished.

There was only one chance now. Perhaps the ape-bodied creature which had carried away Dorothy and Parker's son would try to contact their parents. That was the last hope.

Kane Parker was in his office on the first floor of the City Hall working, although it was nearly midnight. He had not learned of his son's disappearance and as he listened to Hale the man seemed to change. The iron-hard exterior crumbled. His face got gray. His mouth twitched pitifully.

"It's my fault," he said, the words scarcely audible. "I thought the notes were a hoax or from some crazy man who wouldn't dare . . ." A thin sheen of tears came in the big man's eyes. He turned and stumbled to the French window, pushed it open and stepped through into a small court. He stood there, shoulders quivering, wiping hard at his eyes with the back of his hand.

"Whoever did it . . ." he said huskily. Hale could see his fists clench, his body grow rigid as he fought for control of himself. He took a cigaret from his pocket, but the flame of two matches shook out before he could still his fingers to light it. Slowly he turned back to Hale.

"Do you have any idea, anything to work on?"

Hale said, "Not much. But . . ."

The word died on his lips.

Far overhead there was a sound. It drifted down to them thin and wild and terrible. It grew louder with the crescendoing rush of a siren. It jerked Hale's gaze upward. And in that death-long instant he realized what caused the sound.

A human being was falling from the sky, screaming as he rushed through space!

The scream shattered at Hale's ears. He saw an object hurtle out of darkness directly overhead, smash down at him. And in the sickening crush of flesh on stone the cry ceased. A body had fallen into the court not thirty feet from where Kane Parker stood!

Both men stepped toward it—and stopped. There was scarcely enough left to recognize. The clothes had split wide open with the terrific impact. The body had flattened out.

Time stopped as the two men stared at the horror, barely visible in the dim light from the window. Then sound came from Parker's throat that was scarcely human. "My boy!" he said. He would have fallen, but Hale got his arm around him, helped him back into the room.

**T**HE police were there soon. A doctor led Parker away as he would have a child. And Alan Hale went out into the night again with fear crushing his chest.

What had the monster done with Dorothy? He thought of her fragile body tossed over the thing's shoulder, the gloating laughter. Hours had passed since then. Where was she? What was being done to her?

He roamed the city like a maniac, half mad with fear and grief. He telephoned Bill Mardan time and again, but there had been no word from the monster who had carried her away. He rushed into police headquarters, wild eyed, and out again when the sergeant at the desk told him they had learned nothing. He prowled through dark sections of the city like an animal.

It was ten o'clock the next morning when he stumbled into the office of the Probate Clerk in the Court House and began to go through some records. And it was mid afternoon when he came out. His eyes were red veined, his nostrils

wide with his breathing. He fought the terrific impulse inside him that would have sent him howling down the street, running like a beast gone insane with the desire to kill.

"I don't really have any proof," he thought. "And if Dorothy's still alive I'll only get her killed acting that way. It's got to be something else."

He went to his apartment, wrote a letter, and called for a Western Union boy to deliver it. He wrote another letter to his city editor, inclosing a sealed envelope that was not to be opened unless he failed to report on the next day. And then he sat down to wait.

He was waiting for death, and knew it. How it would come, he did not know, but he was sure it would come. How the monster had come out of the sky to capture Dorothy and the Parker boy he didn't know. But it would come again.

And what would be Hale's chance of winning then? He tried not to think of that. He couldn't shoot the creature as it rushed him. If he killed it there would be no way left to trace Dorothy.

It was after midnight when the monster came. It arrived as before, with a sudden exploding of glass as the window crashed inward. Then the ape-bodied thing with its great wagging head stood chuckling on the window sill.

Hale had the .32 automatic in his hand, crouched far over it. "All right," he said. "Get out of that window. Slow. You jump and I'll shoot."

The thing laughed softly. Through the matted hair the little eyes gleamed viciously. "Get down," Hale said again. His voice was clogged in his throat.

White teeth glittered in the creature's mouth as his laughter changed suddenly to a snarl. And then, headlong, he dived. Hale flung up the gun, finger tightening on the trigger. In the same instant the thing struck him, hurling him backwards.

Hale crashed to the floor with the monster on top. He smashed at it with his fist, never stopping its snarl. He tried to twist, to roll free. With one hand the thing clutched his throat. With the other it struck. Light flamed within Hale's brain, and went out.

He regained consciousness slowly. He was swaying in a vast, eternal darkness. It was like the sensation he'd sometimes had after going to bed drunk: when the

bed seemed to whirl in dizzy circles through dark space, lost high in the night.

His eyes had been open for some time before he realized it. His head rolled slightly and for the first time he realized where he was. A cry of terror swelled in his chest, but he fought it down.

He was in a small steel basket from which a single wire cable stretched upward into blackness. Near his feet stood the ape-like creature which had captured him, peering down over the rim of the basket. And beside him was another monster almost identical!

Hale had been tossed into the basket half lying, half sitting, with his head near the edge. Looking over and down he could see the lights of the city fading into a dim swirl of mist far below.

The basket was moving forward and up at the same time. He knew that it must be fastened to a dirigible and was being drawn upward; it was the sort of thing that lighter-than-air craft had sometimes used during the war, lowering an observer below the clouds while the ship itself remained hidden. So that explained how the ape-man had reached the tops of the apartment houses, while the dirigible was hidden by the light fog of the past few nights. From the roofs the other one had probably lowered him by a rope to the windows, pulled him up again.

**T**HE creature turned and peered down at Hale, laughing softly. Hale didn't move, lying as though still unconscious, eyes slitted. And the basket swung upward.

A dark, sausage-shape formed above them, seeming to condense itself out of the night. Then they were so close to it that it cut off all other sight above them and for the first time lights appeared on the small dirigible. The basket slid up through a hole in the deck and stopped.

Some five feet away, watching him, his hand still on the machinery which controlled the basket, was Kane Parker. He looked at Hale who lay motionless, seemingly unconscious, then at the grinning monster beside him. "Damn you!" Parker said. "I told you to kill him, not bring him here!"

The creature laughed. "We drop

him. I like drop 'em." The other monster stood beside him grinning idiotically and saying nothing.

"You're damn right we'll drop him," Parker said. "And I've a mind to drop you with him."

Alan Hale moved like an uncoiling spring. During the ride upward his hand had slipped under his coat and closed on the long bladed knife he'd hidden there. Now his legs catapulted him clear of the basket and headlong toward Parker.

The big man cried hoarsely and staggered backward. His hand ripped into his pocket and there was the glint of metal as an automatic came free. But he had stumbled against the winding machinery as he jumped backward, knocking himself off balance. Hale reached him before the gun was ready. The knife slashed down.

He had aimed high at the shoulder, but Parker's upthrust arm deflected the blade, turned it downward. With all Hale's strength behind it the steel ripped into the big man's chest.

Hale jerked at the knife but it wouldn't come free. He let go, flinging himself around to face the monsters.

There was only the hole in the deck, the swift uncoiling-rush of cable. The creatures' thin screams seemed to hang for awhile in the dirigible, and fade.

Parker had stumbled back against the machinery, releasing the cage into a straight drop.

"He lived long enough to tell me where you were hidden," Hale said to Dorothy Mardan. "When he saw he'd lost he talked, as much as he could. The boy was a child adopted at birth. Parker had never liked it, but his wife had left it most of her money. Recently Parker had lost a fortune and he planned to get it back.

"I'd hoped to catch the monster when he came for Sental but Sental was hiding in a downtown hotel and couldn't be found. Probably Parker didn't mean to bother with him anyway. I suspected Parker when I learned at the Probate Office that the contracting company which has been getting most of the city's engineering bids was owned by a holding company, all of whose stock was owned by a man named Kardin; and Parker and Kardin had handwriting exactly similar. Nobody was supposed to know about the proposed reforms except the three men connected; yet whoever was back of the trouble knew. So I tried to investigate all three, and also to see where a lot of city money had been going. There had been a lot of engineering work, sewers, streets, etc., so I looked into that. Parker had been getting most of the bids himself through his holding company, and any reform of the city government would probably make him lose out. He couldn't afford that, but he needed extra money too. So he knocked his own son off, to get that money. And he meant to get a ransom for you. He had an idea your father's wealthy. Where he got those ape men to help him I don't know; out of a circus probably. But like most freaks they were half-witted and Parker had trouble making them do exactly as they were told."

She snuggled her blonde head against his shoulder. "I'm still afraid," she said laughing. "I want to stay very close to you."

"I'll keep you close," he said, "but I didn't think for a while that I would. You should have seen me trying to get that little dirigible down. I'd been up in one several times on news stories, but I didn't really know how to fly it. Thank God it wasn't an airplane. That dirigible hit the ground hard enough."

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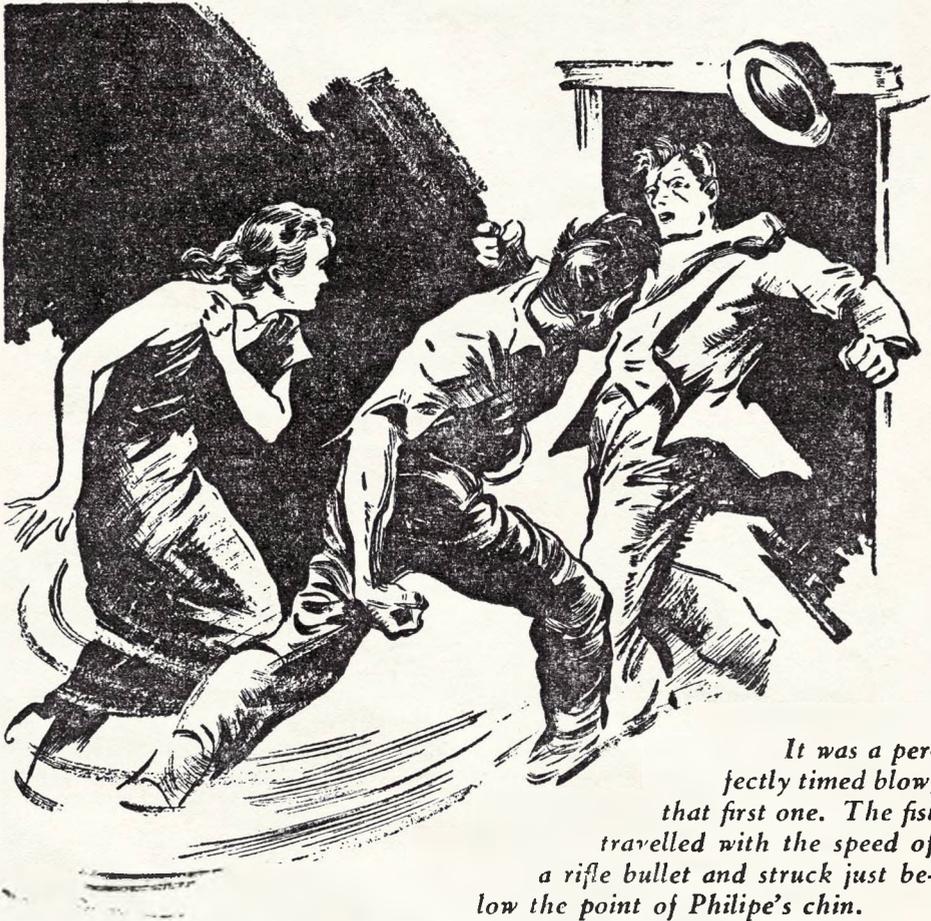
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# THE GENTLEMAN IS DEAD!

by HUGH B. CAVE



*It was a perfectly timed blow, that first one. The fist travelled with the speed of a rifle bullet and struck just below the point of Philippe's chin.*

---

*It's tough enough for the cops when a corpse stays dead—but when it doesn't . . .*

---

**T**HERE was nothing imposing about the exterior of Kendall's place. There was not even a sign above the entrance. The average pedestrian would have walked past without noticing even the door itself.

You walked up a straight flight of stairs, opened another door at the top and paced along an uncarpeted corridor. There, if you were not known to Ambrose, the doorman, your parade ended and you were politely but ominously re-

quested to depart.

If Ambrose knew you—and he could never be fooled—you said, "Good evening, Ambrose," and walked over that last, unimposing threshold into a blaze of glory.

Galen Dole murmured, "Good evening, Ambrose," and went on in, knowing that his chances of getting out again were extremely thin.

It was a peculiar situation. For three weeks, night after night, he had been

coming here, losing money at roulette, faro, black-jack and all the rest of Kendall's sucker games. It was the city's money, the taxpayer's money. He had lost it deliberately.

At the same time he had garnered amazing evidence of Kendall's crookedness, and for more than a week now had been in a position to put Kendall behind bars.

But there had been a woman.

Where Marguerite Trent fitted into the scheme of things, Dole had been unable to find out. That he had met her before somewhere, he was positive. So he had waited.

This afternoon there had been a phone call. "Mr. Galen Dole, I believe?" Kendall's voice! "Mr. Dole, I have an important proposition to talk over with you, concerning me, my place of business, and —er—a young lady in whom you have shown a certain amount of interest. For her sake I suggest that you drop in this evening. About eleven, shall we say?"

There'd been a leak, of course, somewhere. Kendall was an octopus with many tentacles. Probably one or more of those tentacles had reached right into Headquarters and sucked out the news that the trap might be sprung at any moment.

Kendall had payed his trump, in a desperate attempt to avert disaster.

The casino was quiet tonight. That, perhaps, was because the evening was still quite young. The modernistic clock above the bar said ten-forty. Philipe, the suave and mighty-muscled bouncer, leaned there sipping a drink. At sight of Galen Dole he gently lowered the glass to the bar and straightened out of his slouch.

Philipe was like a cobra. His small dark eyes missed nothing. In action—and Dole had seen him in action several times—he could strike with a flowing swiftness too fast for the eye to follow.

"Ah, good evening, Philipe!"

"Good evening, Mr. Dole."

"Mr. Kendall is in his office?"

"Yes, Mr. Dole."

Dole flipped a bill to the bar. "Scotch Henry." While he sipped the liquor, his gaze strayed casually around the room.

"Like a morgue in here tonight, Philipe."

"Yes, Mr. Dole—a morgue." The word was slightly accented.

Dole smiled. A not unpleasant tingle crept through his lean, six-foot frame. His hands trembled slightly, as they always did when the presence of danger caused the blood in him to run a bit faster. In the war, his hands had always trembled like that when, high in the clouds, he had spotted an enemy plane approaching.

He smiled again at the bouncer. "Morgues, Philipe, are for corpses." Quietly, then, he strolled across the room, pushed open swinging doors and paced along a broad, endless corridor.

The carpet was thick and soft. Expensive paintings in excellent taste adorned the paneled walls. The small, luxuriously furnished rooms on either side were private gaming chambers where Kendall's more illustrious clients might enjoy themselves away from the hum of the crowd.

The last room of all was Arthur Parker Kendall's office. The door was closed.

Dole knocked gently, with the tips of his tapered fingers.

He knocked again.

THE vague half-smile on his lips became a frown. His hand closed over the knob, turned it, and slowly pushed the door open. His other hand was in the pocket of his evening coat.

His eyes narrowed a bit, and he said softly: "Ah-h-h!" Then he entered, stepping over a sprawled shape on the floor, and closed the door behind him.

Arthur Parker Kendall would not keep the appointment. He would never again keep an appointment with anyone. He sat at his desk, slumped forward as if asleep, his head resting on his arms. Blood had flowed in large quantity from a gaping hole in the center of his pasty forehead.

The man on the floor was dead, too, and was to Galen Dole a stranger. Older than Kendall, he had a face white as calcimine, a shock of iron gray hair. He, too, had bled profusely.

The pool of blood on the gleaming black floor, the puddle on the desk, seemed grotesquely out of place in such magnificent surroundings. More out of place, even, than the corpses themselves. And the slow drip, drip, drip of crimson

drops from the desk to the floor reminded Dole of the beating of a large, naked heart.

A sigh escaped Dole's lips. A sigh of disappointment. He took a clean white handkerchief from his pocket, dropped it over the gun that lay on the rug, and picked the gun up.

It was a small, pearl-handled thirty-two. Definitely a lady's gun. Placing it on the desk, he pulled the telephone toward him and dialed a number.

"This," he said a moment later, "is Galen Dole. I'm in Kendall's private office, Trenchard. Kendall's been murdered. I'll wait here until your men arrive."

He emptied the pockets, then, of the man with iron gray hair, sorted out the articles thus collected, and, from an identification card in the man's wallet, learned that the corpse's name was Wallace Deering. Deering appeared to be a broker of some sort.

Galen Dole didn't care much. The case had become very ordinary and would be handled by men trained to such routine. To Galen Dole, the business of detecting, as such, was a difficult, mysterious business.

He locked the door, slouched to a chair and sat down. Then he saw the glove.

It was a lady's glove, made of black doeskin, gauntlet type. It lay against the gleaming chromium base of an ash-stand, close to the door. Dole picked it up.

He held his breath then, and glanced sharply at the dead face of Arthur Parker Kendall, and at the pearl-handled revolver on the desk.

For the glove bore two significant initials, modernistically cut from silver. M. T.

Marguerite Trent!

Frowning fiercely, Dole examined the gun again. Three bullets had been fired from it.

Fourteen hours later, Galen Dole leaned on a desk at Headquarters and, with a pencil, drew a rough outline of a human head, complete with brain.

"The bullet, Trenchard," he explained quietly, "passed through the anterior section of the right hemisphere—like this." A dotted line showed the course of the slug through the skull and brain of Mr. Wallace Deering.

"So what?" Trenchard growled.

"Try it on yourself sometime," Dole said, smiling, "and tell me how it feels."

"Now, listen, Dole." There was a whine of impatience in the inspector's voice. "For Pete's sake, quit kidding about this mess. Those two guys are dead, and somebody killed 'em. We got to find that somebody!"

"There are fingerprints, Trenchard, on the gun."

"Yeah, but whose?"

"There were three bullets fired from the gun, but we've found only one of them. The one that killed Kendall."

"I know that, damn it!" Trenchard banged the desk with his calloused fist. "But—"

But Galen Dole was talking again, in a drawling tone that commanded attention. "I've questioned everyone who was in the casino that night—the bartender, the bouncer, and the old fellow who was sweeping up downstairs. Philippe and the barman say that Kendall came in about nine-thirty and went straight to his office. About ten, Deering came in. No one else."

"Yeah . . ."

"Philippe and the bartender were drinking, and the big electric phonograph was going. They didn't hear any shots. But the old guy downstairs, sweeping up, distinctly heard two shots, or sounds that could have been shots, about ten-fifteen."

"He's paid to push a broom," Dole declared gently. "I said he heard two shots, Trenchard."

"Then why in hell didn't he investigate?"

"Huh?"

"The gun was fired three times; the old fellow heard two shots, and we found one bullet."

"All right, all right, so what?"

DOLE still had the pencil in his hand. Leaning over the desk again, he shielded the pencil-point and elaborately lettered a word on the paper. He was grinning then, and the grin went with him as he strolled out of the office.

Inspector Trenchard stared at the paper. The word was NUTS. Trenchard sputtered an oath, put his head in his hands and groaned.

"I got one brain in the whole lousy department," the inspector moaned, "and it has to be his. Day in and day

out he acts like a boy scout. He plays the slot machines. He pokes his nose into trouble just for the hell of it. He's a sucker for good-looking dames. He won't work, he hates his job, he brings me a bunch of scallions every time I fire him. What a guy! What an outfit! No wonder I'm nuts!"

By that time, Galen Dole was out of the building and hiking down the street to a cab stand. And the grin on Dole's thin face had been replaced by a muscular scowl which appeared to be permanent.

He took a black doeskin glove from his pocket and glared at it. By all rights it shouldn't be in his possession; it should be at Headquarters. But Headquarters knew nothing about that glove.

Yet if Marguerite Trent had killed Kendall and Deering, why hadn't Philippe or the bartender seen her enter the club?

Dole shrugged his shoulders, piled into a cab. The cab took him out to Brookdale and let him off in front of the Fernwall Apartments, on Fern Street. The key-case in his hand bore the initials of Mr. Wallace Deering.

Apartment twenty-two was on the second floor.

It was a front apartment with five nicely furnished rooms. With the door closed he potted around, peering into closets, opening doors, closing them. It was a job he disliked. A job which ordinarily would have bored him stiff. But Marguerite Trent was a very lovely girl.

In the living-room he found brown stains on the light-blue carpet. More stains on a small table beside a large, expensive club chair. And a scar in the wallpaper which unmistakably had been made by a bullet.

And something else; a faint and puzzling scent of perfume, vaguely familiar.

And, in a neat little waste-container which could be made to vanish into the side of a modernistic writing desk—a glove. The mate to the one in his pocket.

An unsightly rent marred the palm of it.

He sat down, stared at the blood-stains, the bullet-scar on the wall. All this, this analytical business, was out of his line. Trenchard, now, would revel in a problem such as this. Maybe.

Half an hour later Dole closed the

door behind him. Twenty minutes after that he pushed open the unpretentious door which gave access to the gambling casino of the late Arthur Parker Kendall.

Ambrose, the sentry, was not on duty upstairs. Dole walked in. The place was apparently deserted.

He strolled forward, staring about him. The gambling tables were covered with duty-looking green cloth. The bar was empty except for a can of polish and a rag. More than ever like a morgue, the whole layout had an air of silence and decay that was downright depressing.

For no good reason the tapered fingers of Dole's right hand began to tremble, as they always did when his mind registered intuitions of impending peril.

He strolled down the corridor to Kendall's private office, entered and stood by the desk, scowling. The door stayed open. If there were footsteps, he wanted to hear them, not be caught napping. But first there was a problem to be solved. The problem of the missing bullet.

The sweep-up fellow had heard two shots. But the police had found only one bullet in Kendall's sanctum.

Dole paced every inch of the floor, moved furniture, examined the walls and ceiling. It was a job he disliked, and as the moments dragged by he became short-tempered. Damn it, there'd been three bullets fired out of that gun! Where was the third?

He talked to himself. "Mister, if you had to fire a gun in here and didn't want the slug to be found . . ."

His gaze fell on the ash-stand near the door, and he said softly: "Ah-h-h!" Already he had moved the stand half a dozen times, but this time he did more; he turned it over.

The metal base of it had a small, round hump, dead center. Dole's frown was suddenly a smile.

Holding the thing between his knees, he unscrewed the top, shook out ashes and cigarette-butts. Something made a thud on the floor. A bullet, hammered almost flat by its contact with the weighted base of the stand.

"You poke the muzzle of the gun into the ash-stand," Dole said softly, "and pull the trigger. And who but a lad with no brains would ever think to look *there* for the bullet?"

HE closed the door behind him and strolled back down the corridor. The grin on his face was the grin of a little boy with a new toy. It vanished abruptly when a voice said ominously behind him:

"You're not leaving yet, flatfoot!"

Dole was rigid a moment, then turned with almost insolent grace and gazed complacently into the scowling face of the man who strode toward him.

"Ah!" he murmured. "At last!" His fingers were trembling.

Most men would have been cowed by the forty-five in Philipe's huge paw. To most men, the wolfish leer that twisted across Philipe's generous mouth would have brought consternation, at least—and probably fear. Dole leaned against the wall, returned the bouncer's gaze and said easily:

"I'm pleasantly surprised, Philipe. I came here looking for you and was disappointed to find you out."

"Yeah?" There was nothing of the gentleman about the mighty-muscled bouncer now. He had discarded the veneer. "Well, I was figurin' on lookin' you up, too, Dole. Come into Kendall's office."

"But I just came from there."

"And you're goin' back."

Dole sighed. The gun swung with him as he slouched away from the wall. It followed him down the hall and over the office threshold. With the door shut, Philipe stabbed a glance at the little pile of ashes and butts on the floor and said through a scowl: "What's all this?"

"I was wondering," the detective shrugged, "what kind of cigarettes Kendall smoked."

"Yeah? Well, I hope you found out. Sit down!"

"Aren't you taking an unnecessary chance? We could be interrupted here, you know."

"We won't be."

Dole sat in the chair which had recently supported the corpse of Arthur Parker Kendall. He kept his hands in full view on the desk because he knew that if he didn't, Philipe would order him to. His fists were clenched, so that the bouncer would not notice the quivering of his fingers. For years he had been half ashamed of that quivering.

"So . . . ?"

"You're gonna do me a favor," Phil-

ipe snarled.

"So?"

"You're gonna tell me what you know, *all* you know, about that Marguerite Trent dame!"

Galen Dole successfully concealed his astonishment. "My dear fellow," he murmured, "that's what I came here to ask *you!* Personally I know nothing about the woman. Absolutely nothing. She is most charming, of course, and—"

"Lay off the horse play! You know who that dame is and what she is. She didn't pal around with Kendall for her health, and you know it. And you're gonna hand me the details!"

"You confuse me, Philipe."

"I'll do more'n confuse you. I'll blow your brains out!"

Dole leaned back in his chair, gravely studied his adversary. An expression of intense disgust crept across his face and stayed there.

"You're an abhorrent sort of skunk, Philipe. Just what's on your mind?"

"I'll tell you what's on my mind," Philipe snapped. "I want to know the life history of that dame, and you're gonna hand it to me. You're gonna write it all down and sign it. You're a dick, see? Well, that dame's got something on me, or I think she has, and I'm gonna get something on her. There's a pen in front of you and paper in the drawer. And be careful when you reach into that drawer. I can knock the spots out of a card from here."

Dole stared at him a moment, nodded slowly and opened the desk drawer. "As you say, Philipe," he murmured. "As you say. The life history of Marguerite Trent . . ."

He wrote slowly, partially shielding the gliding pen-nib with his left arm, yet not conveying to the watching bouncer that he was deliberately striving to hide the words. At intervals he leaned back, gazed thoughtfully at the ceiling and thought, or pretended to think, out loud, for Philipe's benefit.

"Now let me see. In Boston . . . that was in 1931 . . . she worked with Joe DeLippo. Later, in Detroit . . ."

Philipe stared straight at him. On Philipe's lips a thin smile of triumph took form and broadened. Gripping the gun in his right hand, he relaxed a bit, slicked his hair back, breathed deeply with satisfaction. Had the desk not been

between him and the detective he might perhaps have stood up and paced forward to see what Dole was writing. But he seemed content to wait for the finished product.

Dole pushed the paper over the desk. Philippe stretched to take it.

"I, Galen Dole," Philippe read, "do hereby swear that the following comprises my total and complete knowledge of the life and activities of the woman who chooses to call herself Marguerite Trent."

PHILIPPE'S mouth broadened in a grin, revealing white teeth and pink gums.

"Marguerite Trent," he read, "is now about twenty-six years of age. She was not always, of course, twenty-six years of age." His eyes narrowed; he shot a quick glance of suspicion at Dole, then continued reading. "She is, however, a mysterious and . . ."

Philippe stiffened in his chair. A low rumbling sound gathered volume in his throat, but he kept on reading. He was not watching Dole's right hand.

That hand, awaiting the exact psychological moment to strike—the moment when Philippe's attention was almost magnetically drawn by the text of the letter—suddenly shot up, back, and forward again with the speed of light.

The pen with which Dole had written the letter sped point-first across the desk and sank half an inch deep into Philippe's gun-wrist.

The beefy bouncer yammered a howl of pain and lurched erect. Galen Dole slapped both hands down on the desk, vaulted the barrier and planted the soles of his shoes on Philippe's chest.

Philippe staggered back, gasping more with amazement than with pain. The pen fell from his wrist as he whipped up his hands. But Dole was upon him. Dole's hands, both of them, curled like lash-ends around the bleeding wrist and violently twisted. Philippe's gun clattered to the floor.

Dole kicked the gun. It skidded across the room. With an insolent smile curling his lips the detective went to work.

His fist was a rapier. His feet whispered a song of mockery and his smile drove the muscular Philippe into a blind storm of rage. Snarling and bellowing, the bouncer struck blindly at a lithe,

grinning target which avoided him without half trying.

The rapier left bloodied his mouth, bruised his huge chest. It came from all directions, stung him, maddened him, until his rage made him careless. Then he flung out his arms and charged blindly, hoping to catch and crush his adversary in a bear-hug.

Dole's right hand crossed over. Travelling less than a dozen inches it crashed with the explosive force of a grenade, straight to the bull's-eye. Like a butchered steer, Philippe shuddered, collapsed. Not once had he even touched his adversary.

Galen Dole stood over him and said softly: "You lack technique, my friend. You live in an age of soft foods and over-indulgence. I'll take the letter, please."

The letter lay under Philippe's sprawled body, and in order to get at it Dole had to bend over, seize the body by one shoulder and exert himself. He did so, crumpled the letter into his pocket, but did not straighten from his stooped position.

He stayed as he was because a gun-muzzle was suddenly jabbed against the small of his back and a brittle voice rasped: "It's not so easy! Stand still!"

Henry, the bartender of Arthur Parker Kendall's establishment, had taken two swift steps over the threshold and was in command of the situation.

Galen Dole said softly: "Ah-h-h!" "Walk straight ahead," Henry ordered, "and then turn around, over by the desk. No funny business, or—"

Dole obeyed the command. When he turned, he kept his arms bent at the elbows, his fingertips pointing to the ceiling. His fingers were trembling and his gaze was fixed rigidly on the gun in Henry's hand.

It would not do to make a false move while that gun was aimed at him. Henry, though short and slender when compared with the mastodontic Philippe, had been a bar-tender for years and undoubtedly knew the ropes.

"We'll wait," Henry said, "until the boss comes to."

"The boss?" Dole murmured. "I thought Kendall was your boss."

"Shut up."

Philippe was groaning. In a moment, Philippe returned to the world of the living and pushed himself to a sitting po-

sition, then stared about him. He seemed confused. He staggered erect, glared from Dole to the bar-tender, and snarled irritably: "What is this?"

"The detective, here," Henry said calmly, "had the jump on you. I tagged him. What'll we do with him?"

Philippe's memory functioned, and a crimson flush crept into his battered face. He dragged a deep breath, balled his hands into fists and made sucking sounds with his lips.

"I'll show you what I'm gonna do with him! By God—!"

"Take it easy," Henry said. "You and him already made enough noise in here to wake the dead. How do we know the cops aren't watching this place?"

"Huh?"

"We should take him over to where the girl is. What you do then is your own business, but if you do it here I'm leaving in a hurry."

PHILIPPE thought that one over. He gazed at Dole, and a wolfish smile of anticipation spread across his blood-smearred mouth.

"There won't be no chance of interference where we're takin' you, Dole," he said. "There won't be no one to hear you holler. And when you get through hollerin', you'll write a letter for me—if you're able—and it won't be the kind of letter you wrote the last time! Get goin'!"

"Where?" Dole asked quietly.

"Get goin'! You'll find out!"

Philippe led the way and Dole followed, with the bar-tender's gun denting his back. There was no talk then. They paraded down the broad corridor to a rear flight of stairs, and down the stairs to a door that opened on an alley.

There Philippe said viciously: "You let out one holler, wise guy, and it's curtains! And don't think we'd hesitate!"

Dole smiled, murmured gently: "You have nothing to worry about, Philippe." But his fingers were quivering.

They took him along the alley, then across it, and through a door in a high board fence. The building which loomed above him then was a tenement house. Owned, Dole reflected, by the late Arthur Parker Kendall. A cold chill of anticipation wormed its way up the detective's spine as the door clicked shut behind him and Philippe said: "You

first. Straight up."

The place had a musty odor of unuse and was black as a tomb. The stairs were steep. Careful where he put his feet, Dole ascended slowly, stopped at the top, and was harshly ordered to keep going, along a dark, narrow hall.

"In here," Philippe snapped, thrusting open a door.

There was a light inside: a cheap bridge-lamp, glowing in the corner of an unfurnished room with stained yellow walls, cracked ceiling, and painted board floor. Dole entered, breathing slowly and deeply to solidify his strength for the ordeal that lay ahead.

Philippe, striding over the threshold behind him, halted suddenly and stared with widening eyes at a radiator in the corner.

"She ain't here! She's gone!"

A dirty strip of rag, apparently a gag, lay on the floor beside the radiator. Beside that lay a pair of handcuffs. Apparently Marguerite Trent had been handcuffed to the radiator. But the room was now empty.

The silence, after Philippe's exclamation of amazement, was ear-splitting. Then it was shattered by the torrent of abuse that spewed from the bouncer's lips. He stormed forward, snatched up the cuffs and examined them. He whirled and glared around him.

Galen Dole stared at something else—at a brown silk shoelace which lay there on the floor. And the expression on Dole's face would have puzzled his captors had they been less concerned with the escape of their female prisoner.

Light was dawning. The Dole memory had at last fastened on something definite in the mysterious past of the woman who called herself Marguerite Trent.

"Listen," Henry said, interrupting the sputterings of Philippe. "I was here myself only a little while ago and the girl was asleep. She isn't far from here, I'll bet my right hand. If we put the cuffs on this fellow and take a look around . . ."

Philippe thrust his left hand out and seized Dole's coat lapels, dragged Dole toward him. The ugly leer on his face told the detective what was coming.

Philippe's right fist made an unpleasant crunching noise against the angle of Dole's jaw. "And that ain't all!" the

bouncer snarled. "When I get back, I'll take care of you right!"

Dazed by the blow, Dole leaned back against the wall, but was not permitted to stay there. Philipe waded in, hurled him to the floor.

When the two men left the room, Dole was handcuffed to the radiator, his face aching and bloody from the mauling he had absorbed. His eyes were bright, though, and with cocked head he listened to the receding footbeats of his captors. Then he went to work.

It was comparatively simple when you knew how. First a shoelace; and that problem was simplified because, by turning his head and dropping one shoulder, he could reach with his teeth the shoelace which had been discarded by Marguerite Trent.

A shoelace, a pair of ordinary handcuffs—and then some clever manipulations with strong, lean fingers. Painful, of course, when you were fighting against time and did not dare to rest. But Marguerite Trent had done it—he himself had taught her how!—and in five minutes he was free.

The manacles thudded to the floor. Dole wiped perspiration from his face, pulled his knees under him and stood up. And found himself staring in amazement at a woman who stood in the doorway of his prison room.

"You!" he whispered.

She came toward him. Amazingly beautiful, this Marguerite Trent, even with her hair dishevelled, her clothes awry. That wide, soft mouth, those probing eyes in which every known color seemed to be magically blended . . .

"I came to help you," she said softly, "but I see you don't need me."

HE listened a moment, heard nothing in the deep silence of the house. Almost savagely he gripped her arms. "Why do they want *you*?"

"I know too much about them."

"Know what?"

"From the beginning, Philipe has been the silent partner of Arthur Kendall. Now Philipe is the sole owner of the club. Always it has been crooked. I can prove that, and he knows it. He fears me. At gun-point they brought me here, and Philipe told me then that he would get from you my complete history. And—"

"I could have given it to him, you know," Dole said, smiling.

"Ah! You remember me at last!"

There was laughter in Dole's eyes. In his mind was the realization that he and Marguerite Trent were in danger; that Philipe and Henry might return at any moment. But this would not be the first time he had faced danger for the sake of spending a few moments with a beautiful woman.

"Tia Juana," he mused, and raised her hand to his lips in a gesture that was not even slightly tinged with mockery. "Tia Juana, and a beautiful girl named Maria. Remember you? I owe you a thousand apologies for having forgotten you! But it was a long time ago and you've changed. And even then you favored another chap . . ."

"And married him, Galen."

Dole stiffened imperceptibly. "Married him?" His voice was low, vibrant.

"I loved him. He was wild, foolish with his money, but I loved him and thought I'd be able to sober him. I failed. He lost every cent, gambling. That is why I came here. Paul left me, tried to regain his losses and went deeper into debt. He committed suicide."

"You came here with Wallace Deering?"

"No. I met him here, through Kendall. He, too, was a fool. Time and again I warned him that Kendall was crooked, but no, he insisted on finding it out for himself, the hard way."

"And that is why," Dole said grimly, "your life is in danger now." His hands tightened on her arms, and his fingers were trembling. "But I admire you, my dear! You've courage!"

"In Tia Juana," she said softly, "it was more than admiration."

Dole did not answer. Alert in spite of his disdain for danger, he had heard footsteps at the end of the hall. Abruptly his smile faded and he thrust the girl back against the wall, away from the door.

Marguerite, staring at him with widening eyes, thrust out a hand to stop him as he glided silently toward the threshold. "But you have no gun!" she whispered fearfully.

"It would be sacrilege," Dole murmured, "to use one. I owe these gentlemen something."

He was waiting in a half crouch, fists clenched and a dull gleam in his eyes, when Philipe came over the threshold. Even before Philipe realized that the prisoner was no longer handcuffed to the radiator, Dole was in action.

It was a perfectly timed blow, that first one. The fist travelled with the speed of a rifle bullet and struck just below the blunt point of Philipe's chin. A sledge would have done no more damage.

Philipe's two hundred odd pounds of beef rose as if yanked by chains. Lamp-light gleamed between him and the floor.

With Dole's lowered head smashing into his chest he staggered backward into the hall, hurling off balance the man who would have entered behind him.

Henry, the bartender, was not too astonished to use his gun, but had to contend with the blockading bulk of Philipe, who sprawled all over him. In a graceful headlong dive Galen Dole swept Henry's legs from the floor. The bartender crashed.

Dole's fingers, the same tapered fingers which always trembled when danger was imminent, closed in a steel grip around his gun-wrist before he could recover.

When Henry did recover, Dole was standing over him, smiling, and the gun had changed ownership. And Marguerite Trent, clutching at Dole's arm, was saying anxiously:

"Someone is coming, Galen!"

Dole scowled. Downstairs a door had thudded shut, and someone *was* coming. A sweep of Dole's left arm placed the girl behind him. Still watching Henry, he took a backward step which gave him command of the stairs.

Then he uttered a low laugh of relief and relaxed. "My good friend, Trenchard!" he murmured.

**I**NSPECTOR TRENCHARD had not come alone. With him were policemen. And apparently Dole's smile was not the contagious kind, for Trenchard, puffing to the top of the stairs, glared at Marguerite Trent and uttered an explosive gust of triumph.

"Damn it!" he spewed. "At last!"

"And about time," Dole said sarcastically. "You had men watching the club, didn't you? They must have seen these two gorillas walk me out of there.

What kept you?"

"They saw the parade," Trenchard growled defensively, "and sent for me. Said they couldn't figure out whether anything was wrong or not, the way you and Henry and Philipe hiked out of there."

"All right. Now you can walk these two back with you."

"What for?"

"They're crooks, Trenchard. Crooks."

"Crooks, hell! What I want is the man or woman—" Trenchard emphasized the word "woman"—"who murdered Kendall and Deering. And we just found out half an hour ago that this dame's been friends with Deering right along! Visited him frequently. Now she'll answer some questions."

"The word is *lady*, Trenchard," Dole said softly. "Not *dame*."

"Huh?"

Gazing at the policemen, Dole said firmly: "Put handcuffs on these two gorillas before Mr. Trenchard forgets that they exist."

The policemen obeyed him. Trenchard, with other things on his mind, glared at the girl.

"Now," Dole said, "suppose you and Miss Trent and I have a talk in more pleasant surroundings."

With obvious misgivings the inspector followed Dole and the girl down the hall.

There were chairs in the room Dole entered, and with a better light on her, Marguerite Trent was truly exquisite. Even Trenchard seemed to appreciate that, for he stared at her uncomfortably and spent some time chewing his lower lip. He did not again refer to her as a *dame*.

"Now then," Dole said, "the idea is apparently this: *You* believe that Miss Trent murdered Kendall and Deering. Right?"

"Well, I ain't saying . . ."

"Suppose you tell the inspector, Miss Trent," Dole said, facing the girl, "exactly what happened in Deering's apartment before he went to the club."

She nodded. "I'll begin at the beginning, Inspector," she said calmly. "In Tia Juana I married a young man who had considerable money. It was stolen from him by Arthur Kendall, and I determined to get it back. I followed Kendall to this city and won his friendship. Then I met Wallace Deering and

realized that through Deering I might succeed in ruining Kendall. Deering was wealthy. The trouble was, he was also a fool. Kendall took every dollar he owned.

"I was desperate when I went to Deering's apartment that night. I had a gun with me and was determined to visit Kendall and have a showdown. But Deering would not listen to me. He was terribly despondent. While I was trying to reason with him, he took my gun and shot himself."

"He did *what?*?" Trenchard demanded.

"Shot himself," Dole murmured, "and then went to the club."

"My God! Am I crazy or is everyone else? How can a guy shoot himself and then go out for a walk?"

"By placing the bullet," Dole said, "through the anterior portion of the right hemisphere. I thought I made that quite clear at Headquarters, when I explained it to you. Deering shot himself and the bullet passed through his brain without killing him. Undoubtedly he was more surprised than you are. Then what happened, Miss Trent?"

"He—didn't die. He just stood there, looking at the gun for a moment, then went and studied himself in a mirror. Then he began laughing. Violently. Out of his mind." She shuddered.

"And what did you do?"

"I tried to calm him. I would have sent for a doctor, I suppose, but when I tried to make him lie down he struck me." Her shapely fingers crept to her chin and gingerly caressed it. "I was unconscious quite some time. The blow was a hard one, and I suppose the general shock of what had happened . . . anyway, when I did come to I hardly knew what to do. Deering was gone. I suppose I should have called the police, but . . ." She shrugged her shoulders.

**T**RENCHARD, bleary-eyed with bewilderment, turned helplessly to Galen Dole. "Will you please," he mumbled, "tell me what happened to Deering after that?"

"Certainly, Trenchard. Put yourself in his place. You are desperate; you've lost all your money to a crook. You attempt suicide but it doesn't take. You know, however, that you have but a short time to live, and you decide on the spur

of the moment, as it were, to get even with the thief who ruined you."

"Yeah."

"You go to the thief's place of business, taking with you the very gun with which you have already tried to kill yourself. Suspecting nothing, he escorts you into his private office. You kill him. And then, Trenchard—and I frankly admit I don't quite understand the motive for this—you decide to lay the blame for your own death and his death on an entirely innocent person, Miss Trent."

"That," said the girl in a low voice, "was because he suffered from the mistaken belief that Kendall and I were more than friends, even after I had assured him a hundred times that I was deliberately courting Kendall's friendship in order to learn the man's weaknesses. Deering loved me. He knew his own cause was hopeless, yet he bitterly resented my apparent affection for Kendall."

"Motive established," Dole said, nodding. "So then, Trenchard—you're still listening?—so then, in order to frame Miss Trent, Deering placed the gun, *her* gun, on the floor of the death-room and left beside it a glove which belonged to her."

"What glove?" Trenchard snapped.

"Pardon me; I held out that bit of evidence. Thought it might confuse you. Here." From his pocket Dole pulled a crumpled black glove, but instead of handing it to the inspector he gave it to the girl.

The girl's eyes widened. "But I threw this away in Deering's apartment, days ago!"

"I know you did. I found the mate to it in the waste-basket."

"Now wait a minute," Trenchard said ominously.

"Not at all. The glove didn't enter into it even for an instant. It fits the right hand, Trenchard. If Miss Trent had worn it to keep her prints off the gun, she surely would not have removed it at the scene of the crime."

"Go on," Trenchard growled.

"Yes, of course. We were at the point where Deering, having murdered Kendall, was completing his childish attempt to frame Miss Trent for the crime. He knew, of course, that he was dying. He knew that he and Kendall would be found dead together."

"Yeah?"

"So there had to be two shots, Trenchard, in case anyone heard them. But it took only one shot to kill Kendall. And he could not fire the second bullet into the floor or the ceiling, because even you, Trenchard, would have known then that the second bullet had not killed *him*. You see?"

"My eyesight's all right," Trenchard snapped.

"So he fired that second bullet into the ash-stand," Dole said. "And when I found that bullet, the rest was simple arithmetic."

Trenchard stared at the floor and thought it all over. Very slowly he nodded. "I guess," he said, "that gives Miss Trent a clean bill of health. I guess the case is closed."

Dole was smiling at him. "It's odd, Trenchard," Dole said, "how many persons seem to have worked on the false idea that Miss Trent has a past. Even Philipe, for instance, was sure of it. At gun-point he forced me to put down all I know about her. Perhaps you'd like to read it."

From his pocket he drew a crumpled sheet of paper, politely smoothed out the wrinkles before handing it over. Trenchard narrowed his eyes at it.

He read: "I, Galen Dole, do hereby swear that the following comprises my total and complete knowledge of the life and activities of the woman who chooses to call herself Marguerite Trent.

"Marguerite Trent is now about twenty-six years of age. She was not always, of course, twenty-six years of age. She is, however, a mysterious and strikingly beautiful woman, with dark eyes, dark hair, entrancing lips. When she walks, it is with the grace and dignity of a queen. When she talks, her voice is an intoxicating murmur of cool water moving through shady woods. When she laughs, her eyes and voice laugh together, and—"

Trenchard snorted. "What the hell!" he said, and then stopped, stood staring. His eyes widened and an expression of intense amazement spread across his face.

Marguerite Trent was in Galen Dole's arms, softly sobbing.

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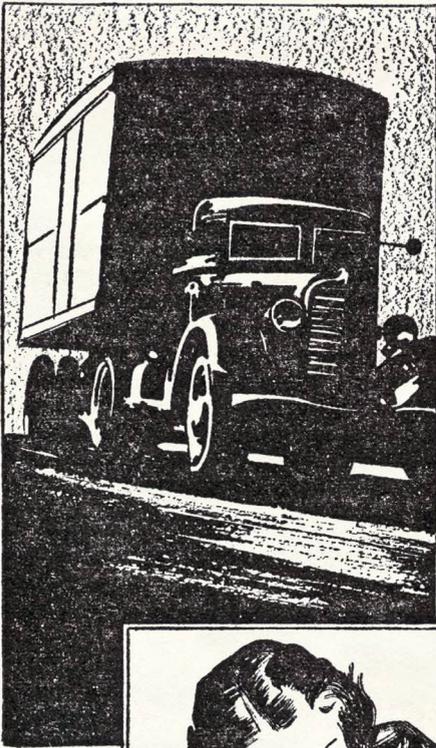
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# DEATH



**W**INTER'S howling squadrons of rain, sleet and chill wind were bombing Campbell's Gap. Reb McKay took the three thousand foot highway without raising his foot. His chains purred beneath and the twin windshield wipers cut protesting arcs of visibility.

Fifty miles ahead was Sangertown, division office of the Great Southern Truck Lines, where trouble awaited. And it was Reb McKay's business to get to points of trouble quickly. Tonight he journeyed with insufficient information. A truck driver had been killed and there had been no hijacking. Dave Horsley, traffic chief, was already in Sangertown. He had reached Reb, headed south on vacation, at Roanoke. The storm had cut them off before much had been said.

"Probably an accident," Reb grumbled. "Fair enough weather for anything to happen, when they overload six wheelers. And Ben Furst is good at that. I lose a fishing trip on a routine case any insurance adjuster could handle and—"

Reb McKay forgot his criticism of Furst, the Sangertown division chief. He forgot his fishing trip too, for a slowly moving sedan cut across his vision on a sharp curve, moved directly across his path not a hundred feet distant.

Even as Reb slammed the brake pedal and felt the rear wheels skid, he saw twin, orange colored flames lance out from the sedan's windows.

A hole appeared in the arc of the right windshield wiper. All these things Reb saw as he acted almost mechanically. He raised his foot to ease the skid, yanking the wheels with the mad lurch of his car. White painted posts, cable connected, loomed off the shoulder. And the orange pencils kept flashing. Something struck the rear door, as if a stone had been hurled. Reb knew what it was—bullets.

The sedan lurched forward, and Reb held to the shoulder, nursing his car and regaining control. He saw the left fender barely clear the sedan's rear bumper. He saw a face, caught in reflected light, a face that was long and swarthy, and

# KEEPS A DIARY By SAM CARSON



*Reb McKay was a lawyer by profession, a deep-sea fisherman by blood, and a violinist by nature . . . but when they found the brother of the girl Reb loved pinned under a demolished truck, Reb became a detective—by instinct!*

then Reb's car was back on the road.

It was over so swiftly that Reb could hardly believe it had happened at all. The lower curve was deserted, and somewhere ahead an airplane beacon winked, red then white. But the jagged opening still showed in the windshield glass, and Reb now realized how close to sudden death he had been.

Off the mountain, there were no pursuing lights. Nor were any showing on the heights above. Face grim, Reb let his car eat up the straightaways into Sangertown. It wasn't the first time he had ever faced ambush. But what made Reb McKay boil so now, was knowledge that men had tried to kill him, had almost succeeded, for no apparent reason at all.

He drove into the Sangertown ter-

minal court, where men labored to load trucks, cursing the weather and the way ice stiffened tarpaulins resisted efforts to cover bulky freight. The watchman jerked a thumb toward a garage stall. "If you're Reb McKay," he bellowed, "they're waiting on ye in the chief's office. First door to the left."

He saw them, Dave Horsley, fifty and bald but still tough and able to handle a five ton job as well as the next. He saw Ben Furst, as sleek as a dancing master, a man in his thirties who was reputed to be handy with his fists and was a crack pistol shot. Both men jumped up as Reb walked in, slapping hat against slicker.

"You're a sight for sore eyes, you old trouble shooter," Horsley cried. "Afraid the mountain would stop you tonight."

"It didn't," Reb said drily. "What happened?"

"Jim Regan," Furst answered first. "They found him on the mountain, half mile this side of the summit. Under his truck loaded with refrigerators. Bullet through his eyes. Happened about daylight."

REB let the air out of his lungs in one surprised whistle. Jim Regan, the kid the Great Southern was pointing for a real traffic job. College man. It was Regan's way to learn the business from the driver's wheel. And besides, he had a sister, Mary Lou, and Reb hadn't been able to get her off his mind since meeting her last summer. Richmond folks, they were.

Reb drummed a table as he listened, first to Horsley, then Furst. It came to him, irrelevantly enough, that tonight marked his first full year with Great Southern, and he still had no official ranking. Reb was known as traveling field representative. A lawyer by profession, a deep sea fisherman by instinct and a violinist of merit, Reb had taken this job of trouble shooting temporarily and had liked it. Besides, Dave Horsley was a friend of Glavis McKay, back in the tidewater country, and had known Reb since the latter had been able to toddle. Reb was twenty seven. His next thought made him stifle a laugh. He was wondering what Furst used on his hair, to make it so slick. Then he sobered. "This is serious, Reb," Horsley was telling him. "Somebody laid for Regan who knew all about him. They didn't want refrigerators, nor Jim's money belt. They shot Jim, then put him in the cab and ran the truck off the road."

"A half mile this side of the summit, eh?" Reb asked dreamily. This habit of closing his eyes and asking questions had irritated a lot of men. Reb did it to think clearly. "That would be at the head of the long S curve," he continued softly.

"So," he affirmed, "that clears up something, at least."

"What?" Furst looked irritated. "You look sleepy, fellow."

"But I'm not," Reb answered placidly. "A half mile this side of the summit tonight a car blocked me and a machine gunner threw lead at me for thirty seconds."

"What!" Both men shouted the question. Horsley was on his feet. "Somebody tried to hijack you? Let's go get 'em. Now."

"Hold your horses, Dave," Reb said. "They didn't try to hijack me. Somebody wanted me liquidated good and plenty. And when I didn't liquidate, they aired out. Waste of time to go up there now. Instead, I want a look at Regan's truck, and we'll go back to the scene of his wreck in the morning."

"The truck's in the garage, in behind the warehouse," Furst told him. "I'll send for Windy Bragg."

"Windy? Is that roughneck down here? By the way, Furst, do you have a complete report on the accident? And who checked it for the state police? I'll want to see them. I got a good look at the gentleman swinging the machine gun."

"We ought to notify the state police anyway," Horsley stormed. "We have a contract we're just starting for the refrigerator people and this happens. Something's screwy and besides, it had to be Regan."

"I know," Reb said grimly. "For personal reasons I'd take this job, if I weren't on the GS payroll. By the way, Dave, I did notify the state police. Found Sergeant Gettis. He's in charge here, I understand. I went by their headquarters coming in. And now, if you don't mind, I'll go by and see Windy Bragg. Be with you in a half hour."

There was no trouble locating Windy Bragg. Reb heard a bull voice down by the shop crane, where the operator was lifting a battered van body from its chassis.

Windy glanced across the way and scowled. Reb grinned. Windy probably thought it another brass hat, he told himself. Then the garage top hand recognized the caller. "Glory be," he belowered. "Afraid they wouldn't find you, skyhooting toward Florida." He gripped Reb's hand with a greasy palm. "You've already heard?"

"About Jim Regan? Horsley and Furst told me. That the wreck?"

Windy nodded. "Jim was partly under the side of the cab, head foremost. She went through the fence and plowed down for three lengths before the load went over. They musta bagged him on the run. Sergeant Gettis said it was a machine gun bullet."

"Know exactly where Jim left the road?"

"Sure. Half mile from the top. Looks like you'd 've seen it, coming through, even if it is bad driving."

"I was sort of busy, coming through the gap," Reb said quietly. "The same crew tried to polish me off. I happened to get by. But I need a new windshield, if some of the boys can put it in to-night."

WINDY grabbed a handful of waste and wiped his round face. He plumped his two hundred pounds to a box, looking up, mouth agape. "You," he muttered. "Then Jim had the right hunch."

"Had the right hunch? What are you driving at, Windy? Spill it?"

Windy lowered his voice. "He got a telephone call, not ten minutes before he took the wheel, we found out at Roanoke. Then Wee Willie Drake got a stummick ache and Jim sent him to a doctor and took the run alone. But he told Wee Willie he expected something to happen."

"He told Drake that, eh? Sorry I didn't know, back there. What sort of a person is Drake?"

"Square shooter, and he really was sick, Reb. He got down deadheading on the express run, and he told me. Furst sent him home."

"Jim didn't mention details of that phone call to Drake?"

Windy squinted up at Reb. "I thought of that too. No, but he did say Jim Regan was worried. The Roanoke manager'll have to go on the carpet for letting Jim get away with no relief. And the insurance people will kick up a row too. But Reb, it would have been the same, if we'd had two relief men with Jim. He just made his last run. Somebody had the finger on him." Windy shut up abruptly as a helper approached to ask questions about disassembling the giant machine. Windy beckoned Reb. "Take a look at the cab," he said. "It's got four bullet holes. Came in from the left."

Reb saw the dashboard clock stopped at 4:12 o'clock. The arc of those bullet holes, fanned out, showed the killers had come up alongside, firing abreast, and then getting ahead and out of danger, once the truck was out of control. "A

cool job, well planned," Reb mused. "Windy, when do you eat?"

He reached for a new wad of waste. "In ten minutes. There's a dog wagon across the street. Owner's a pal of mine."

When Reb got back to the office, Horsley had left for his hotel. Furst, making up his time sheets, glanced up and produced a sheet of paper. "From Regan's sister," he explained. "She'll be in from Baltimore around noon tomorrow. Find out anything from the wreck?"

"Not much, except how they got him." Reb studied Furst thoughtfully. "I'd like to see your personnel list, drivers, warehouse men, clerks and everything in this division. And when and where was your last hijacking?"

Furst looked surprised. "Sure you can have the list. I'll have it in the morning. "We had a fruit shipment hijacked three weeks ago. Hundred miles south of here. And there's been some clipping, but the police broke that up not long ago. I'll tell you, McKay, this is the worst thing in the Sangerton division to happen to GS Truck Lines. We've got to catch the rats."

"Well," Reb said, "I'm going to bed shortly. It's been a long and mean drive, and I want to rest."

Windy was yelling something over his shoulder back by the loading platform, when Reb emerged. A coupe turned into the circular parking area. Headlights played upon Reb's face. The coupe skidded, and Reb heard the exhaust roar. Startled, he caught a glimpse of the driver, and his companion. The car shot out, and an incoming truck blotted out sight of the rear license plate. Then Windy arrived, still growling at some mishap in the shop. Reb said nothing, till they took seats in a deserted corner of the restaurant and had given their orders. "And I told 'em," Windy was saying, "you punks don't know beans how to run down them killers. Wait till old Windy's pal gets here. Yessir—say, what's on your mind?"

"There was a coupe drove in, just before you left the platform," Reb said. "The driver looked like a person you used to know. Pink Roby."

Windy whistled. "That machine gunning rat! With the old Cadiz mob on the Boston road the time we rode trucks

for six weeks and picked 'em off with sawed off shotguns. You wouldn't kid me?"

Reb shook his head. "Roby and his pal had come to pay a call, Windy. They didn't expect me."

"Huh. I'll bet the rats were the very ones who ambushed you on the mountain—"

"Wrong, Windy. But it could have been somebody Roby sent up the mountain for me, and he was drifting around looking for more bad news. You keep your eyes peeled, Windy, around the Sangertown works."

"Hell, they'd know me, if I tried to spy around."

"Yeah? Well, maybe they don't know you're here yet. You're in the garage anyway. Now tell me something about Regan."

Windy looked troubled. Reb had the feeling his friend knew something and was reluctant to tell it. He stirred his coffee and averted his eyes. Then he looked Reb full in the face.

"Reb, there's so much wrong, and so little dope, I dunno what to say. You can't put your finger on it. Hell, you know how the Darrell-Chase Lines are muscling in, trying to edge in because Sangertown's a logical crossroads for 'em. We're an established company. I knew Bug Chase when he was running white corn all the way to Washington and Baltimore. Darrell's a front. Silk stocking family and harmless. Reb, Jim Regan had found out some things. It must've been hot. He was about to spill it to me a coupla times."

"Where did Jim room, Windy?"

"My place. I got a pass key. Been up there today."

REB drained his coffee cup. "Grab your hat. I know Jim better than anybody. He always kept a diary. We've got to find it, Windy."

"Thunderation," Windy exploded. "A thick, black leather book. Seen him writing in it a dozen times. Come on."

Reb digested Windy's opinion in silence as they breasted the sleet and snow. Yes, probably the garage foreman was right. Darrell-Chase Lines had been encroaching on GS territory right along for months, working through local political groups, lobbying, and now waging more tangible warfare. That is, if they

were responsible for what had happened up on the mountain. And there was Roby's presence.

The rooming house was a gaunt, brick affair, with dimly lighted hallways. The stairs creaked to Windy's weight as he led the way. "My room's to the right," he said. "Jim was at the end of the hall."

After some fumbling with the pass key, Windy got the door opened. There was no switch, and Reb switched on his flashlight. Windy strode forward, hand outstretched to pull the light switch pendant. Reb had the sensation of a third presence. Before he could speak, he heard a thump. Windy stopped, hand frozen. "Grab the light cord," Reb ordered. Then he heard the noise again, nearer the door.

Red whirled, flash cutting a swath of light across the bed and dresser, then leaping in the wake of a thin figure dashing madly for the exit. Reb jumped too, but the intruder yanked the door shut. It raked Reb's shoulder and knocked his flashlight to the floor. Groping in the darkness, Windy stumbled over him. "You blundering idiot," Reb cried. "If you can't think to snap on a light, get out of my way."

By the time Reb had retrieved his flashlight, a breath of cold air swept upstairs and a door slammed. Windy started outside, but Reb called him back. "It's no use. It's too dark on these streets to find a man going places." With that Reb went back into Jim Regan's room and turned on the light. Then he closed the door. "I'm plumb sorry," Windy said over and over. "Plumb sorry, Reb. Just wasn't looking for anybody up here, of all places."

"That's all right, Windy. Did you touch anything when you were up?"

"Nope. 'Cept get the undertaker Jim's new suit. Looky there. All the dresser drawers are open. And his suitcase with things scattered."

Reb laughed. "My hunch is, Windy, there's somebody else looking for Jim's little black book, and they haven't found it, yet. So we get that much good out of our friend's visit. And by the way, the little light I had, gave me a squint at his face. He looks like Pink Roby's pal, if you ask me."

"Well," suggested the practical Windy, "let's go and find Roby and his

pal and shake the truth out of 'em."

"Let's try and find Jim Regan's diary first," Reb countered.

But they didn't make such a discovery. Reb searched every corner of the room. He even looked in the seams of Regan's mackinaw and overcoat. But he did find a single sheet of paper, a Darrell-Chase Lines letter head. The sheet was frayed at the bottom, where the signature should have been.

"You will make two equal payments, as promised. Draw on C if necessary. Use caution, but don't fail."

Reb thrust the crumpled sheet into his pocket. "Windy," he observed, "I think our search here is useless. You and I are going to search elsewhere."

"Meaning what?"

"I'd like to unearth Pink Roby's hangout, and know who his pals are."

"Fine. Let's go find 'em," said the practical Windy.

Reb laughed. "It won't be that easy. First, you get a catnap, and I'll talk with Horsley. You meet me in the morning, at seven. I'll arrange for your leave to work with me—"

"Glory be," Windy exclaimed, a huge grin on his face. "Okay, boss. I'll be glad to get outside that garage, believe you me."

Reb was in his room when the door opened. Thinking it Horsley, he grunted an invitation to enter. But the man in the doorway was Pink Roby. In behind was a taller man, with elongated chin and black eyes. "Stay in the hall, Blacky," Roby spoke. Then he entered, manifestly enjoying Reb's astonishment. "Heard you wanted to see me, McKay," he announced. "Well, here I am."

REB saw Roby's slender fingers hovering at right hand coat pocket. The intruder had eased the door too gently with his foot. It came to Reb that he had to do some fast thinking, for Roby had been known to be partial to silenced guns. And this visit had a very direct action upon Reb McKay's destiny. That was apparent too. Roby came nearer, legs outspread. "Well?" he inquired softly.

"There wasn't but one place you could have heard that," Reb said. "And that was in Jim Regan's room some forty odd minutes ago. Now that you're here, what is it?"

"This." Roby's grin faded. "You messed me up once, McKay. I was small potatoes then. Now—" he paused significantly, "—you listen. Check out of Sangertown—before daylight."

"Roby," Reb said, "you're scum—a rat. What's more," he added significantly, "the war's on. You tell Bug Chase that. Jim Regan was about to put the finger on your crowd and you got him. I know. Well, trouble's just started, Roby. The men, or rats who got Jim are going to fry, or die of lead poisoning. They can take their choice. That goes for present company, Roby. Now get out, and get out quick."

"Easy." Roby's voice was flat. There was a scuffling outside the door. Roby came to his feet, not swiftly, and yet in time to prevent Roby's outside companion from entering before the damage was done. Roby's right hand came out of his coat with a snubnosed gun, belt high. But that right hand sagged when Reb struck. And as Roby wilted, Reb lifted the man before him, sensing the entry of the gunman at the door. He saw the longest faced individual he had ever viewed, taller than Roby. Thrusting forward, Reb shoved the limp Roby against the newcomer and threw him off balance. Both went against the opposite wall and Reb stood in the doorway, Roby's retrieved gun in his hands. "Listen you," Reb said, "don't call a second time. Don't come around at all. And when Roby snaps out of it, tell him the GS is going to put its trademark on every punk getting in its way. Starting now. Understand?"

"I got you," the man answered. "But you're a prize sap, Mister. I'll say that. Nobody ever conked Pink and lived to brag about it."

"Till now," Reb said curtly, closing the door.

He didn't lock the door. Reb knew full well there would be no return visit, just yet, nor would it be open, when it came. Roby had overplayed his hand, Reb told himself. "Half bluff, and half the real thing," he muttered. "Roby's got heavy backing, to walk in and warn me like he did."

He wrote down these facts on a sheet of paper: Jim Regan had dangerous information he was about to use to put the finger on the Darrell-Chase outfit.

Jim got his for knowing too much, and GS Lines are out a truck.

Pink Roby is in charge of the Darrel-Chase wrecking crew. Roby has inside contact with GS Lines.

Roby is the key man in Regan's murder.

He was still pondering these conclusions when Horsley knocked. He had on hat and overcoat, and a brief case under his arm. At Reb's look of surprise Horsley nodded. "Yes, I'm leaving town. The main office just called. Got to travel south. We're in a jam about tonnage and overhead clearances. Looks like more lobbying to me. You look after Jim's sister tomorrow. I've got to hurry and catch my train."

Reb gave a report on Roby's visit. Horsley looked more worried than ever. "Came out in the open, eh? Means Darrell-Chase is digging in here. I'd heard rumors they're more solid here than we thought. Reb, maybe you should have been more—er discreet about Roby. I'd better let the brass hats know about that too, and you'll need some help, I'm thinking, from our regular field men."

"I'll call, if I need them," Reb told him. "Roby was bluffing—party. He'll go after me in a smoother way, now. But I'm wondering just how he got that little conversation I held with Windy, up in Regan's quarters."

After Horsley left, Reb McKay made another notation.

It read:

"Dave Horsley knows what Jim Regan discovered. He's been warned, and wants to get away. Not being yellow, Dave has something hot."

"It has to be that way," Reb reflected. "Roby's gall in coming up means somebody with plenty of power is around. Who?"

After a moment Reb wrote: "Bug Chase." Then he tore the paper to bits, placed the pile in an ash tray and touched a match to the heap. With that action he opened a traveling bag and took out an iron wedge, similar to that used by wood cutters. He shoved it beneath the door. Then he took the room key, produced a steel object with angles and thumb screws, fitted it to the key and inserted it into the lock. The appendage hooked to the knob. Reb surveyed the job and smiled.

HE inspected windows, then got out a flashlight. Satisfied, he went to bed. He had the door secure, and the key clamped in a device of his own manufacture. Phoning a call to the desk, Reb shut out events of the preceding few hours. It was a faculty he had. Reb McKay had another faculty, which he had discovered in college, and that was real concentration. It didn't last long, only a few seconds, but matters back in Reb's subconscious marched by, sliding into sequence like trained soldiers, during those moments of concentration.

He saw it now, Darrell-Chase Lines, failing to beat their big competitor by fair means, shifting to tactics of Bug Chase's rum running days. It happened that Reb had never run afoul of Chase, but he felt he would before he left Sangertown. It was logical, a campaign of lobbying, of actual sabotage, to discredit Great Southern just before the new year, when a half dozen big hauling contracts, three for drug and grocery chain systems, were to be renewed. Loss of those contracts would be a big blow. Sabotage and legitimate harassing would kill off contract signers who preferred goods delivered promptly rather than insurance adjustments and delays.

Jim Regan had ferreted out facts, and maybe personalities, tied up with this sabotage scheme. Maybe he knew who was the traitor on the GS payroll. And Dave Horsley had an inkling. Reb knew the man must. He was close to Jim. Maybe they had worked together. And now Horsley was afraid.

Of what?

Reb found himself sitting bolt upright. He switched on the light and reached for the phone.

Windy Bragg answered sleepily. "Reb speaking," the latter snapped. "How long before you can dress and meet me downstairs?"

"Aw—uh—say, you in a hurry to go places? I can make it in ten minutes. But I'm pow'ful sleepy."

Reb got into his clothing swiftly. Then he phoned the Sangertown airport. "I flew through here last summer, on the Florida plane. Does it still leave here at three this morning?" he demanded.

"Two o'clock, sir. It's on time. Do you want a reservation?"

"Yes, for two persons," Reb said, giving his name.

"You'll have to hurry, sir. It takes twenty minutes to get out from your hotel."

"We'll make the ship." Reb banged the receiver up. He got his service gun and holster out, strapping the latter beneath his armpit. Then he went down, to find Windy, still red and puffing, outside. "I got out my car," he announced. "Where to?"

"The airport, and step on it. We're going down the line."

"What for?" Windy asked. "Ain't we got a job to 'tend to here? And besides, I don't crave to get into the clouds, on a night like this. Can't we get there on tires?"

"We're going to overtake Dave Horsley—he's aboard the Florida Special. And Dave is going to need us before he gets off that train," Reb said.

"Well, if he's in trouble—say, what's up?"

"I'm taking a chance Horsley's in danger, if he don't give up something."

"Huh. What's he got so durned important? Dough?"

"No. Jim Regan's confidential report, or diary, or memoirs, whatever you choose to call it."

"So he took it. Well, that saves us trouble," Windy mused. "When'd he tell you?"

"He hasn't," Reb answered.

Windy lifted a heavy foot from the throttle. Well, I'll be a cookie. You mean to say you're going to take me flying, to overtake Horsley, on a hunch, for something to protect you think he's got?"

"Windy, Dave Horsley pulled out, a worried man. Regan's told him plenty, and Horsley won't tell me because he's scared to death, and Dave don't scare easy. It had to be Regan's finger book. Horsley isn't treating me fair, but he means well. Well, he's underestimated his foes by trying to beat it. So we're taking the plane. We've got to ride with Dave Horsley, while I get him to listen to reason and spill everything he knows."

"Check," Windy said, turning into the highway leading to the distant airport. "But I got a sort uh prejudice about skyhopping, 'specially on nights like this un," he added glumly.

It was daylight, after they left the plane at its first stop in advance of the Florida Special. They drank huge mugs of coffee waiting on the train. It hardly slid to a stop before Reb showed his credentials to the conductor. The latter nodded. "I think your man is in car K-47. Stateroom."

"That would be him, I guess," Reb said. "Come on, Windy."

THE porter affirmed Reb's description. "Yassuh. I guess we got him all right. Up this way, please."

But there was no answer to the porter's knock. Reb and Windy were silent. Windy pounded with his big fist. Silence.

"Together," Reb said. "Break the door."

"You all caint do that," the porter cried. But Reb and Windy lunged. The door bulged, then opened with a crash.

Dave Horsley was on his berth, fully clothed, papers from his brief case over the floor. There was a tiny, bluish hole through his right temple.

There was the routine investigation, the questioning of train crew and passengers by local police and railroad detectives. But Reb soon gathered, after hearing witnesses, that Dave Horsley spoke to none but car conductor and porter, that he left a call for eight o'clock and had sent off a telegram to the New York office just after leaving Sangertown. And then, into the confusion of the inquiry, held at the station, a railway detective brought in a hobo. "Riding the sleepers and he claims he saw something," the officer announced. "Talk, punk."

"I ain't done anything," the man snarled. "What if I was beating my way. I hear there's been a man killed and when I stick my neck out, you act like you wanta put it on me."

"Mind if I ask the questions?" Reb put in. Without waiting for an affirmative, Reb studied the hobo. "The man who was killed was one of my bosses, and a friend," he said quietly. "What was it you saw?"

"Well, buddy, I'm topping this sleeper, see, and the ventilators are open. This sleeper ain't one of them air conditioned jobs, and I button my overcoat around a pipe and twist around, to take

a look below. I'm an hour outa Sanger-town when the gent and the porter go into the end stateroom. Then I nod a while. When I look down again, the aisle is dark, but I see somebody slip outa the gent's stateroom and make a getaway. That's funny, I tell myself. I gotta look at the face. It's a big man, tall, with about the longest chin I ever seen. He's a tough looking mug."

"The fellow Roby called Lanny," Reb muttered. "His gunman."

"See him any more?" an officer asked.

"Naw. But when I drop off here and hear everybody talking, I finally spots a bull and spill my story. Do I go now?"

"You stay," the railway officer snapped. "We'll try to pick up the horse faced punk, if this bo is talking straight, and I think he is. But nobody heard a shot, and that's strange."

"Not strange," Reb said. "The man had a silencer." Then to the hobo, "Could you identify Lanny when they catch him?"

"Sure—" The man snapped back his head, staring at Reb with narrowed lids. The malevolent look didn't pass Reb's watchful gaze. Then the hobo looked down. "I dunno what you are talking about," he mumbled. Reb merely smiled. He nudged Windy. "Let's go."

"But they ain't half started questioning the bo," Windy protested, outside. "And what sort uh shot was that you fired at the bum?"

"He's a plant," Reb asserted. "This is the boldest job done against our company. Don't you get the idea, Windy? They're going to put the finger on Dave Horsley's killer themselves. Somehow. That's something one of the most dangerous criminals in the east invented ten years ago, always to clear himself. Watch. They'll find this Lanny person right away. And anyway, I've got to do plenty of phoning."

Before his task was over, the long faced suspect was found, trying to escape in a stolen car. Trapped, he fought it out and Reb reached the scene, in time to find the coroner present, and to identify the man as the one who had accompanied Pink Roby to Reb's hotel room.

"Okay, Windy," Reb decided. "We'll let the police here wind up this

case. I've got a release on all his personal effects and they're going on the plane back to Sangertown, with us."

"But what was the motive? That was too coldblooded, except to get poor old Horsley outa the way. He had no dough and you say you doubt the man got anything at all."

"He wasn't after anything but Dave's life, I feel sure."

"But Regan's report, or what you call it?"

Reb shook his head. "The brass hats are coming down, Windy. And I want to see Mary Lou. And the answer to a lot of things still is in Sangertown. And I'm as much in the dark as to why they actually killed Dave Horsley and Jim Regan as you are."

"They knew too much."

"I wonder what it was they knew."

MARY LOU REGAN was there when they landed. Quiet and slender, she looked quite a bit like the blue eyed, curly haired Jim. She had read about Dave Horsley's passing. Reb talked to her in her room, Windy pacing up and down the corridor. The girl was pale, but calm. "I'm not surprised at—at either," she said. "But Reb—it's so—so unfair." Her lips quivered and she twisted a ball of a handkerchief nervously.

Reb studied her. "Why weren't you surprised?" he asked. Did she know the answer? And he didn't feel astonished when she nodded. "Jim told me, something. He and Uncle Dave—I always called him that. They knew Darrell-Chase were trying to put over a merger and squeeze your company out of their territory. Jim had worked under an assumed name with the Darrell-Chase wrecking crew. He did some paying off, and had photographed checks. He had names of reliable witnesses, and some letters. He and Uncle—Mr. Horsley were going to take their case to headquarters when they both got warned, and things began to happen. That was when they asked for you."

"And when I did get here, it had happened to Jim, and Dave Horsley didn't open his mouth."

"I think," Mary Lou Regan told him, "Uncle Dave expected it to happen to him, and didn't want to drag anybody else into it. He wrote me a letter. I got

it just before — before it happened to Jim. He—he wasn't married, you know, and I think he meant the letter to be a will, Reb. The way he wrote it. I'll show it to you, later."

"We started out looking for Jim's diary," Reb said. "Now, well, his evidence is worth something, wherever it is. And I think it's here, somewhere in Sangertown."

"You've searched his things, you said."

"Absolutely. The police, too. There was somebody in his room when Windy and I went up. And a talk I had with Windy there and was overheard." Reb told her about Pink Roby.

Mary Lou didn't know Roby. But she told Reb he should get help. "I know you pride yourself on being a lone wolf, and settling things yourself, Reb, but this is too big. They dared to kill Jim. And then they got Dave Horsley because they had to finish the job. It's obvious you're next, if you don't wait for reinforcements."

Reb laughed. "I'll be careful, Mary Lou. I'm awfully sorry I can't go along with you."

"I understand. You've got to stay, and I've got a job to do, Reb. But I'll do it alone. Your duty is to locate Jim's evidence, and with the help of Great Southern, punish the guilty persons. And then—" her voice broke, "—then I'd like you to come and see us, Reb."

"I'm going to, my dear," he said gently. Reb sighed. "Things can happen mighty fast, and stunning in nature. Mary Lou. That's how I feel now. Stunned. I'll be up, when I get this job done," he added grimly. "I owe it to Jim, and Dave Horsley."

Police had found the car used by Jim's ambushers. It was a "hot" car, they told him, taken from a Roanoke doctor. There were no finger prints. The gunman had been identified as Lanny Rook and he was known to Newark and Philadelphia authorities and had done time in the west, under other aliases. The hobo had been released, after a fingerprinting. And careful perusal of Dave Horsley's effects revealed no light, or didn't at first. It was just before repacking the things, with Windy waiting and slightly bored, that Reb came upon a scrap of envelope in Horsley's brief case. He was about to thrust it back when his

memory stirred. He reached into his coat pocket and produced the sheet found in Jim's room, the one bearing the cryptic message to "contact C, and don't fail."

The envelope and sheet matched. Windy spoke up impatiently, but Reb waved him aside. He sat down, closed his eyes. As Reb shut out even Windy's presence and closed the window of his mind, he saw Dave Horsley again, with that desperate look in his eyes, about to catch his train.

Horsley could have been running away to escape something.

Horsley could have been in frantic search for something, playing out his hand alone, with Jim gone. But the man had been too relieved when Reb had showed up. So what?

Reb reclined in a chair, legs outstretched, as limp as one asleep. Fearing himself marked, Dave Horsley could have received a tip where to locate Jim Regan's evidence, and if the tip had materialized, acted as necessity required, risked no life but his own, and stopped Darrell-Chase, all in one coup.

And also he had permitted Reb a chance to see Mary Lou, now that she needed someone so much more.

If Horsley had received a tip, who was it from?

SOMEONE he trusted. Reb let out a deep sigh. He had the answer. It had to be Ben Furst. He grew tense, opened his eyes and got up. Windy was at the window. "Clear again, and warmer," he mused. "Just about twenty four hours since you landed."

"Windy," Reb said abruptly, "you suppose they've repaired Jim's truck yet?"

"Huh? Sure. The tractor was okay with a few hours' labor. They just had to put another trailer on. Crowded as we are, the outfit'll probably go out on a run, maybe tonight."

"Could you arrange for it to go out?"

"I dunno." Windy was perplexed. "First has the sayso. Anyway, why?"

"We'll need a scatter gun, and a good rifle," Reb mused. "You and I, Windy. Going north. Over the mountain. Us two in the cab and Furst is going to clear us. You want a free chance to die tonight, and maybe not gain a thing? Or do we wait till the GS sends down a

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plane load of private dicks, who'll take days to get the idea and be of any help?"

"Well, confidentially speaking," Windy observed, "I ain't a bit hot about sticking out my neck. But if shoving a tractor and loaded trailer north will do any good, let's get going."

Night camped on the highway with its curving ribbon showing in the lights as Windy took the grade with all the motor had. They had on a couple of tons, potatoes, and the tarpaulins were snuggled in tightly. Across the level miles from Sangertown to the mountain, Windy had been concerned with handling the six wheeler. There had been one addition to the cab, done under Windy's supervision. There were sheets of steel waist high, bolted to front and either side. Against Reb's knee rested a sawed shotgun, while within easy reach was a magazine rifle. They had done little talking, because traffic was dense till they took the Y for the north highway. Now Windy was relaxed, regaining the feel of the road, nursing his load around curves and making allowances for drivers riding the center stripe around inside curves. "This job sure handles well," Windy confided. "I hit the air first time and she squats. Jim sure had a good tractor."

"You're curious about this trip, eh?" Reb asked. "Furst certainly was. He wanted to pilot us."

"That cookie? Yeah, since you mention it, I'd like to know."

"Well, figure it out for yourself. About everybody has tried to locate Jim's evidence, and failed. He hadn't turned it over to Dave Horsley, I don't think. Mary Lou didn't think so. I was sort of hoping he'd sent it away. But that's out. Now where was the safest place for Jim to keep his stuff?"

"Search me. I'd 've dumped it in the lake. All the trouble it caused."

"In this truck, Windy. Nowhere else."

Windy almost left a curve. A truck came around a banked turn and Reb held his breath as the two huge machines came nearer and nearer. Brakes screamed, and the downgrade truck slid by with inches to spare. Windy dropped into lower gear and swore. "The louse, hogging the road," he muttered. Then, "What in the heck did you have to drag this elephant out on

the highway for, with me in the garage?"

"That's the answer, Windy. I searched, as well as I could, while they were working on the cab. Even then I'd figured to get the truck away from Sangertown. There's something we overlooked, but now I know. It's got interesting thumb and finger prints to be studied. Other people had a hunch about Jim's hiding place, and failed. We're going to Roanoke and do some real searching."

"Sounds haywire," Windy grumbled, "but you're the boss."

"Well, you watch the road, Windy. We may not get through without trouble. But the main thing is, I want us to get through. You drive, I'll watch."

It happened, as if Reb McKay's remark were the signal. First a coupe flashed by, lights boring into mountain cliffs overhanging Campbell's Gap. Vaguely Reb identified the distant curve, with its protecting, white painted posts, as the point where his own ambush had been attempted. Then another car, this time a sedan, whirled by, and Reb saw a face at the rear window. His pulse quickened. Without pause he reached for the sawed off shotgun and placed it beside Windy. "Heads up," Reb cried. "If shooting starts, duck as low as you can."

"I'll hit 'em, if they block the road," Windy yelled back. "Think it's them?"

"I'm taking no chances. Look, they're stopping on that curve. They're backing up the sedan."

REB saw Windy reach forward and switch on all lights. The motor roared, with cutout open. But above all that roar, there came a blasting sound from ahead, tongues of spitting flame, and glass cascaded about the pair. Ahead, the sedan loomed, not fifty feet away, and Reb slid from the seat, rifle at ready. He groped for the cab door latch, yanked at it. To his left Windy was down, almost under the wheel. "Hold on," he bellowed. "I'm going to hit 'em."

"You'll wreck," Reb warned.

"Better take 'em to hell with us, than leave the rats here alive," Windy retorted. "Get ready to jump, if you have to."

Reb saw the sedan right at hand. A man leaped away from the machine,

dragging his machine gun. Reb kicked at the door. He jerked up his rifle. This was going to be the place for pistol and shotgun work, he thought. Nevertheless, he fired. He remembered, just before the grinding impact, that the sedan driver made one frantic effort to get out of the way. Then two wheels showed. A smear of water hit the cab and lashed both men as the remainder of the glass went out. After that, the tractor rose, lightless now, then came down with a crash. "Hang on," Windy was bellowing. "We're getting through."

And somehow the tractor kept going. Shots came from both sides, flashes that retreated now, and Windy brought up one hand, firing his gun with the barrel over the side. The roar was deafening inside the cab. Reb saw a figure, just ahead, almost blending with the darkness. He fired again. Then he ducked and the tractor picked up, lurching queerly, as they went through the pass.

"We got 'em," Windy shouted. "Plowed right through that sedan."

There were lights behind now, twin lights, and farther back flame. That flame was the wrecked sedan. Reb felt a thrill of victory. He aimed, this time as carefully as he could, from the running board.

Two hundred yards behind now, he thought. Better give for another fifty. He squeezed the trigger.

The next moment he was almost thrown off. The tractor, still weaving, was gaining momentum. "Hey," he shouted to Windy, "this isn't a racing car. We're going down the mountain now."

"You stop her," Windy retorted. "I can't. Her brakes are shot."

One lone headlight sent its wobbly beam dancing crazily upon the road, upon jagged rocks to one side, and overshot velvety darkness on the other. The tons of weight, pulled on by gravity and unfettered wheels, pushed the tractor on, around curves and with ever accelerating speed, to certain destruction. Windy's features were grim, revealed in the uncertain, reflected light. Reb knew it wouldn't be long before they crashed. "Get ready and jump," he bellowed. "You've got to."

"Okay. Yo go first," Reb shouted back. "On this straightaway." He missed a climbing sedan by inches. The

oncoming headlights made their own pathway dark. And Reb found they were off the road, crashing into the retaining fence, two men and a thundering uncontrollable monster of steel on rubber. He yelled at Windy once more and jumped. The ground rose to meet him, and the impact seemed part of the terrific sound all about, as the tractor and loaded trailer ripped through at a curve. Then Reb saw lightning, followed by darkness and deep silence.

He came to, limp in the arms of a man who was arguing with others. "This one's not bad hurt, I tell ya. The other punk's dead. He ain't moved for five minutes."

"Yeah. Well, bring him over. I want McKay to live, for a while."

Reb stiffened at the tones. Pink Roby! Then, as his captor lifted him, with toes still dragging, Reb forgot Roby because his side hurt, and a spot behind his right ear throbbled with intense pain. He had the feeling that part of his head was damp.

"Coming around," somebody grunted, as Reb was dropped to the running board of a car. "That was some smash. Truck's twenty feet down. This punk was plenty of distance away."

"Work him around," Roby ordered. "We got to move outa here before somebody reports this wreck to the cops. Me'n Bug want to ask questions. Slap his face."

Reb's temples reacted so painfully to that slap that he couldn't repress a groan. And he experienced a sort of weakness at the same time, so much that he let his head roll forward. He realized he was still in a daze. And somebody struck him again, jerking his chin up. "Snap out of it, McKay. Get the idea? Snap out of it."

REB looked up into blinding light. Roby's face was just visible beyond the flashlight. Now he saw a second man, in tan overcoat and wide brimmed hat, the sort he knew by reputation that Bug Chase invariably wore. He saw Bug Chase at close hand for the first time in his life. But Reb knew, in the next moment, that he had seen the man before, and recently. "You were in the sedan, up on the hill—the night—you tried to get me," Reb said thickly.

"But you won't ever tell," Bug Chase

retorted, in flat accents. "You're going to tell us what you did with Jim Regan's pictures, and love letters. We want them, just as souvenirs."

"I don't know what you're talking about." Reb felt sleepy. He wanted to get down on the ground. He wanted to get ease from these various pains stabbing him so persistently.

Whop! Pink Roby's open palm struck, and this time Reb bounced upward. He lashed out, and his fist caught Roby. Then Reb was swamped with swinging fists, beaten to the ground, and a heel ground against his cheek bone. "Lay off Pink," Bug Chase ordered. "He's got to talk."

"And how," Roby said with an oath. "Jerk him to the running board, Buzz."

Buzz! Somewhere that name had been connected with troublesome episodes. Buzz—Buzz Lowry! Highjacker. Ex-prizefighter.

But Reb had no time to ponder. Bug Chase was firing questions. And Reb shook his head to clear it. "Suit the two bit crook stuff and listen," he snarled. "I mean, this slapping stuff. I'll tell you what I know."

"Let's hear it then," Chase said quietly.

"Chief, cars coming up the grade," the fourth man cried from the car.

"Talk," Chase told Reb. "Talk fast."

"I haven't found the stuff either, and that's the truth. I went through Jim's room, and his stuff, and Dave Horsley's, and it wasn't there."

"Yeah. What was the big idea, truck driving? You and Windy? And what's in the load?"

"Potatoes. Go and look for yourself."

"There's potatoes all over the mountain, so help me," the man named Buzz affirmed.

"Shut up," Roby snarled. "He's lying, Bug. McKay is. Let's liquidate him. And I want the job."

"You want to talk?" Chase suggested. Lights played upon the cut below, sign of the approaching cars.

"I've told you the truth," Reb said. "But I suppose you rats will give it to me, like you did poor Dave Horsley, and Jim Regan. But other men will come, and if I get sent to hell this night, you'll join me."

Roby laughed. "What's the verdict, Bug?"

"Pitch him over the side, and we'll go over the truck later," Chase snapped. "You asked for it, McKay."

"Stand where you are, all of you."

Reb's heart leaped at the sound. Windy Bragg's voice was something to remember, all through the coming years. Out of the darkness a lurching figure stumbled, and he held a sawed off shotgun before him, advancing in the manner of one too tired to do more than lift one foot after another.

Windy seemed to float from outer darkness, into the lighter gloom where the two cars stood, coupe and sedan, with Reb McKay and his four captors. He seemed to float, for timeless moments, a man with battered face, with left arm dangling, the gun held by his right. Reb fought off his lethargy. He knew his injured ally was no match for these four men. But what to do? His mind seemed off the track, somehow. He wanted to laugh at Windy's scarecrow appearance.

It was Pink Roby who broke the spell. Dimmed against the coupe lights, Reb saw the man come up with a gun. And as he saw that gun, Reb lashed out. He struck Roby in the side and the man spun partly around, gun discharging almost in Reb's face. Even as the crack of the gun was so deafeningly close, the ponderous roar of Windy's shotgun dominated everything. Reb kept up his attack. He had one objective, to get Roby's gun. And the pair went down, clawing, kicking and squirming. Again Windy's gun roared, and a man screamed. A machine gun clattered. Reb almost had Roby's gun when the latter struck him squarely in the face. Taking swift advantage, Roby wrested the gun away. "You louse," he belted. "Windy got Bug, but I'll send you to hell—"

The gun was within a foot of Reb's body. Reb tackled from his knees. Then he saw the gun plainly, as lights from the oncoming cars shot around the last curve and played directly upon the scene. It wasn't a second of time, but Reb reached for that gun through what was a week, a month, and this time he had one hand on the weapon and the other clutching Roby's wrist. Somersaulting, he held the cursing Roby, and brought the man crashing to the road shoulder. Rolling once more, he jerked

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the gun free, just as the cars swerved and came to a halt.

"What's coming off here?" someone bellowed. The voice was Sergeant Gettis', of the state patrol, and with him were two other men in uniform. Windy Bragg stood before them, legs outspread, before him the prone bodies of two men. Roby stood sullenly beside. "What's coming off?" Windy repeated owlshly. "Two men met four rats, that's what. They didn't get us, like they did Jim Regan."

**B**UG CHASE was quite dead. The second figure on the highway stirred. In the glare of flashlights, they turned him over. "Ben Furst," Reb and Windy cried in unison.

The Sangertown manager for the GS groaned. A crimson trickle came from one corner of his mouth. He coughed, tried to sit up. Reb knelt. "So you drove the car, eh? You're going out, Furst. Who were your playmates, who got away?"

"Find them," Furst whispered. "To hell with your evidence now. You won't get me, for stringing with Chase and Roby."

"Going to scuttle your own company, eh? Who got Dave? And Jim?"

"Ask Roby. He and Chase engineered the deal. I was just going to be their Sangertown manager. Jim Regan and Horsley bought out a louse who had busted into Bug Chase' safe, and they paid for it with their lives. Now leave me alone." Like a machine running down when power is cut off, Furst collapsed. Presently he coughed, tried to raise his body. It was his last movement. Windy Bragg sank to the ground. "I'm hurting," he said.

Presently there were police officers, an ambulance, and a radio car. And it was the radio patrol that reported arrest of both men, fugitives from the scene, after the two had been foolish enough to attempt the holdup of a car. It happened that two officers were in the car. Windy had been taken to Sangertown.

Reb and the patrol sergeant went down to look at the wrecked truck. Bandaged up, Reb felt better.

"I wonder," Reb mused, "how Windy got out alive?"

"He'll never know," Gettis replied. "That cab's a sure enough wreck this time."

Reb borrowed the sergeant's flashlight. The trailer still held plenty of potatoes, lying on its side. The tractor had broken free and was upright after a couple of somersaults. Reb swept the beam about, then exclaimed. "Look," he cried.

The cab roof had burst open. In a partition there was exposed a brief case, of the type Horsley had liked to carry around. Reb crawled in, pulled the leather container out. In the dim light he got the case open.

There were letters, canceled checks, a series of candid camera shots, which close inspection showed to be taken in garages and offices, showing Chase and Furst, men tampering with GS tractors, and some pictures difficult to place in connection with sabotage. But the letters told stories, of agreements with office holders, GS workers, and acknowledgements of money paid by Chase to various individuals.

"We'll find the pictures mean something too," Reb said. "Jim Regan and Dave Horsley got out of their element, trying this job by themselves. Anyway, we've got enough to put Roby on ice, and the two birds the patrol caught."

"I'm pinning the murder rap on Roby," Gettis said. "We'll sweat his pals till they talk. It looks like this case is busted wide open, McKay."

"Yes," Reb agreed with a sigh. "Wide open. But I lose two friends, for the ambitions of a rat. Or rats. I'll take this case in with me, Sergeant, and let your boys lock it up, till we meet the district attorney. Then maybe I'd better go over and check on Windy. And then," he added, "I've got some phoning to do. I've got to tell Mary Lou that Jim closed his case, through me and Windy."



# DEATH WON'T ACCEPT AN I. O. U.

by T. K. HAWLEY

*There was one I.O.U. the money Jack Mardel had coming wouldn't cover  
—the one he'd given Death!*

Jack Mardel glanced furtively at the big clock on the wall of the clubroom—glanced through a screen of smoke that enshrouded the card table and his companions. His dark eyes gleamed. At last the time had come. The deed must be done quickly if he were to come into the rich inheritance from his uncle without waiting for the uncertain remoteness of natural death. He got up easily, threw down his cards nonchalantly.

"Sorry, boys! I've got to get on." His voice was cool, careless. No one perceived that his eyes were just a bit brighter than usual, his movements ever so slightly mechanical and forced.

Bob Johnson protested. "Why pull out now, Jack? Let's make a night of it."

"Can't. Simply can't. The old man demands that I get home before his bedtime. Age must be served." Mardel drew out a fountain pen, scribbled an I.O.U., pushed it across the table to Johnson, and put the pen back into his breast pocket. He was smiling sardonically as he stepped out into the brisk night air a moment later. No more I.O.U.'s after tonight.

His plans were all laid. He glanced at his wrist-watch as he quietly let himself into the Mardel mansion. Just ten o'clock. He had made it exactly in time. His uncle would be in the bath. He crept silently up the stairs. There were no servants around to interfere with his plans. They all slept out. It would be easy. At the bath-room door, he paused. The old man never locked it. He pushed the door open, his face pale, his eyes glittering. The old man, in the tub, gaped at him, surprised at the intrusion.

"What do you want, Jack?" he quavered.

Mardel did not speak as he bolted the door behind him. He seized a towel from the rail, threw it over his uncle's face, shoved his head under the water, and held it there. The old man struggled, but it was all over in a few minutes. Panting, trembling, Mardel drew back.

Good thing he had made all his plans beforehand. He was in no condition to think now. He hurried to his room, hid the wet towel, and changed his suit so that the wet coat sleeves would not be seen. At a quarter after ten, he was calling Sergeant Elliot at the police station. The sergeant knew him. He would never be suspected.

"I've just come from my club," he said over the telephone, his voice strained to what he believed to be the right tension. "Found uncle dead in the bathtub!"

"Bad business, Mr. Mardel," the sergeant's deep voice boomed. "Don't touch him. I'll be right over."

Mardel hung up. It seemed ages before the police arrived. Sergeant Elliot, Doctor Freeman and a constable came in. Mardel knew them all, even the constable, and so he was not worrying about the outcome. But he was a bit impatient for the preliminaries to be dispensed with.

"Did you make sure he was dead?" asked the sergeant as they entered the bathroom.

"Why, yes." Mardel thought swiftly. "I raised him up, saw he was gone."

"Quite right," said the sergeant. "I wondered why your sleeves were wet."

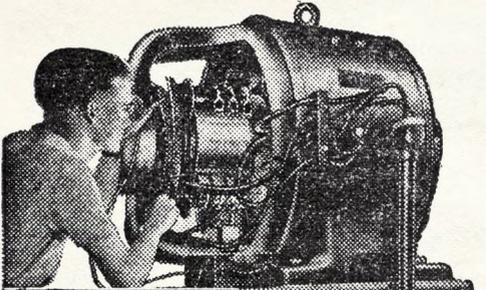
Mardel's heart stood still an instant. His sleeves? But he had changed his suit. He glanced down.

"I see you changed your coat," the shrewd old sergeant remarked. "Just a touch of water on the shirt sleeves—on the cuffs."

Mardel suddenly realized that Sergeant Elliot as an elderly friend was quite different from Sergeant Elliot as a criminal investigator on duty. He did not feel comfortable as they looked down at the body in the tub.

"Poor old Joe," the sergeant mourned. "Looks as if he fell in and drowned all right. Must have had a heart attack." He bent closer. "I say—look here. The water is blue!"

Mardel's heart again performed an uncomfortable variation in tempo.



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The sergeant turned to him. "While the doctor examines the body, you can go downstairs with Constable Haynes and give him your statement. We'll save time that way and I know we all want to get this unpleasant business over with."

Mardel led the way to the sitting room. He didn't like Sergeant Elliot's tone. There was something wrong. And that blue water! What in hades had caused that? He had barely finished his premeditated statement when the sergeant and the doctor came in.

"There is evidence that the end came as you suggested," said the sergeant quietly. "Have you completed your statement?"

"The constable has written it in his notebook," said Mardel.

"Then please sign it."

Mardel fumbled in his breast pocket. "Humph! Lost my pen, I guess."

"Or left it in your other suit," suggested the sergeant with almost too much courtesy. "Where did you use it last?"

"At the club. I signed an I.O.U. with it just before I left."

"You seem to be a little careless with your property, Mr. Mardel," said the sergeant. He held up a fountain pen between thumb and forefinger. "Is this yours?"

Mardel gulped. "It is," he said chokingly, and reached for the pen. But the sergeant drew it back. His face had grown hard as granite.

"A fountain pen filled with blue ink turns water blue," he announced quietly. "We found your pen tightly grasped in the hand that was doubled under the body. Strange that a drowning man will grasp at a straw—or a fountain pen—isn't it, Jack Mardel?"

"It must have fallen in the water when I—when I found Uncle Joe," stammered Mardel, desperately. "When I bent over him."

"And yet you said he was dead when you found him," retorted the sergeant. "Mardel, I arrest you for the murder of your uncle."

"I—it's not true!" shrieked Mardel.

"Be quiet, young man, and sit down. We will have a correct statement now, if you please, and I have a pen here for you to use—one without water in the barrel."

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Architectural Draftsman   | <input type="checkbox"/> Boilermaker            | <input type="checkbox"/> Heating                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Ventilation                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Building Estimating       | <input type="checkbox"/> Telegraph Engineer     | <input type="checkbox"/> Air Conditioning        | <input type="checkbox"/> Bridge Engineer             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Contractor and Builder    | <input type="checkbox"/> Telephone Work         | <input type="checkbox"/> Steam Engineer          | <input type="checkbox"/> Bridge and Building Foreman |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Structural Draftsman      | <input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Steam Electric Engineer | <input type="checkbox"/> Chemistry                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Structural Engineer       | <input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical Draftsman   | <input type="checkbox"/> Marine Engineer         | <input type="checkbox"/> Pharmacy                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Management of Inventions  | <input type="checkbox"/> Machinist              | <input type="checkbox"/> R. R. Locomotives       | <input type="checkbox"/> Coal Mining                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Electrical Engineer       | <input type="checkbox"/> Patternmaker           | <input type="checkbox"/> R. R. Section Foreman   | <input type="checkbox"/> Mine Foreman                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Electric Lighting         | <input type="checkbox"/> Diesel Engines         | <input type="checkbox"/> Air Brakes              | <input type="checkbox"/> Fire Bosses                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Welding, Electric and Gas | <input type="checkbox"/> Aviation Engines       | <input type="checkbox"/> R. R. Signalmen         | <input type="checkbox"/> Navigation                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reading Shop Blueprints   | <input type="checkbox"/> Automobile Mechanic    | <input type="checkbox"/> Highway Engineering     | <input type="checkbox"/> Cotton Manufacturing        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Heat Treatment of Metals  | <input type="checkbox"/> Refrigeration          | <input type="checkbox"/> Civil Engineering       | <input type="checkbox"/> Woolen Manufacturing        |
|  |   | <input type="checkbox"/> Surveying and Mapping   | <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture                 |

#### BUSINESS TRAINING COURSES

- |  |   |   |  |
|--|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business Management   | <input type="checkbox"/> Bookkeeping      | <input type="checkbox"/> Service Station Salesmanship | <input type="checkbox"/> Grade School Subjects |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial Management | <input type="checkbox"/> Secretarial Work | <input type="checkbox"/> First Year College Subjects  | <input type="checkbox"/> High School Subjects  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Traffic Management    | <input type="checkbox"/> Spanish          | <input type="checkbox"/> Business Correspondence      | <input type="checkbox"/> College Preparatory   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accountancy           | <input type="checkbox"/> French           | <input type="checkbox"/> Stenography and Typing       | <input type="checkbox"/> Illustrating          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cost Accountant       | <input type="checkbox"/> Salesmanship     | <input type="checkbox"/> Civil Service                | <input type="checkbox"/> Cartooning            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> C. P. Accountant      | <input type="checkbox"/> Advertising      | <input type="checkbox"/> Railway Mail Clerk           | <input type="checkbox"/> Lettering Show Cards  |

#### DOMESTIC SCIENCE COURSES

- |   |   |  |  |
|---|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Home Dressmaking                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Advanced Dressmaking | <input type="checkbox"/> Millinery                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Foods and Cookery |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Professional Dressmaking and Designing |   | <input type="checkbox"/> Tea Room and Cafeteria Management, Catering |  |

Name.....Age.....Address.....

City.....State.....Present Position.....

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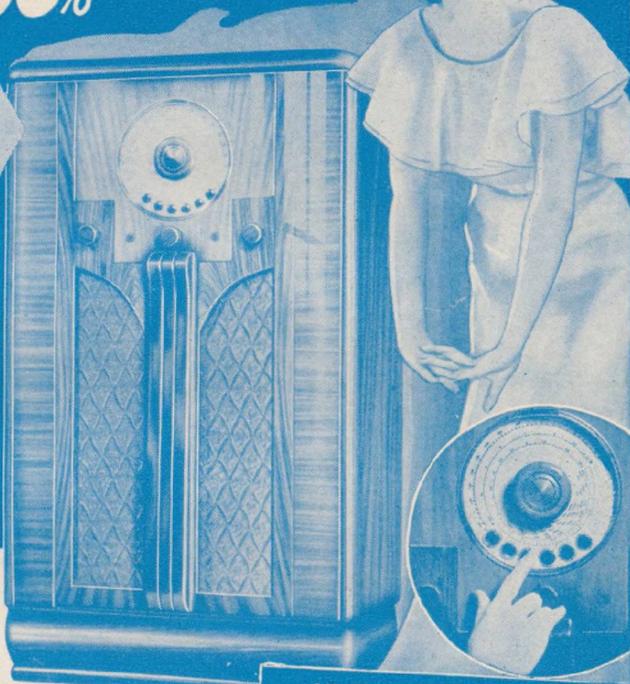
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 R.D. \_\_\_\_\_ Bx \_\_\_\_\_ St. \_\_\_\_\_  
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 PRINT YOUR LAST NAME ONLY IN SPACE BELOW  
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