

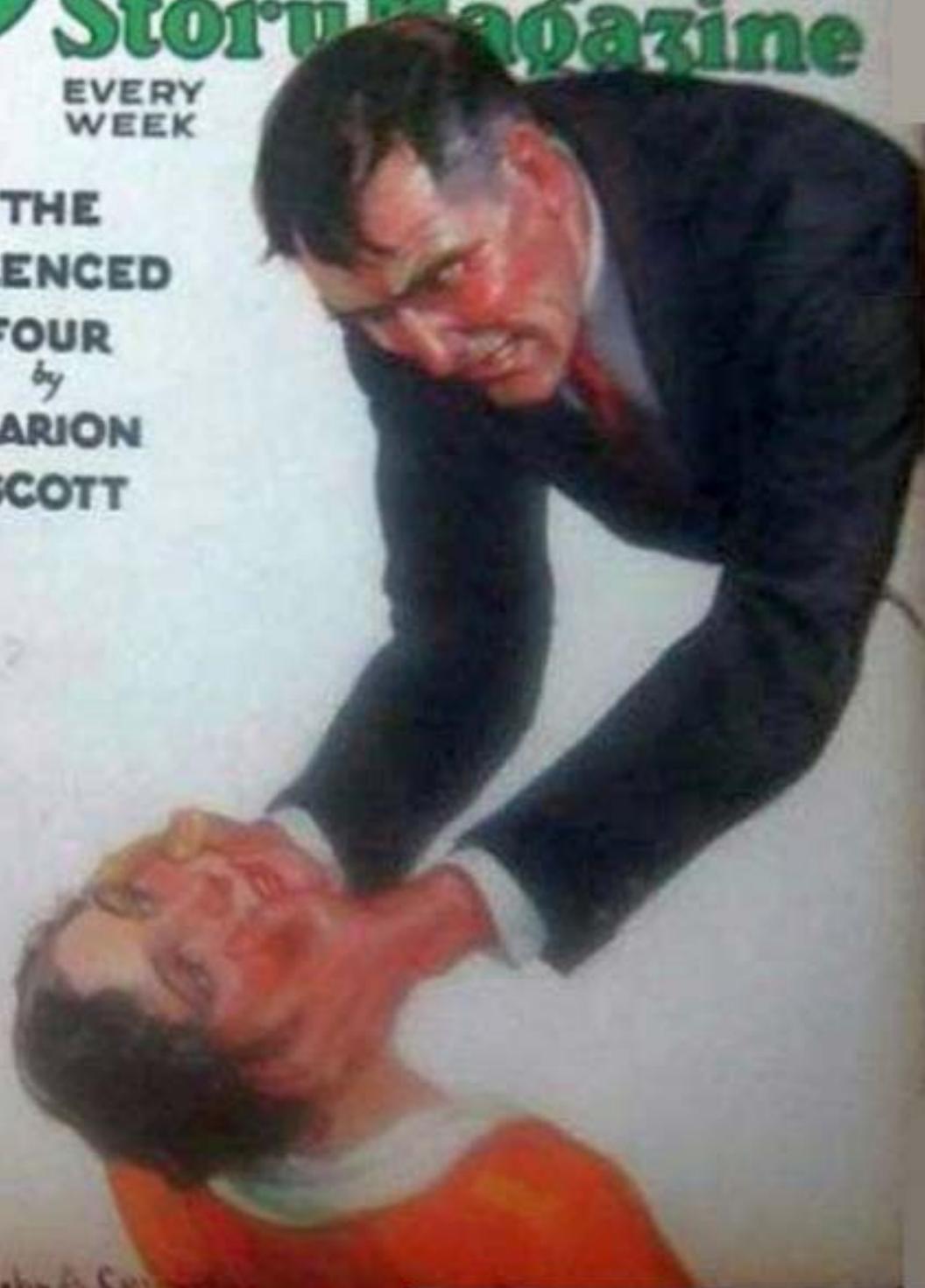
STREET & SMITH'S

JAN. 2, 1932

# Detective Story Magazine

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FOUR  
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MARION  
SCOTT



John A. Cox

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# **EFFECTIVE BECAUSE SAFE**



# Yeggs Will Be Yeggs

By C. Wiles Hallock

THE DRILL," big "Lippy, the Drill"  
And "Gabby McGann, the Gyp"  
Were buddies, faithful and true, until  
McGann fell hard for a dizzy frill,  
Who slighted Lippy, as dumb molls will,  
And sundered the partnership.

'Twas all because of a wren,  
Two boon companionate yeggs  
Grew cold and cagy and hostile. Then,  
Suspicious, vicious and vengeful men,  
They drank red rancor, and drank again  
Their cup of hate to the dregs.

But Gabby was rod-heeled, too;  
So both of the bullies fell.  
"My pal!" sneered Gabby. "My pal, true  
blue!"  
And both yeggs died. But the frill, she  
knew  
'Twas crime! But what can a poor frill do?  
A yegg is a yegg! Ah, well!

The Drill concocted a frame;  
He sent for Gabby, the Gyp,  
And said: "Old pal, it's a sin and shame  
Us two is parted account of a dame!"  
The Gyp agreed. So they played a game  
Of poker, a dime a chip.

They played till the Gyp was broke.  
(The Drill was a dirty cheat!)  
"That deck was cold!" 'Twas the Gyp who  
spoke.  
"Old pal, you jest!" cried the Drill. "You  
joke!  
Are you chilly, pal? Frozen feet? Well,  
smoke!"  
And Lippy "turned on the heat!"



# The Silenced Four

A SERIAL

By MARION SCOTT

*One minute, she was helping the law; the next, she blocked it with defiance.*

## CHAPTER I.

### HOUSE OF DISCORD.

**S**TOP!" Hagar cried in a desperate whisper. "Stop, I say! You're driving me—mad!"

She stood in the long shadowed upper hall at Inneshaven, head thrown back, fingers locked tight in the lusterless darkness of her hair,

and, as she spoke to nothing more human than the elements, there was no response to her cry, and the rain continued to clamor against the house in a devil's tattoo that set her nerves to shrieking.

To Hagar, tense in that attitude of rigid defiance in her father's house, it seemed that the whole of her life had moved with terrible certainty toward this moment of men-



tal blackness, when she knew to a devastating completeness, the desire to kill.

Ever since she was a child and had been punished for running to the solitude of the woods around Innesshaven, since the day she had thrown back her head and screamed childish defiance at her father she so blindly adored, since that night of terror when her mother had died, she had been building for this one moment; for this breathless, enervating atom of time when she could clench numb fingers in her hair, cry for the rain to stop, and feel her whole trembling body alive with the murder urge.

With a sudden mental clarity that was odd against her momentary frenzy, she asked herself a question: "Which one should I kill? Irma? Paul Gaffney?" Her teeth sank into her underlip. Which one? Her stepmother, Slade Innes's wife?

Paul Gaffney, who had but recently come to Innesshaven?

"Hagar!"

She whirled at that low voice. Keith Innes, her uncle, stood beside her. In the dimness of the hall, his face was gray-white. His lips twitched.

She asked hoarsely: "What is it? What do you want?"

"Irma," he answered thickly. "Where is she?"

Hagar's fingers curled against cold palms. "Why should I know?" she countered. "I am not—Irma's keeper." And all the time her mind was seething with the memory of what she had seen not five minutes ago. Irma Innes, the woman who had taken her mother's place, standing just around the turn of the hall there, her head buried against Paul Gaffney's shoulder, his arms hard and tight around her.

Keith Innes drew a shaking hand

across his eyes. Hagar was glad. His eyes, these last few weeks, had frightened her. There was something back of their brightness, something that crouched there gibbering, that might at any moment break loose.

"Irma went along the west corridor, there, ten minutes ago," Keith said. "She was with—Gaffney." He couldn't pronounce the name very clearly. "You came right behind them. I glimpsed your face when you backed away. What did you see, Hagar? What did—"

Hot color flooded Hagar's cheeks. "I am not keeping a check on your rival," she threw at him, and laughed to see the whiteness that flamed over his face. "Every one knows you're mad about Irma," she taunted. "Every one except my father, Irma's husband, that is. You're a poor actor, Keith. You don't cover up well. Also you're a fool. Can't you see she's only using you to keep Gaffney interested? Don't you realize she's—"

He caught her face between his hands, drew it close, and looked into her eyes. "Be careful, little niece," he spoke very, very softly. "Some day I'll—kill you—for your—hate of me."

There were livid marks on her cheeks where his fingers sank, but she looked back at him and laughed. "Why don't you kill Gaffney?" she suggested. "That would be more to the point."

He turned abruptly and walked away. She glared after him with hot eyes.

"I hate him!" she cried. "I hate him so much I could kill him! I wish I could kill him." Reaction came with a sudden slumping of her slim shoulders; hard, tight sobs that twisted her. She dropped to a massive carved chest, face buried in

twitching hands. Close to twenty years ago, Rosemary Innes, Hagar's mother, had died, and on that night, Keith Innes had shaken the small, frightened girl to rouse her from the cold, white trance that held her. He had told her sharply not to be a little fool, and Hagar had never forgotten.

The Innes devil had leaped to life in her and she had beaten at him, scratched and clawed at his handsome, stricken face, screaming her fury. An Innes never forgot. Hate was part of their heritage, and it did not die. Pagan, the Innes tribe. Fierce, turbulent, uncontrolled.

That was the way Hagar had hated her stepmother, even before Slade brought his new wife home. Nothing had occurred in the year that Irma had been at Innesshaven to lessen the feeling. The coming of Paul Gaffney, the accidental discovery on Hagar's part, that Irma was in love with the newcomer, that had only fed the fires. Then that scene in the west corridor—that had been the culmination.

She hunched forward, staring at the floor. If Irma were dead! If Paul Gaffney were dead!

A door closed softly. Hagar turned. Doctor Kearney was coming from Madame Margery's room. Hagar sighed faintly. Sight of the fat little doctor with his round, silver head, his big, intelligent eyes behind thick-lensed glasses, always quieted her.

The doctor was close beside her before he noticed her. He drew up sharply, and she saw his hand go out as if he pushed something back.

"Good evening, Hagar," he said. "I did not see you. Glasses need attention, I guess."

"Good evening, Doctor Kearney. How is grandmother?"

"Just the same, my dear. She

doesn't change. There will be no change except one." He stood gazing down at her, nodding and smiling with a gentle sort of helplessness. Doctor Watts Kearney was a very good doctor. He had acquired much of the knowledge concerning human ills, that it is possible for one man to have, and along with the knowledge had come the realization that all who live must die. It was part of his consciousness, this ever-present necessity for death and death itself, the cessation of breath, the stilling of the eager heart, held no terror or strangeness for him. If Doctor Kearney could have acted on his own convictions, he would have placed the ether cone over the defiant white head of the old woman of Inneshaven and ended the travesty of life which she maintained.

There would have been no cruelty in the act as he performed it, no emotion behind it. It would simply have seemed to him the intelligent thing to do. Since established law and the ethics of his profession prevented this, he continued to live at Inneshaven, give the invalid every care his knowledge warranted, and in his spare time he labored with the fervor of the enthusiast on his study of the cure and prevention of cancer.

Hagar sighed a little. She understood Doctor Kearney, not by actual analysis, but by virtue of the queer intuition which was hers, and sometimes he made her shiver just a bit, but now she smiled and said:

"I'll go in and see her, doctor. Going down for a bit of tea?"

The doctor nodded and turned toward the stairhead. Hagar rounded the turn in the corridor and went into her grandmother's room.

Madame Margery sat bolt upright in her invalid's chair, shriveled

lower limbs hidden by a soft, creamy shawl, head high, valiant old eyes snapping defiance at the fate that held her prisoner.

"Good evening, Hagar," she said in her clear, decisive tones. "I am always happy to see you, but you are not to call on me from a mistaken sense of duty. I am quite comfortable, and when my time comes I shall, I hope, die without interrupting a dinner party which my daughter-in-law may be giving." Then quite suddenly the delicate, wrinkled old face twisted, the great black eyes filled with tears, and, before Hagar knew it, she was on her knees beside her grandmother's chair, head buried in the blanket across her knees, and the two of them were sobbing convulsively.

Mrs. Malvern, the housekeeper, came in with tea for the invalid. She was a tall, somber woman who had grown gray in the Innes service. She had decked Hagar's mother for her wedding; she had held Hagar in her hungry arms when the baby was less than an hour old, and Mrs. Malvern it was who had closed the tired eyes of Rosemary Innes, that night of storm and blackness eighteen years ago. She took in the scene with one swift, comprehensive flash, set the tray on a table, and said over her shoulder:

"I don't approve of the way things is goin' any more than you do, ma'am, but you mustn't let yourself go like this. Miss Hagar, I don't blame you for feelin' like you do, but your grandmother is sick."

"Nonsense, Mrs. Malvern," Madame Margery snapped, all traces of tears gone from her voice. "Whatever puts it into your stupid old head that things aren't as they should be, and you forget yourself, my good woman, and take liberties not befitting a servant."

Mrs. Malvern was stoically pouring tea, and she did not look up or so much as bat an eyelid. When her mistress had finished, she said tonelessly: "My head may be stupid, ma'am, but there's eyes in it, and, beside the eyes, there's ears, and with what brains I've got, I can figure out a few things. As to takin' liberties, I've been in service to your family since Mr. Slade's father came a-wooin' of you, ma'am, and in all that time I've had my say, and I'm havin' it now. Drink this tea and don't be for tellin' me you don't want it."

She slapped the cup down at madame's elbow and waited to see her command obeyed. Madame Margery sighed, and took up the cup. Madame had always been afraid of Malvern, and, to the best of her knowledge, Mrs. Malvern was the only being in the entire universe that instilled that human emotion in her stanch old heart. She sipped the fragrant liquid, eyes on the fire. Hagar leaned back, stretching her long, slim body in a taut arc. There were tears still gleaming on her lashes, but the moment of weakness was past. She was thinking that Mrs. Malvern was passionately devoted to Madame Margery, and that Mrs. Malvern resented quite as intensely as she, Hagar, did, the presence of Irma Innes in the house.

When she had left Madame Margery's room, refreshed herself a bit, and started downstairs for belated tea, she had regained some of her natural stamina. Moreover, she had convinced herself that she could overlook that scene between Irma and Paul Gaffney, as she had forced herself to overlook other things that had bitten almost as deeply.

Then, passing Irma's door, she caught the sound of her high, trill-

ing voice, singing a fragment of a French love lyric, and a sudden, blinding rage stopped her. She stood there, gasping for breath, with perspiration breaking cold over her body.

"Wanton!" she whispered, and, before she realized what she was doing, the door to Irma's room was open, and Hagar was inside.

Irma Innes rose from a low divan before the fire, turned, staring at Hagar, and a long string of pearls slithered from her hands, to fall to the floor in a glowing heap of changing fire.

The two women, only a few years apart in age, faced each other. Possibly because a three-day rain had stretched the nerves of Inneshaven tautly, perhaps because the two of them, with a different sort of foresight, sensed approaching tragedy without being able to detect the cause, the thinly veiled hatred that had always existed between them, tore aside its draperies and showed its hateful face.

"What are you doing in my room? Who gave you the right to intrude?" Irma said thickly.

"What are you doing in my home? Who gave you the right to——" Hagar cried passionately.

Then the dangerous tension snapped, and Irma Innes laughed. She stretched long silken arms above her head, so the lace of her green negligee fell back, and laughed.

"Don't be ridiculous," she advised. "I'm here because your father married me. What better right could I have?"

Hagar had herself under control now. She put her hands on slim, swaying hips, strolled across, and looked into Irma's eyes insolently.

"I'll admit my father's bad taste in marrying you," she said distinctly, "but, if it is necessary to

have your lovers under your husband's roof, you might display enough control to entertain them in private."

Imps of mocking mirth danced in her long, heavy-lidded eyes, quirked the corners of her mouth, sent her straight black brows into writhing lines of derision. There was the suggestion of laughter all about her, and Irma, watching, white-lipped with fury, felt a new and hitherto unsuspected fear of this dark, sullen girl, so she stood there wordlessly, her face gray. If Slade discovered the truth about Paul Gaffney—

"A gift from my father?" Hagar's cool voice roused her. The girl lifted the string of pearls from the rug, was holding them out at the extreme tips of her fingers.

Irma snatched at them. "You—brat!" she choked. "You—little—beast! Get out of my room!"

Hagar tossed the pearls contemptuously to the divan, turned, and sauntered out. In the hall she met Paul Gaffney. Gaffney had a long, bony face, close-set, colorless eyes, thin, wide lips that looked cold. Yet, there was something about him that held the eyes, intrigued the mind; some suggestion of evil so complete and final that it attracted as the ultimate always does.

Hagar loathed him. He smiled at her and passed on. She turned to look after him. He had stopped outside Irma's door. His hand was on the knob. As Hagar paused at the stairhead, she saw him open the door a bare crack, lean there, peering in. She flushed. He did not find it necessary to rap for admittance to the private sitting room of Slade Innes's wife.

Back before the fire, Irma Innes, frenzied with fear, wadded the pearls into a little heap and ran

with them into her dressing room. Irma's nerves had been in a bad state since Paul's arrival at Inneshaven, two weeks ago. She was sobbing a little as she groped for the hidden drawer in her dressing table that for so long had housed the royal stones. Of course, she had been a fool to take them out. She had about succeeded in convincing Paul that she didn't have them, that they had gone with the rest of the loot into old Murkelson's coffers, then she had been weak enough to want to look at them, enjoy their great beauty.

Her fingers shook as she stuffed them into the drawer, shoved it shut, and, turning, stumbled from the room. The place was so quiet. She became abruptly aware of the quietness of Inneshaven. It screamed at her from the lovely green-and-gold room, clamored in the voice of the rain, fumbling at her windows. She dropped to the divan, drawing her long, supple body into a tight, tense ball, covering her ears with icy palms.

"Stop!" she chattered. "Stop that beastly pattering! I can't stand it—the rain! It's driving me crazy."

She sat up, frowning. Breath whistled between her set teeth. Some one was there! In the room with her! Watching her! Aware of her possession of the Delacourt pearls! Some one had watched her hide them.

Then she relaxed and groped for a cigarette. The room was empty except for herself. With a quick exclamation, she rose, ran to the door and picked from the rug a smoldering cigarette stub. It was a Russian brand, heavy and exotic. The cork tip was still damp. She held it at arm's length, staring at it. Only one person in Inneshaven

used that brand of cigarette. Paul Gaffney!

Then Paul Gaffney had been in the room.

The thing burned her fingers, and she dropped it, crushing it with the creamy richness of the rug. She walked slowly to her dressing room, opened the drawer that held the pearls, and stood there frowning at them.

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## CHAPTER II.

### THE BLOW.

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HAGAR was sipping tea. She leaned back indolently in the deep tapestry and wondered, as she surveyed the group before the fire through half-closed lids, why people didn't really look like what they were. A frown grew between her flexible brows as she considered the question. It would be so very much simpler if one could just look at another person and know immediately that he was a slimy, dangerous criminal.

She started out of her reverie. Paul Gaffney was sitting on a low stool at her feet, and she realized with startled surprise that she had been looking directly at him when she figured out that business about criminals.

He smiled, showing large, pale-yellow teeth. "You remind me of a medieval princess," he said, in that slow, caressing voice of his. "Aloof on your imperial throne, contemplating death for the unfaithful of your subjects."

She set the cup on the small table beside her.

"You remind me of a rather stupid individual, trying to cultivate a pseudo-romance," she said brutally,

then laughed, to see the white fury that twisted his face. He leaned closer, resting his long, cold fingers on her wrist.

"A woman as beautiful as you could get away with murder," he said, and his fingers tightened convulsively.

She jerked away. He came after her by inching the low stool along the polished floor. "You are beautiful, Hagar," he insisted very low. "So beautiful that I dream of you sometimes."

"Sorry to interrupt your dreams, Gaffney," a quick voice cut in, "but I dislike seeing a lady bored. Hagar, you promised to let me show you my new gun." And Lance Murray drew Hagar to her feet, slipped a hand under her elbow, and calmly led her from the room.

She didn't say anything until he held the door of the gun room open for her, than she paused, looked straight into his eyes that were always a bit lonely and hurt.

"Thanks, Lance," she said very low, and smiled to see the light that leaped to life in his face.

He showed her the gun, losing his usual self-consciousness as he enthusiastically described its points to her. Lance Murray was so much a part of Hagar's existence that she really thought no more of him than she did of her slipper trees, or coat hangers. A minor essential to the smooth running of her life, but not, in any sense, indispensable.

Lance had thickly curling blond hair, black brows, and blue-gray eyes. He also had an infectious smile, strong white teeth, and a temper that he had tried for some twenty-four years to conquer fully. He had come to live at Inneshaven as a small boy, at the death of his parents in an Indian epidemic, and, in spite of the welcome accorded the

lonely, frightened child, the kindness that had always been shown him, Lance Murray could not forget that he had been the recipient of charity, and never quite overcame his fierce pride concerning it.

"It's for small game or target shooting, Hagar," he was saying, handling the Colt automatic pistol, with the skill of the lover of firearms. "Look, it has perfect balance. It shoots .22 long rifle cartridges."

He hurried on, turning the beautiful weapon as he described each feature, not looking at her, but holding his quick, nervous glance on the gun as if he were afraid to let her see what was in his eyes. Hagar replied mechanically. There seemed to be several strata to her mind, each occupied with separate thoughts.

First, she considered her father and the wreck he had made of his life through his second marriage. Did he really see through Irma? Know her for what she was? Accept his defeat like the good sportsman he was, or could it be possible he was still blinded by her?

"Balance it, Hagar. See how perfectly it fits your hand."

"It's lovely, Lance. Where did you get your passion for guns?"

"Born with me, I guess. It has a magazine capacity of ten shots without reloading."

Hagar sitting in a high-backed straight chair! Lance on one knee beside her! Firelight on his tawny hair! Rain pattering against the panes!

Who was Paul Gaffney—really? An old friend of Irma's brother? Hagar doubted if Irma even had a brother. Gaffney had just appeared one day. Hagar had been in the hall, and she would never forget the sight of Irma's face when she saw him. He had been accepted by the

inmates of Inneshaven. Two weeks he had stayed now, and he acted as if he owned the place. There had been an air of suspense over the house since his coming. Irma, quivering with a furtive sort of excitement. Slade, grim-lipped, eyes smoldering, lines deepening in his face hourly. Keith—Hagar shuddered, remembering her uncle's eyes, and that something that seemed to crouch behind their brightness.

"This is the automatic side lock, Hagar. See? It guarantees perfect safety."

Terror leaped out at Hagar, clutched her by the throat.

"Lance," she cried faintly, "put it away! I hate it! Why do you love to kill?"

And to the boy's wide-eyed amazement, Hagar, the strong, the unshakable, began crying without even attempting to stop. Just sitting there, staring at nothing, with tears rolling down her cheeks, her slim brown hands lying palms up along the chair arms.

Lance fought out of the sudden blur of angry pain into which her words had thrown him, dropped the gun, caught her hands, holding them hard against his chest.

"Hagar," he said hoarsely. "Don't cry, Hagar. I'm sorry, beastly sorry. I don't love to kill. I won't ever kill anything again if you don't want me to. Don't draw away from me, Hagar. Look at me, listen to me. I love you, Hagar. I've always loved you."

Her glance returned from contemplation of something he could not see, slowly focused, then she became aware of him. She frowned slightly, loosened her hands from his grip, and stood up.

"I'm sorry, Lance," she said carefully. "I didn't mean that as a criticism of you. I like men to enjoy

sports. Please don't think about it any more, and your gun's lovely. I'll go now, if you don't mind."

She went out, walking slowly, that air of serene detachment about her that had always baffled his impulsiveness. Lance Murray hunched dully on the floor, eyes on the blue barrel of his beloved gun, while gradually the realization came to him that Hagar hadn't even registered his crazy love-making. She thought so little of him, she didn't even know when he threw everything he had before her.

Holding the gun mechanically, he stood up, staring at it. Then, with a short, hard laugh, he tossed it to the table, lighted a cigarette and went out.

He was still in that daze of unreality when he stumbled through the dimly lighted rear hall toward the back stairs, and came suddenly on two tense figures standing in the shadows near the door. Paul Gaffney and Hagar Innes! And Gaffney held the girl in a tight, cruel embrace, face buried in the masses of her dusky hair.

Lance stopped, overwhelmed by sudden disaster. Then, like a flash, Hagar surged back, one hand swung out and caught Gaffney in a stinging slap across the cheek.

"Beast!" she cried. "Beast!"

"You little devil," Gaffney choked. "I'll teach you to——"

He caught at her shoulder, but Lance's blow cracked on the point of his jaw, and he stumbled drunkenly, eyes suddenly blank, to sprawl in a limp heap on the floor. Lance glowered down at him, rubbing his knuckles. Hagar was standing hard pressed against the wall, looking at Lance with a curious sense of having seen him clearly for the first time in her life. Then a clear, brittle voice spoke from the hall's end.

"If you've done brawling, you might be interested to know that dinner is served."

Irma Innes lounged into the picture, trailing the length of her green velvet dinner gown behind her, the frosty sparkle of diamonds at her throat. Her slow, bleak glance went from the unconscious man on the floor, to Lance, on to Hagar and flamed with searing hate.

"Brawlers," she said, turned, and flashed around the corner.

Gaffney was stirring. Lance looked at Hagar. "I'm sorry," he said simply. "I guess you could take care of yourself."

She put out her hands in a swift delightful gesture, and her vivid face was strangely softened. "Don't be sorry, Lance," she begged. "You restored my self-respect with that blow, if you get what I mean." Then she ran up the stairs, and Lance's eyes lifted to follow her, bright with a happiness, greater than any he had ever known.

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### CHAPTER III.

#### MURDERED!

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HAGAR couldn't rest after dinner. She was tormented with such a longing to get away from Innes-haven that she had to clutch the arms of the chair where she sat before the fire in the drawing-room to keep from leaping up and racing out.

Then, quite naturally the thought came: Why shouldn't she leave? Just go out and walk through the park in the rain. She smiled with grateful relaxation at the idea. It relieved that feeling of suffocation that was tickling in her throat. She tossed her cigarette to the fire, and stood up.

Slade Innes spoke to her: "Not leaving us, are you, Hagar?"

Hagar smiled at her father. She thought him the strongest, most handsome man she had ever seen, and her turbulent nature responded perfectly to his. Up to a year ago, they had been great pals, heartily devoted friends, then everything had ended when Slade brought Irma home as his wife.

Slade was watching her now with a queer sort of timidity, a faintly defiant pleading in his eyes. He loved this dangerous child of his more completely than anything else in the whole world. He had sensed her antagonism to his new wife. Savagely, he had set about to overcome it. He would quite willingly have severed his right hand at the wrist to prevent her discovering what he himself knew, that Irma was a sinuous, lovely parasite, treacherous as quicksand, deadly as fever.

Paul Gaffney, tight-lipped and silent, lounged in a shadowed corner. Hagar could feel his eyes on her. Lance had not shown up for dinner. Irma was lovely and indifferent as usual. Keith Innes sat beside her. Hagar shivered when she looked at him. Mrs. Malvern passed silently through the room. Her grim, leathery face was hard-set. The look she bestowed on her mistress made no attempt at concealment. Doctor Kearney had gone for his usual nightly walk. Madame Margery, chained to her wheel chair upstairs, played out her little drama of unconcern. Hagar was oppressed with the surge of conflicting emotions under one roof. Again, there was that lashing insistence to be gone.

She answered her father: "Think I'll run out for a bit of air. See you all later."

No one said anything. As she closed the door behind her, the silence of that teeming room followed her tangibly.

Inneshaven was only fifteen miles from the city. A paved highway led to within a quarter of a mile of its extensive grounds. But it stood alone in its serene aloofness, seeming unconscious of the throbbing life almost at its doors.

Hagar loved the night. She loved the storm, when she could confront it, feel the surge of wind against her body, whip of rain on her uplifted face.

As she raced through the night, her nerves relaxed. The weight of tragedy was lifted. She was suddenly happy and very young. She thought of Caper, the collie she had owned as a child; of Dennis, the old setter; of how she used to run with them knee-deep through autumn drifted leaves, back in the days before Irma came, when life was joyous.

From the rainy darkness, a hoarse voice sounded. "Irma," it said. "Hey, Irma."

Hagar's running feet stumbled to a sudden stop. She stood there motionless, wide, startled eyes straining at the dark. Rain tapped drearily on the leaves of the maples above her head. There was a low wind soughing through the blackness, and the echo of that ugly, furtive voice calling to the mistress of Inneshaven.

Whose voice? A man't, but no man Hagar knew. Then the bushes stirred, and a dark form materialized dully. The man said again:

"That you, Irma? It's about time——"

At Hagar's startled exclamation, he stopped abruptly, and she could feel him there, bulking large in the shadows. Sheer physical terror kept

her from moving, then the man backed into the greenery that closed behind him, and she heard his stumbling, crashing steps dying to silence.

She drew a deep, sobbing breath. The incident had terrified her beyond all reason. She began walking swiftly, unconscious of where she went, unheeding of the soggy ground, the dripping shrubs, the rain beating about her. Inside of a dozen yards, she was running, plunging blindly through the darkness, whipped by terror that robbed her of coherent thought.

She stopped at last because she could no longer get her breath, and there were crooked streaks of light dancing before her eyes. She leaned against the trunk of a towering maple, and gradually her laboring heart slowed, and she was able to think intelligently.

After all, what business was it of hers if some one called to Irma Innes. Probably, there was some simple explanation, something entirely in keeping with the involved and characterless nature of her step-mother, something which Hagar would have scorned, but which to Irma seemed quite natural.

She thrust her hands into the pockets of her leather jacket, set her head defiantly, and started back toward the house.

It loomed before her presently through the misty curtain of the rain, with softly glowing windows and the glint of firelight on shadowed walls. Hagar knew and loved every foot of the place: its long, rambling halls, its large, quiet rooms, deep fireplaces, recessed windows. The house was stanchly constructed of yellow stone which, through the years, had softened to a pale-cream. Its rough old walls were thickly coated with a heavy

drapery of woodbine, whose main stems, half as large as Hagar's body, sent out myriad sturdy tendrils that clung tenaciously to protruding stone or to specially constructed lattices.

Yet, as she approached, she felt a curious reluctance to enter. Something seemed to rise between her and the safety of Inneshaven like a tangible barrier.

She paused, wiping rain from her eyes, then jerked round at the shuffling of slow, uncertain steps on the gravel. Into the bar of light across the lawn stepped the short, powerful figure of Doctor Kearney. He was moving cautiously, head bent, tapping the gravel lightly, almost gropingly, with his stick, and Hagar frowned at the queer suggestion of concentration about him, as though every faculty was bent on the business of walking. He passed without seeing her, swung up to the door of the sun room and entered. As it closed behind him, Hagar caught the sound of his cheery whistle. It did much to restore her to normal. Doctor Kearney looked so completely matter of fact, so solidly set on firm ground, that some of her vague fears vanished.

But still she lingered, hunching down in the shelter of the portecochère, to smoke a reflective cigarette for some ten minutes. Then, feeling much calmer, she ran up the steps and opened the door.

Immediately, her manufactured courage drained away. The place was so still—no sound of voices, no laughter, no music; just a thick, brooding silence, intensified by the endless rain. She closed the door softly, jerked off her tam and stopped, momentarily paralyzed, as the stillness of the house was shattered by the sound of a shot.

Oddly enough, with that crashing

discord, Hagar became perfectly calm. It was what she had been waiting for. Not consciously for a shot, but for the trouble which was bound to come. She tossed her tam to the hall tree and raced up the stairs.

The first person she saw was her father, Slade Innes, standing very stiff and still at the entrance to the cross corridor that opened onto Madame Margery's apartment, as well as the room occupied by Paul Gaffney. Innes was just standing there, head thrust forward, big hands clenched by his sides, and Hagar, coming to an abrupt halt beside him, heard the sound of his panting breath.

"Dad," she whispered. "Dad? What's happened?"

He did not turn his head, but one hand went out, groping blindly for hers. She clenched her fingers around his, and they stood there together, not speaking. Then Innes said calmly:

"Gaffney's been shot!"

At the same moment, the house woke to life, roused out of the temporary stupor into which that shot had thrown it. Doors opened. Startled faces appeared. Irma, in a shadowy green negligee, her gorgeous hair a golden satin cape around her shoulders, eyes stark in a white, ravaged face.

Keith Innes moved with his usual silent grace, eyes hooded, lips tense. Mrs. Malvern crept down the stairs from her quarters that were on the third floor.

All of them approached with a queer stealth, to huddle staring at the long, limp body of Paul Gaffney sprawled on the floor, half out of the open door of his darkened room.

Then Hagar heard quick, running steps behind her, and Doctor Kearney, wearing raincoat and cap,

pushed through the little group and bent over the dead man.

They waited, breathless, for what he would say, though there could be no doubt in the mind of any one, looking at that small bluish hole in Gaffney's temple, as to the doctor's verdict. It seemed so long before Kearney spoke. Hagar felt unreasonably irritated. What use was his poking and probing, his pressure on the limp wrist, that groping for a heartbeat that was forever stilled? Why didn't he speak? Why didn't he just say: "Gaffney's murdered."

Then a voice spoke from the stair-head:

"Guess I'm just in time. What's happened here, Slade?"

They turned as one person. A man stood there, leaning on the railing. He wore a dripping raincoat, a soft gray hat pulled low over his eyes. One hand, lean and forceful, clasped the railing. Light caught and held on a great glowing moonstone set in silver, on the third finger. Hagar had never seen him before.

Slade Innes drew a shaking hand across his eyes. He said: "Hello, Court. Mighty glad to see you. Gaffney, a guest of mine, has been murdered."

"How does he know it's murder?" Hagar thought. "It might be accident, suicide."

The stranger tossed his hat aside, strode across, and stood staring down at Gaffney. To Hagar, watching with a terrible intensity, came a queer warning premonition. Something inside her cowered blindly from the sight of the man's hard, enveloping stare. There was about him a suggestion of a smoothly running, high-powered machine. No lost motion. No unnecessary energy expended. A mind and body that coordinated so perfectly as to pro-

duce a dynamic force that would sweep everything from its way.

Still looking at him, she asked slowly: "Who is—that?"

The man turned his head, so the light struck his face. His eyes, a queer, cloudy gray, stared hard into hers. She gasped, and took a backward step. There was a tingling excitement about her, as if she had suddenly received an electric shock.

Her father answered her question: "This is Captain Courtney Brade, of the detective bureau. I had asked him to come out this evening on an entirely—different—mission."

Brade's eyes went slowly over the group, seeming to appraise, classify, and dispose of each individual with startling thoroughness. He inclined his head slightly.

"Good evening," he said, in his deep, pleasant voice. "I'll get your names later. Now let's figure this out." He extracted a cigarette from a slim silver case, lighted it, and drew fragrant smoke into his lungs. Since he had reached Gaffney's side, he had not moved a step.

He looked at Slade Innes. "Gaffney's the name, you say? A friend of yours?"

Slade Innes's dark, handsome face flushed. Involuntarily, his eyes went to Irma's, narrowed with swift contempt. "He was staying at the house," he answered curtly. "He was a friend of Mrs. Innes's brother."

Captain Courtney Brade grunted softly. He looked at Irma. "We can check up on that later," he commented, and Irma's pale lips tightened. "All right," he went on crisply. "What happened, aside from the fact that the man was shot? You, Slade, what do you know about it?"

"Nothing. I was in my room." He motioned back to the central

door of the main corridor. "I was reading. I heard a shot. I think I was the first one on the ground. That's all."

Brade eyed him thoughtfully, nodded. "Next. Who arrived next?"

"I did," Hagar said, head high, eyes defiant. "I had been walking in the grounds." She paused abruptly, then went on. "I had just entered the house when I heard the shot. I found my father standing here, just where he is now."

Brade's quiet, penetrating glance ticketed the girl. He had known Slade Innes for close to seven years, but their association had been in a business way, and he had never met Hagar. Slade's daughter, all right: same fire, same pride, same restless devil inside.

He looked at Keith Innes. "You?" he inquired.

"In my room. Writing a letter. Heard a shot. Nothing else."

"Hm-m-m!" Brade stroked his chin. "That boy's lying," he reflected. "He heard something else, but he won't talk—yet."

"Mrs. Innes?" he went on. "What can you tell us of the murder of your brother's friend?"

Irma's lips quivered. She inched closer to her husband. Her hand toyed with the diamond pin at the low V of her dress. "Nothing," she said faintly. "I know nothing about it, nothing—nothing." Her voice rose hysterically.

Slade put an impersonal arm around her shoulder.

"We were all downstairs," she continued. "It was—dull. Paul—came up here. I followed him."

Brade's eyes narrowed. "She followed him," he mentally checked. "Go on," he said.

"There's nothing else to tell," Irma said, clinging to Slade's arm.

"I don't know anything about it. I heard a shot. When I got here, Paul was—lying there. I didn't do it. I didn't——" She began sobbing, cowering against her husband. "I didn't kill Paul," she chattered. "You can't prove that I killed him."

Slade Innes was staring at her curiously. "Control yourself, Irma," he advised. "No one's said you killed him."

Brade regarded her thoughtfully. "Where's the other chap, the one who was examining Gaffney?"

There was silence a moment, then Hagar answered: "That was Doctor Kearney. He was just here a moment ago. He's——"

The door of Madame Margery's suite opened. The doctor appeared. He had thrown off his coat and hat. His plump, pleasant face was pale. He mopped his broad forehead with a crisp linen handkerchief.

"I heard you asking for me," he said. "I went at once to see my patient, Mr. Slade's mother. I feared what this would do to her." He glanced around helplessly, spread his hands. "She is bad," he said. "The shock has brought on another stroke." And without further word, he turned and hurried back to the sickroom.

Slade Innes groaned dully and stumbled after the doctor. Keith and Hagar followed. The light in Madame Margery's room was turned very low. There was a dense hush over the place. The old woman lay like one dead, her thin, straight body outlined under the silken covers of the bed. Her head was thrown back, eyes closed. The cords in her thin neck stood out rigidly; the sound of her breathing was a labored, suffering thing. The group by the door stood helplessly staring at this new ruin, then the doctor

looked up from a contemplation of the unconscious woman.

"You had best go," he said gently. "Send Mrs. Malvern to me. I will put through a call for a nurse."

"She'll live?" Slade Innes demanded hoarsely. "This isn't going to kill her, Kearney?"

Kearney regarded Innes somberly. He was entirely unable to understand this concern over a poor old body so nearly ruined. He shook his head gently: "I cannot say, Mr. Innes. It is the third, you know. I will do what I can. The shot—I suppose that was it. She heard it, of course. She is right next door. It was too much. Go now, please."

They crowded out. Only Courtney Brade closed the door, shoved his hands into his pockets, and strolled over to look down on the pitiful figure on the bed. "Up to this time," he asked, "she had full possession of her faculties? Hearing? Speech?"

"Oh, yes. She could not walk, but otherwise she was perfectly normal."

Brade frowned at the wall separating madame's room from Paul Gaffney's.

Just then, Keith Innes said clearly: "The window's open here in Gaffney's room."

Brade registered that fact along with another: that voices in the adjoining room were audible in this one, and that while Madame Margery had undoubtedly heard the shot, she must also have heard any conversation that preceded it. He glanced again at the rigid waxen face. Locked in that numb brain was probably the secret of Paul Gaffney's murder.

He spoke to the doctor. "Know anything about Gaffney's death?"

Doctor Kearney shook his head. "Nothing. Sorry——" he hesitated briefly.

"I'm Captain Brade," the officer told him. "Detective headquarters."

"Thank you, captain. I was out for my usual evening stroll, and, as I came in downstairs, I heard the shot. Got there as fast as I could."

Brade nodded, and went out.

Slade Innes stood beside his wife, who had dropped to a low stool in the hall. She was sobbing dully. The light was on in Gaffney's room. Brade frowned angrily and hurried in. Hagar stood across by the open window. Keith Innes lounged nonchalantly by the fireplace.

Brade crossed to the window. Rain had beat in, forming a wide, damp spot on the rug. Marked clearly on its light surface were the prints of muddy shoes. He rose and bent over the sill. Its smooth wood was marred by long scratches. There was the dull smudge of a hand on the side. He leaned out, shading his eyes from the rain, snapping on a powerful flash.

Hagar watched him, eyes coolly questioning. "He came up by the vines," she said, and pointed at the heavy curtain of greenery that sheathed the outside wall. "It is very strong," she added. "There is a stout metal lattice underneath."

Brade asked without turning his head: "Who came up by the vines, Hagar Innes?"

There was a little moment of silence, then she said: "Why, the man who murdered Paul Gaffney, of course."

"Yes?" Brade still did not look at her, but he felt the slight trembling of her taut body, saw her slim brown hands clenched hard on the ledge. "Any idea who that was?" he inquired.

A shrill voice cut in. "I can tell you. I know who murdered Gaffney."

Brade turned. Irma Innes stood in the open door. Her face was a ghastly mask of twisted fear. Slade Innes caught her shoulder and jerked her back.

"Don't be a fool," he rasped. "Wait until you're asked."

"Take it easy, Irma," Keith said hoarsely. "You haven't been asked."

"Oh, yes she has!" Brade snapped. "What do you know, Mrs. Innes? Who murdered Gaffney?"

Irma started forward, and her slipper touched Paul Gaffney's out-flung hand. She screamed and stumbled back. Slade caught her. She stared across the body of the dead man, straight into Brade's eyes.

"Lance Murray," she said clearly. "He had a quarrel with Gaffney tonight. He has been missing since five o'clock. He came in that window, shot Paul."

"You're lying," Hagar cried, and stopped because she did not recognize the voice as her own. But she knew that a terrible pain had stabbed through her at that accusation, and, for the first time, she wondered definitely where Lance Murray was.

Irma brushed damp hair from her eyes. "I'm not lying," she said evenly. "Lance is in love with Hagar. Paul fancied her, too." Choking breath made her stop. "Paul made advances—there in the lower hall. Lance came on them. He knocked Paul down."

"I'd quicker think you did it." A hard, level voice broke in, and Mrs. Malvern shouldered her way into the room. She stood there staring round with hard, bitter eyes. "You're a policeman?" she demanded of Brade. "Well, I can tell something about this. I was in madame's room, just before dinner

and I heard them quarreling—her and that dead man there. Quarreling bitter, they were. In this very room. Madame heard it, too. It nearly killed her. That her son's wife, the mistress of Inneshaven, should be in a stranger's room, quarreling."

"Never mind that," Brade cut in. "Go on with your story."

Mrs. Malvern's head jerked up. Dull color stained her cheeks. "I'll go on with my story in my own way, young man," she said sullenly, and Brade did not again interrupt. "They were quarreling because Gaffney admired Miss Hagar. Mrs.—Innes"—Mrs. Malvern seemed to have trouble with the name—"she accused him of trifling on her. He laughed at her and asked her what she could do about it, and she said"—Mrs. Malvern paused, turned and looked straight and hard at Irma—"I can do plenty, Paul Gaffney, and I'll do it, too, before this night is over." She shrugged gaunt shoulders. "She did, I guess," the old woman added, turned, and stalked out of the room.

Brade rumbled his thick brown hair, gray-frosted at the temple. He had been a policeman for close to twenty years. Brains, sheer natural ability, intensive training, and a deep understanding of human nature had lifted him from the ranks to captain of detectives in the city bureau. He had come up the long, hard grade by learning that back of every passionate crime is a complicated network of misdirected human emotions. That the crime itself is the natural culmination of overwrought emotional reactions, the hateful steam that rises from the boiling kettle of hate and love, fear and greed, jealousy and desire.

From what he knew of Slade Innes and his family, from what he

could sense of the seething emotions around him now, he knew that the way leading back over the rugged path that had led to murder was going to be hard to follow.

There would be frantic accusations, baffling statements, misleading information, willful lying, and, somehow out of the mass, he, Captain Courtney Brade, would have to find the truth. It was his job. It was also his passion, this unswerving adherence to a straight line of thought that would eventually bring him to the murderer. But first he had to find the one true thread out of the tangled mass.

Hagar cried sharply: "Lance! Where have you been?"

Brade glanced up. Lance Murray stood in the hall. Brade had met him once. The boy was a sorry sight. His thick blond hair was tangled with moisture. His clothes were soggy and disheveled. There was a long, ragged tear in the woolen golf stocking he wore, an ugly bruise on his cheek.

He stood with lowered head, staring down at Gaffney; the muscles around his tight lips were twitching. Then he looked up, and his hot, defiant stare went round the group.

"I didn't do it," he said thickly. "You can't pin it on me. I hated the fellow. I'm glad he's dead, but I didn't—"

"Lance!" Hagar cried again, and Brade smiled faintly. Let them alone, and they'd make his job easier. That was part of Brade's stock in trade, the things people did, because of what they were; the actions and words that came as the results of that deep, intangible thing, human nature. He depended more on it than on any amount of up-to-date, scientific deduction.

"Where have you been, Murray?" he asked quietly.

Lance shook his head dully. A frown grew between his brows. "I don't know," he said thickly, and pressed a wet, muddy hand to his eyes.

Brade caught the hand, held it to the light. There was a moist crimson stain on the cuff of his light sweater!

"Have you hurt yourself?" he asked softly.

Lance stared at him, a queer, baffled look in his eyes. "Hurt?" he repeated thickly. "No, I didn't—hurt myself."

"He's drunk," Irma cried shrilly. "He's reeking with whisky."

Brade's lips tightened. There was no doubt of the correctness of Mrs. Innes's diagnosis. Brade shook Murray's shoulder. "Try to think what happened," he insisted. "You went out of the house shortly after tea, after you had a row with Gaffney downstairs. Where did you go? What did you do?" He frowned down at the boy's oxfords, stained and wet with mud, then his glance went to the marks on the carpet by the window. "Snap out of it!" he ordered. "Get hold of yourself, man. Murder's been done."

Lance's head came up. He made a mighty effort to get hold of himself. Perspiration stood in big pale drops on his face. "I smashed Gaffney," he said thickly. "Smashed him, then I went into the gun room and——"

He muttered something under his breath, shook his head again, took a stumbling step ahead, and crashed down.

Brade dropped beside him, slipping a hand inside his light coat, drew it out, dripping with blood.

He rose swiftly. "Get him to his room!" he ordered. "Call the doctor. He's been wounded—stabbed, I think!"

## CHAPTER IV.

### BRADE'S METHOD.

"I'M talking to you first, Slade," Captain Brade said, "because you're master in this house."

Slade's harsh laugh stopped him. "Master?" he said bitterly. "That's good."

"Care to amplify that remark?"

Slade stared at him from haggard, bloodshot eyes. "No," he muttered.

Brade sighed faintly, and took another line of attack.

"Why did you call me out here to-night?"

"No use going into that now. The reason for it is——"

"Dead?" Brade cut in. "You wanted to talk to me about Paul Gaffney, didn't you?"

Slade Innes did not answer.

Brade got up and strolled to the window. The men were in the big library at Inneshaven. It was a quarter to eleven. The rain showed no signs of abating. Fire crackled comfortably in the wide-mouthed hearth. A golden Persian cat slept luxuriously on a black velvet cushion. There were cigars and whisky on the table. The other inmates of Inneshaven were in their respective rooms. Lance Murray, the nasty cut in his side dressed by Doctor Kearney, slept heavily under an opiate. Brade had called headquarters in the city. The fingerprint men, the photographers, the medical examiner had come and gone, taking with them the body of the murdered man.

Brade came back to his chair. "When did Gaffney show up here?" he asked.

"Two weeks ago to-night."

"He was a stranger to you?"

"Yes."

"Mrs. Innes vouched for him?"

Slade's eyes lifted, held the detective's. "I don't know quite what you mean by that, Court. Irma introduced him as a friend of her brother. That was sufficient for me."

"And you can't tell me anything about him? Anything of his background? Anything at all that might explain this business to-night?"

There was a brief pause, then Slade Innes's jaw set stubbornly. "I can tell you nothing," he retorted.

Brade flicked the ash from his cigar. "I see," he agreed noncommittally. "Why were you paying him blackmail, Slade?"

Slade Innes leaped up, blue eyes blazing. "Keep your meddling fingers off my private affairs," he cried. "I'll throw you and your flat-footed cops out of my house."

Brade grinned meagerly. "Take it easy, Slade; I'm not enjoying it. But the fact that you and Gaffney had one thundering row, in this very room no later than this afternoon, is bound to come out. You'd better tell me first."

Slade Innes dropped to his chair as if the life had gone out of him.

"How'd you find out?" he asked.

"The second maid overheard it. You told Gaffney you would not meet his demands. That you'd already given him four thousand."

Slade slumped forward, face buried in his hands. "Don't go on," he begged. "Stop it, Court, stop it!" He sat there silently for a moment, then with a deep sigh he got up, thrust his hands into his pockets, and faced Brade.

"Murder's been done," he said slowly, "and I suppose it's your duty to see that the guilty party is punished." He smiled bleakly. "All

right. Do your worst, but don't expect any help from me. I'll put every possible obstacle in your way. I'll block you at every turn. I'll lie and bribe and cheat; I'll do everything but—murder—to keep you from finding out who killed Gaffney. You can have me locked up if you want to. I'll still be working against you. It's war between us, Court, war to the death, and I'm playing fair by telling you so. Good night."

With a curt nod, he stalked out, closing the door very gently behind him.

Courtney Brade stared after him through narrow-lidded eyes, then he took the cigar from between his lips, and regarded it thoughtfully for a long time.

"Huh!" he grunted at last. "Bent on protecting——"

He looked up at a slight tap on the door. Doctor Kearney entered. He looked strained and tired. He came slowly toward Brade, walking carefully as though he did not see well. Brade stared curiously at the large, intelligent eyes behind the thick lenses, as the doctor paused three feet away, head thrust forward, staring at the detective.

"It's about Lance, Captain Brade," he explained. "The boy has a nasty cut, and he seems off his head a bit. He's talking rather wildly. I thought you might want to know."

"What does he say?"

"It's incoherent, of course, but he seems to think he saw some one climbing up those vines outside Gaffney's window, that he tried to stop him, had a fight, and the fellow stabbed him."

Brade rubbed his chin. "The boy's been drinking, hasn't he?"

"Yes, sir, and in the years I've known Lance Murray, I've never known him to be drunk before."

"How long have you known him, doctor?"

"Seventeen years, captain. I've been the Innes physician for that length of time."

"I see." Brade studied the doctor thoughtfully. "What did you know of Gaffney, doctor?" he asked.

Doctor Kearney's pale, pleasant eyes filmed slightly. He glanced away, then met Brade's glance squarely. "Nothing good," he stated. "Since he came here, the place has been all but unbearable. He seemed to own it. He controlled Mr. Innes."

"And Mrs. Innes?"

Again, the doctor hesitated. "She was afraid of him," he said at last. "The night he arrived, I attended her for a bad case of hysteria. She talked of him continually, and of a person named Murkelson, also about some——"

"Yes," Brade prompted gently.

"Pearls," Doctor Kearney said. "Something about a rope of pearls. It was all quite unintelligible to me, of course."

"And since then?"

"She has been highly strung, on edge continually. I think—that is——" He paused, worrying at a fold of the rug with the toe of his stout shoe. Brade waited. Doctor Kearney said abruptly: "I regret saying this. I suppose it is my duty?" he gazed questioningly at Brade.

"It is your duty to tell me anything you know which might have a bearing on this case."

The doctor nodded, sighed. "She was in love with him," he stated flatly, his smooth face flushing. "Every one knew except Mr. Innes. It has been hard to witness, you know what I mean? We all think a great deal of Slade Innes. Every one knew but him."

"You're quite sure he didn't know?"

Kearney's eyes opened wide.

"Why—why—that is—I suppose—I'm sure—he didn't."

"All right, doctor, we'll let it go at that. Mrs. Innes was in love with Gaffney. Gaffney rather favored Miss Hagar, didn't he?"

The doctor scowled. "Yes," he answered curtly.

Brade made meaningless marks on the table with a long, strong forefinger.

"Irma Innes, Slade's wife, now. Her type—highly emotional, not too well-balanced, given to fits of temper, wholly illogical. Do I diagnose her correctly?"

The doctor nodded somberly. "You do. She is a perfect neurotic."

Brade was still engaged with his hieroglyphics on the table.

"The kind that under proper circumstances, sufficiently excited, enough out of control, might shoot a man she loved who laughed at her?"

Watching closely, Brade saw the doctor's face go suddenly pale.

"It's quite reasonable," he said, very low. "But surely, Captain Brade, you're not suggesting that Mrs. Innes murdered Gaffney?"

"Some one murdered him," Brade said.

"It wasn't suicide?" the doctor asked anxiously.

Brade shook his head. "A man shot through the head doesn't normally go about hiding the weapon, and it certainly is not in the room. No, some one shot him. Mrs. Innes. Slade Innes, Keith Innes." A quick exclamation stopped him. He glanced at Kearney sharply. "Yes?" he questioned. "Keith Innes? What about him?"

The doctor began backing toward the door. "I'd so much rather you'd get your information from some one

else," he said unhappily. "After all, I'm——"

"You're, the one person in the house who isn't so tied up emotionally as to be perfectly useless," Brade told him. "You're an outsider. You can look at people and events, separating them from feelings, and get something out of it. You know all the folks in this house. You've got to help me. What about Keith Innes?"

"He's madly in love with his brother's wife."

Brade's lips hardened. It was getting worse and worse.

"Since Gaffney came," the doctor went on, "Keith has been nearly out of his head. There's something about him, something in his eyes"—Kearney paused, swallowing noisily—"I haven't liked the looks of it," he added. "He's altogether too repressed. Too still. Do you understand?"

"Quite. Mrs. Innes—what was her reaction?"

Kearney shook his head. "She is a dangerous woman, captain. You see, I'm being quite frank. She cared only for Gaffney, but she couldn't resist luring Keith on. It is part of her, that devilish ability to drive men mad." He mopped his perspiring forehead. "I've seen his eyes, Keith's, when Gaffney talked to her."

"And Hagar?" Brade asked. "Where does she fit into this picture?"

The doctor smiled. "Hagar Innes is the sweetest, most normal person in this house, captain. But of late——" He shrugged helplessly. "Well, I might as well go on, I've told enough to cause a lot of trouble already."

"The truth never causes real trouble," Brade told him. "It's the lies, the evasions, the attempts to

distort facts that curdle the broth. What about Hagar?"

"She bitterly resented her father's marriage," the doctor said. "She and her stepmother hate each other. Hagar has felt keenly the invasion of Gaffney. She's so proud. Dangerously so. Family honor means a lot to her. There was something unclean about that man's being here. Hagar has felt it."

"A girl of courage. Strong-minded, unconventional, capable under certain conditions of taking the law into her own hands? Of killing to cleanse? That is your conception of Hagar Innes?"

The doctor studied the carpet. "Just about. Yet, I believe," he said slowly, "that there is in Hagar Innes some restraining force, some preponderance of normalcy that would, in the crucial moment, prevent her committing murder, that would let her see a simpler, less violent way out." He nodded vigorously. "Yes, that is my opinion."

Brade tossed away his smoke. "Thank you, doctor. You have helped me a great deal. Watch the boy carefully. As soon as he is rational, I want to talk to him."

The doctor hurried toward the door, looking very uncomfortable.

Brade stopped him with a question: "How is Madame Margery? Any change?"

"None. Her present coma may last for days."

"Has it occurred to you, Kearney, that madame must have the key to the whole solution, that she certainly heard any argument or conversation that preceded the killing?"

Doctor Kearney's hand fell from the doorknob. He stood so still that Brade frowned across at him through the shadows.

Then Kearney said slowly: "It certainly hadn't occurred to me,

captain, but since you mention it I——”

“Exactly. Take extra good care of her, will you? I dare say she hasn't much span of life remaining, but, if there's any way to get her to talk——”

The doctor nodded swiftly. “I'll do my best, captain, I'll certainly do my best.”

He went out. Brade rumped his hair, lighted a cigarette, threw it away, frowned out at the rain, looked at his watch, and lighted another smoke. It was significant and typical of the man that, before he investigated the physical possibilities of the murder, he carefully delved into the psychological. He endeavored to satisfy himself as to which of the inmates of Inneshaven would have been mentally capable of the crime, before he investigated which one could have physically committed it.

The door opened, and a tall blond young man entered. He stood two inches over six feet, had a stubborn, fighting jaw and regarded the world from smiling Irish blue eyes.

Brade's tense face relaxed at sight of him. “Hello, Terry. What's the word?”

Sergeant Terry Shanoloski dropped into a chair and lighted a smoke.

“Can't find the gun,” he announced succinctly.

“Comb the grounds?”

“Absolutely. High-powered lights, everything. Of course, there's ten acres here, and that's a lot of territory to cover, but he certainly didn't ditch it near the house.”

“Tracks?”

“Plenty. Just under the ivy trellis. Two men. Had a scrap. One wounded. Blood on the vines.”

“Yes?” Brade was remembering what Kearney had said about young

Murray's raving. “Anything else of interest?”

“Mrs. Innes was in Gaffney's room shortly before dinner. Must have been just after Lance Murray socked Gaffney for getting fresh with Hagar. It was Hagar they rowed about. They had a thundering row. Gaffney was sweet on Hagar. Mrs. Innes objected—shrilly.” Terry Shan grinned sidewise at his chief. “Keith Innes was outside the door, listening.”

“Where'd you get this dope?”

“Second maid.”

Brade grinned. “That's a valuable girl, the second maid. Then what?”

“Keith discovered the maid getting an earful and went back to his own room across the hall. Since the killing, he's offered her a hundred dollars to keep dark about it.”

“So?” Brade rumped his hair. “Well, that's understandable, and may not mean a thing. Go on.”

“Later in the evening, Mrs. Innes went to Gaffney's room again. That was after they'd all been down here and he'd gone upstairs alone. Miss Hagar had beat it out of the house. The air was rather tense in here, I take it. Mrs. Innes seemed worried about something, and all of a sudden she plops up and takes the stairs on high. Goes to her room first, then his.”

Brade remembered Irma's words: “Paul came up here. I followed him.”

“Any one see her come out?” he asked.

“Not that I've been able to discover.”

“And the shot was fired when?”

“About twenty minutes later. Then she appeared with the rest from her own quarters, but it's possible——” Terry hesitated. He knew Brade's dislike of guesses.

"Get it out!" Brade snapped.

"It's perfectly possible for her to have slipped across the hall after killing Gaffney, go into Doctor Kearney's room opposite—it was unlocked and he was out—then enter her own apartment which comes next. There is a communicating door in the bath that locks on the doctor's side, but not on hers."

Brade's eyes were bright. "And that door was——"

Terry's lips tightened. He squinted up at Brade. "Sure, and it was unlocked," he said.

Brade fell to restless pacing. Terry watched him silently. Between the two officers was a strong bond of affection and confidence. Terry's feeling for Brade was deeply tinged with a youthful hero worship, tempered by his own good sense and knowledge of Brade's practical ability.

Brade, lonely with that queer reticence of his, found in the younger man a trusted release for what would otherwise have remained hidden. Aside from these personal points, their interest and pride in their work held them close.

Brade said suddenly: "Too much of a good thing."

"Eh?" Terry roused out of a thoughtful contemplation of the fire. He was used to Brade's mental gymnastics, but for once he completely failed to connect. Brade grinned, and paused by the table.

"Too many suspects," he said crisply. "Too many people capable of having done this thing. What we've got to fight against, Terry, is confusion. Getting ourselves all tied up until we choke to death." He leaned across the table, the shaded lamplight striking his keen, handsome face. "I think," he said slowly, "that the motive for this crime will be childishly simple once

we can find it. There's such a mass of feeling wrapped around the house and every one in it that——"

The door flung wide. Hagar Innes stood on the threshold, the light from the hall fire behind her, tinging the shadowy darkness of her hair that always looked as if a strong wind had stirred it. The two men remained motionless, staring at her. She came toward them, closing the door behind her, paused a few feet away, standing very straight, head thrown back, hands tightly clenched at her sides. Brade studied her, wondering at her defiance.

"Keith's got the gun!" she said.

Terry rose swiftly. Brade's hand stayed him. He did not move himself. "How do you know that?" he asked softly.

"I saw him take it." She was breathing unevenly, and there was a curious sparkle in her eyes. "When he crossed to that open window in Gaffney's room," she went on, "he picked it from the rug before the fire. He put it in his pocket."

"Why didn't you mention it then?"

Her chin lifted. "Why should I?"

"Why shouldn't you? You were obstructing justice."

She laughed. "I do not ordinarily assist justice by turning one of my own flesh and blood over to its tender mercies," she said, and Brade recalled Kearney's statement about her pride of family.

"Why are you telling me now?" he asked, knowing he took a risk in thus questioning her, but unable to curb his curiosity.

Her hands lifted, fell listlessly by her sides again. She glanced away. He saw her lip quiver.

"I don't know," she said. "I got to thinking about it all. I don't

want Irma to suffer if she's innocent."

Brade's brows arched faintly. "We haven't fastened the crime on your stepmother particularly," he told her. "She's no more under suspicion than the rest. Yourself. Your father. Young Murray."

"Lance didn't do it," Hagar cried sharply. "He couldn't. He doesn't kill things. He promised me he'd never kill anything again."

"What has he killed in the past?"

She shrugged. "Ducks. Geese. Grouse. Deer, up North. He's fond of hunting."

Brade spoke without taking his eyes from Hagar. "Terry, get that gun from Innes. Be careful." Sergeant Shan went out. "Sit down, won't you, Miss Innes, I'd like to talk to you," Brade invited.

Hagar regarded him somberly. "I'll stand, thank you. What do you want?"

Brade smiled, walking slowly toward her. She tensed back, lips tight. "Why are you afraid of me, Hagar Innes?"

"I'm not afraid of—any one," she countered breathlessly.

"Why do you dislike me?"

"I neither like nor dislike you. I don't know you."

"If you did know me, do you think you'd like me? Do you see what I mean? Would we ever be friends?"

"I—don't know."

He stood looking down at her. Courtney Brade had a lean, dark face with strong lines deeply etched from nostril to mouth. He had a wide, stern mouth that could be very pleasant in a smile. His eyes were his greatest charm. Rather tired eyes, very, very wise; a baffling cloudy gray between crisply fringed lids. A few people, who had known him a long time, matched the

smoky gray of his eyes with the misty beauty of the magnificent Oriental moonstone he wore on the third finger of his left hand. They said that Brade's eyes had grown like the stone, from long staring at it; that before he acquired the ring, eighteen years ago, his eyes were clear, and fresh, and bright. The sequence of events that had placed the ring on his finger had clouded his eyes as they had clouded his whole life.

Hagar, gazing at him now, felt the strength and kindness of the man flowing out to her. Her loneliness, her hurt, her bitterness, all the tangled unhappiness of the past year rose up in a hungry longing toward the sympathy she sensed about him. She felt what many another had experienced before—a sudden, unshakable trust in this quiet, grim-lipped man who represented the law. Impulsively, she put out her hands. A sob caught in her throat.

"I think we would be friends, Captain Brade," she said uncertainly, her fingers tightening unconsciously around his. "I haven't very many friends, you know," she added with a queer timidity. "I've rather hated—people of late. Keith, now, I've hated him since I can remember. That's why I came to tell you about the gun, because I hated him, because I hoped almost—that he would be found guilty. Do you see what sort of a person I am? A perfect little beast!"

Brade nodded. "You would be rather a beast, Hagar Innes, to try and incriminate an innocent man just because you didn't like him, but you were absolutely correct in telling me about the gun. It is only by knowing everything that we can hope to get at the truth."

The door opened. Terry Shan

came in. He laid a gun, carefully wrapped in a handkerchief, on the table. "Had it, all right," he clipped. "Colt automatic."

He jerked round at a stifled cry from Hagar. She was staring at the weapon with wide, blank eyes. She put out a hand as she stumbled backward.

Brade caught her, held her hard and tight by the shoulders. "Whose gun is that?"

Her eyes flared defiance into his. "I don't know."

"Think again. Whose is it? You're only being stupid. I'll find out."

"Do it then! I won't tell."

"That's better. You admit you know. Is it your father's?"

"No."

"Irma Innes's?"

"No. Let me go!"

"Yours?"

"I never owned a gun in my life. You're bruising my shoulder."

"Was it Gaffney's?"

"How should I know what Gaffney owned?"

"Doctor Kearney's?"

"You're a brute! Let me go!"

"Lance Murray's?" The question died on his lips. Hagar's tense body relaxed in his grasp. Her head drooped against his hand. She slumped down, unconscious.

At the same moment, a long, agonized cry, quivering with the certainty of death, sliced through the interminable drumming of the rain and shattered the silence of the great house.

The poignancy of this drama becomes more intense as it continues. You will find the next installment in next week's issue of Detective Story Magazine.

A Thrilling Novelette, "JUNGLE CLUTCH,"

by LESLIE GORDON BARNARD,

will appear in Next Week's Issue.

#### GOT EVEN FOR ONCE

**P**ERHAPS the young man who slapped down a policeman expressed an urge to revenge an act of the law inflicted upon him sometime in the past. He didn't get away with it entirely, however. The policeman, after having his nose punched, chased the fellow and struck him with his nightstick. After subduing him, he took him to a hospital where he was treated for head cuts. While this was going on, the policeman waited outside of the door.

The injured man asked the nurse to get him a glass of water. While she was out of the room, he jumped out of a window that overlooked a court. Through this court, he was able to reach the street. When the nurse returned with the glass of water, her patient had disappeared and a searching party was unable to find him.



# TOO BIG TO LIVE

By MEL WATT

*The law wasn't fast enough for this man who greeted you with one hand and struck with the other.*

**A**LL right, Mitter, guess we gotta let you go. But there'll be a next time, and a next time, and a time after that. We'll get you, and don't forget it. Now get out of here!"

"Mitter" Guinness flashed his toothy grin at the police chief and the officers. It was rather incongruous to see such big strong teeth in such a squirrel face. Everything about Mitter suggested a squirrel; the toothy face, the bulbous eyes, the squirmy, loose body.

But inwardly, he had the treach-

erous instincts of the rat. If you will go back into biology, you will find the squirrel and the rat related; they belong to the rodent family. But a squirrel may be amusing and harmless, while a rat is vicious and detestable.

Mitter's treacherous instincts had, originally, earned him the sobriquet of Mitter. When Mitter handled the job, hapless victims never knew they were on the spot. He would rush up to them, his toothy grin flashing, his right hand outstretched, exclaiming genially:

"Mitt me, kid, mitt me. Haven't seen you around in a long time. How's things?"

And while the poor fool, surprised but pleased, was shaking Mitter's right "mitt," Mitter jerked out an automatic with his left, and let the marked man have it in the abdomen.

His "style" couldn't last long, of course. His brothers in crime soon became wary. But while it lasted, he was famous. The trick became so well known that it was employed in a Hollywood production later.

Mitter did his shooting at longer distances nowadays, but he had lost none of his cunning.

That was why he had been up before the police chief. A detective had been killed. There wasn't much doubt who had done it. But they couldn't pin it on him. Mitter had an ironclad alibi. He usually had. Cunning.

"Get out of here!" The chief roared it this time.

Mitter touched his fingers to his forehead in an insolent salute.

"O. K., chief! O. K. Always glad to have a chat with you boys. But why get sore about it? I ain't done nothing. Why take it out on me?"

He slithered, rather than walked, out of the chief's office. He sidled down the corridor. It wasn't any too well-lighted. He didn't notice a big figure lounging against an open doorway, until a huge hand grabbed his wrist. Mitter jumped; his pasty face extended and twitched with fright.

"Come 'ere a minute, Mitter," a quiet voice said.

The huge hand urged Mitter gently. But Mitter didn't protest. He knew the huge hand could get rough.

The man's other hand switched

on a table light. Mitter stared, and saw the gravely smiling features of Bart Bailey gazing down at him. That cold, still smile made Mitter wince. Bart Bailey had been the "side kick," the buddy, of Tom Bruce, the dead detective.

"So you fixed an 'out' for yourself, as usual?" drawled Bailey softly.

"Whaddaya mean, 'out'?" Mitter objected, outraged. "Why you guys always pick on me? What is this, a gag to frame me?"

Bailey ignored Mitter's outburst; he seemed to be meditating.

"Do you know, Mitter," he spoke in a calm, discursive tone, "I'm getting sort of tired of the law. It's too slow to catch up with guys like you. Or, I should say, rats like you."

"Listen, flatfoot——"

Mitter stopped abruptly, when he saw the detective's cool eyes flash like flame under ice.

Bailey's grave, still smile returned. He drew a gun slowly from his pocket. He held it, sideways, in front of Mitter's eyes, so that Mitter could see the initials, "T. B.," stamped in the handle.

"That was Tom Bruce's gun," Bailey continued quietly. "Tom can't use it any more. But it isn't through speaking its piece. It's still got work to do."

The detective paused for a moment, and his icy eyes bored deeply into Mitter's. He spoke, in slow, measured words—ominous words. It didn't sound like Bart Bailey speaking. It sounded like a higher, greater voice—like the voice of prophecy.

"Mitter," it said, "this gun's going to get you some day!"

Mitter stood, staring as if hypnotized, for several instants. He felt cornered, like a rat. But he knew they had nothing on him. With a

show of bravado, he said: "Baloney!" and hurried out of the building. When he got outside, he yanked out a handkerchief to mop the perspiration from his unhealthy face.

Back in his hotel apartment, with no one around to bring out the yellow streak in him, he got back what he imagined was his courage. He could afford to feel big and brave in this place. The hotel was one of the neutral, noncommittal sort that is neither shady nor yet respectable.

Mitter had had his apartment, on the fifth floor, fixed up to suit him. It had been sound-proofed; if it ever became necessary to fire a shot, which Mitter hoped would never happen, the rest of the hotel would not be disturbed. There were other little gadgets, too, which Mitter thought might be useful.

He slumped now into a deep chair, and gritted his big teeth. His eyes were glittering with the spleen of an angry rat. His squirrel face was vicious and vindictive.

"Put the finger on me, will he!" he sneered. "O. K., Mr. Bart Bailey! That suits me!"

It didn't really suit him at all. He was like a desperate rodent, that must either bite or be destroyed. To a braver man, Bailey's words might have been a challenge. But to Mitter, they were a threat; a danger to his life. The threatener must be wiped out. But not in a duel. Nor yet in the wild, open style of the old West. Oh, no. Bailey would get a slug in his back. Or, if he got it in the front, it would come out of some dark corner or hole, as befits a rat like Mitter.

But he'd have to go easy for a while. If these things happened too close together, the cops got on a rampage, and annoyed the underworld with one of those general

clean-ups. As far as Bart Bailey was concerned, he wouldn't be apt to mention his threat to any of his colleagues. He was, in actuality, ignoring the law when he threatened Mitter. This was a private feud, a revenge fight, for the death of Tom Bruce, Bailey's buddy.

For weeks, Mitter was careful where he went. Indeed, he kept to his apartment as much as possible. When he did go out, it was only after an accomplice had telephoned him the whereabouts of Bart Bailey.

When the Tom Bruce affair was forgotten in the minds of an indifferent public, and had become tepid in the emotions of the police, Mitter quite cold-bloodedly decided it was time to get rid of Bart Bailey. It was just like that—a cold bit of business, for which he had waited a requisite length of time.

With the heartless evil of his kind, Mitter laid his plans.

He paid a call on an acquaintance of his—a man who, ostensibly, ran a radio shop, but who, in reality, used this only for a blind behind which to sell narcotics to addicts.

Mitter stepped up to him, right hand outstretched, teeth gleaming.

"Mitt me, Frick! How's things anyway?"

For a moment, Mr. Frick went deathly pale. His terrorized eyes stared at Mitter's left pocket. Mitter saw and laughed loudly.

"Excuse me, Frick! Nothin' like that, pal! That stuff is out, long ago."

Mr. Frick sighed mightily from the depths of his porcine body.

"Boy, you had me scared for a minute."

They chatted for a few minutes, then Mitter got down to the real reason for his visit.

"Say, Cokey's back in town, ain't he?"

Frick laughed hoarsely. "Yeah. Him and that dame of his."

"She sure sticks to him, don't she?" observed Mitter.

"She sure does. For that matter, he sticks close, too. He treats her somethin' terrible most of the time, but he's the most jealous guy I ever seen."

Mitter dropped his voice a note. "Still hittin' it, ain't he?"

"And how!" replied Frick. "And he's worse than any other guy I ever seen, when he's loaded. Raises Cain all over the place."

Mitter took Frick by the arm, and talked low into his ear.

"Listen, Frick, I want you to do something for me. I'll put up all the jack necessary, see? Now, listen!"

Frick couldn't afford not to listen. Neither could he afford to decline. Mitter did him a lot of good in a business way; Mitter had also helped him out in the past.

In another fifteen minutes, Mitter left, his scheme laid.

It was evening of the following day.

"Cokey" Bastion was holding forth at great and pompous length in a room under Frick's radio shop. Cokey always got this way when he was full of dope. A pallid, scrawny creature, he would have been fairly tall had he not stooped so. His splotched, drawn face clearly showed the fatal ravages of dope.

Outwardly, he was gay, alert, somewhat birdlike. But a careful observer would have noted the pain underneath the gayety; the jagged nerves—temporarily soothed—under the alertness; the intensity and defensiveness and suspicion under the birdlike quality.

"Like I said, this job is gonna be

the biggest thing I've ever pulled, see?" he repeated for the fourth time.

"Sure, sure," said Frick with a mild laugh. "When you get around to it, eh, Cokey?"

"Whaddaya mean, when I get around to it? Ain't I just told you that——"

The jangle of a telephone bell stopped him. Leisurely, Frick picked it up.

"Yeah? Frick speakin'."

He listened for a moment, looked at Cokey, then spoke into the mouthpiece:

"Cokey? Yeah, he's here now. . . . O. K. Hold the wire."

He held the phone up to the adduct. "For you, Cokey. He don't say who he is."

Cokey took the phone.

"Yeah, this is Cokey. Who's talkin'?"

A muffled voice came over the wire: "Never mind that. I just don't like to see a guy given the run-around, like you're gettin' from that dame of yours."

Cokey's face took on some color immediately.

"Listen, guy!" he exploded. "If I knew who you was——"

"Don't be a sap!" the voice snapped back. "With my own eyes, I seen him go in. Go on and ask her! Just ask her! You'll see it right in her face. Get wise, fellah! So long."

Cokey cursed volubly. His first instinct was to disbelieve it, not so much because of the woman, but because of his own pride or vanity. But suspicion and jealousy were too strong in him. He dashed upstairs and out of the shop.

The moment he was gone, Frick picked up the telephone, and called a room in an East Side apartment house. The room was next to the

room occupied by Cokey and his girl.

"He's on his way there," said Frick into the telephone, and hung up.

It was five minutes past ten when Cokey rushed into his room. For the following ten minutes, brutal talk and whimpering answers ensued.

"But truly, Cokey, truly! I'm telling you straight," the woman's voice pleaded in desperation.

"Straight! You! I see it in your face, like he said I would. You—you little double-crosser! I'll show you."

There followed the crack of a gun. A shriek! It was twenty minutes past ten—the time when Bart Bailey came past here each night.

"Help! Help!" A man ran up to Bailey, tugging at his coat sleeve. "Hurry up! There's shootin' goin' on up there."

Bart Bailey bounded up the steps, into the house, and up the stairs. As he rushed, there came three more shots, in rapid, mad succession, and several shrieks from a woman.

As Bailey kicked open the door, he saw the shrieking woman clutching terror-stricken to the arm with the gun. In a glance, he saw it was Cokey Bastion—Cokey, who got "shooting mad" when he was in a doped fury.

It all happened in the space of about three seconds.

Bailey had pulled a gun. He tore the woman away, and gave Cokey a hard shove backward. Cokey rolled over, squirmed around, and brought his gun up. A roar! Bart Bailey clutched at his side. He tried to aim his gun, and failed. His arm dropped. He sagged, with a long deep sigh, and thudded against the floor.

When policemen—hearing the re-

verberation of the shots from nearby beats—arrived, they found Bart Bailey quite dead; a bullet had entered his left side and found his heart.

Cokey was cowering in a corner, scared physically sick. The girl had fainted.

"Come on, Cokey," a policeman beckoned.

"I never done it! I never done it!"

They took him away. They didn't believe him, naturally. Cokey didn't believe it himself; it had just been instinctive in him to yell: "I never done it."

It all appeared so plain that no one there could know that Cokey's bullet had *not* been the one that killed Bart Bailey. The killer's bullet had come from the window on the fire escape. It had come from a gun held by Mitter Gunness—the same kind of gun that Cokey used. When Mitter had heard from Frick that Cokey was on his way, he had waited until Cokey arrived and started his quarrel with his girl. He had waited until he heard the thudding feet of Bart Bailey racing up the stairs. Then, from the room next door, Mitter had gone out on the fire escape. It was a torrid night. From the darkness, he watched the quick drama. His nerves were keyed. His gun was ready to fire, in split-second action.

Bailey tearing the woman away! Bailey pushing Cokey backward! Bailey's left side toward the window! Cokey's gun coming up! Cokey's twitching finger pulling the trigger!

Timed perfectly, Mitter fired simultaneously with Cokey! Cokey's bullet, of course, went wild. But Mitter's—

Maybe Bart Bailey sensed it, as he fell. But he was dead now, and couldn't tell. Cokey was too full

of hop. The woman was too scared. No one could tell.

Suppose Cokey, in running amuck, had shot the girl? Suppose his wild actions had hurt innocent people? Suppose he was going to prison, or worse, for the killing of Bart Bailey?

It is needless to say that all those questions were of no consideration whatever to Mitter. He had no feeling in the matter at all. He had got rid of his enemy by a smart trick; that was all that counted.

He got away quietly. In the privacy of his own apartment, while cleaning the gun, a cruel, twisted grin sat steadily on his mouth.

"Put the finger on me, will he! O. K., Mr. Bart Bailey."

For the next week or so, Mitter breathed freely. He went out a lot, at night, and he spent money freely. Also, he drank more hooch than was good for him. And when he drank to excess, he became very arrogant and talkative—overconfident, self-satisfied; what the high lords of gandom call "gettin' too big."

Not only that. He made several dirty cracks about the North Side gang. They were rivals. It got to the North Side, and they didn't like it. It created more bad feeling, of which there was enough already. The two mobs were at that tense stage where each waits for the other to commit some overt act.

Mitter's kind never knew when to quit. He had been out on a party for a day and two nights, and had consumed enough bad liquor to kill a civilized being. Then he staggered into his apartment at eight o'clock of the second morning, with a bad case of the jitters.

He slept a round of the clock, with a little extra thrown in. It was about nine in the evening when he got up. He felt wabbly, but he'd

been that way before; he fixed himself up.

Jerking down the phone, he shouted in a temper: "Ice water! And make it snappy!"

"Right away, Mr. Gunness. Didn't know you were up."

The boy came with the ice water, and a room maid came right after him with sheets over her arm.

"Awright! Awright! Put it down," he snarled at the boy. He turned suddenly on the maid, growling: "What do you want?" He knew perfectly well what she was there for, but he had to take his temper out on some one.

"To fix your room, sir," the girl answered politely.

"Well, make it snappy, see?"

The boy went out, closing the door. The maid went into the bedroom. Mitter sank into a chair, and rubbed a hand over his head.

Not more than a minute passed.

"Put up your hands, Mitter!"

Before doing anything else, the instinct of years made him dart his hands upward. In the next instant, however, he had bounded from the chair, and wheeled.

"Not a step farther, Mitter! Or I'll shoot you quicker than I intended to!"

Mitter stared. His jaw dropped. Holding a gun on him, was the little room maid.

Her small mouth was a cold, determined line; her eyes blazed utter loathing, and underneath the loathing was hate.

Mitter tried to act surly.

"What's eatin' you, sister? Are you crazy?"

"You'll find out." For a moment, she held the gun sideways, so that Mitter could see the handle. "Recognize that? You've seen it before."

Mitter fell back several steps,

from the sudden shock. On the gun handle were the initials: "T. B."

The girl laughed harshly. "I see you recognize it. Tom Bruce's gun. After he was gone, Bart Bailey carried it. Bart told me all about it. And I'm the one person in the world he told he had sworn to himself to get you with this gun."

Mitter was sparring for time.

"Oh, yeah? Why should he tell you?"

There was pride and hatred in her answer. Pride for a dead man; hatred for this living one.

"Bart Bailey and I were engaged to be married."

Mitter went even paler than his usual pastiness. This was serious. Women were bad medicine when they felt this way.

"Now, listen, sister——"

"Save it!" The girl's voice was quite cool and steady. "It won't do you any good. I've a mission to perform. I'm going to kill you."

Mitter sparred some more.

"Don't be a sap! You couldn't get away. They'd hear the shot!"

She smiled scornfully. "Oh, no. Since I got this job a week ago, I found out this apartment was sound-proof."

She raised the gun. Mitter, scared, began sidling sideways. She kept pace with him.

"Now, looka here, sister, you can't get away with this! The mob'll get you some way!"

"Maybe," she retorted calmly, "but Bart's death will be avenged, and that's all that matters to me."

Mitter kept sidling, perspiring profusely, talking frantically. He sidled down one side of the huge table that stood in the center of the room. His hands were gesticulating frenziedly.

The girl shoved her gun farther forward.

"Keep your hands up! Don't try to make a grab for any paper weights!"

She stepped to the other side of the table. They stood facing each other, her gun hand quite steady, Mitter's raised hands shaking in the air.

"Listen, sister! Let's talk sense!"

He leaned, pleadingly, against the edge of the table as he said it. Before the girl knew what had happened, his foot found the hidden light switch under the carpet beneath the table.

Darkness! A scene of lightning action! It was a one-two affair. One—the lights snapped out! Two—Mitter ducked, at the same instant jerking his gun from his shoulder holster and firing!

There followed a little gasping "Ah!"—a gun thudding to the carpeted floor, a body falling.

Mitter came around the end of the table warily. He crawled to the girl, and prodded her. He shook her. No movement. Then he got up, stepped on the floor switch again, and the room flooded with light.

He glared at her. She was bleeding a little at the chest. He saw no movement of breathing.

Mitter was scared, deathly afraid. He had never wanted a thing like this to happen here. He had to get her out, and get her out quickly.

But where? Hospital? Morgue? Or doctor's? That was out! They'd hold him, and he knew what that would lead to.

Dump her in the river? That might not prove so hot, if there were an investigation.

A sudden inspiration came to him—a typical Mitter Guinness inspiration. Evil and cruel, an inspiration of the devil. It appealed to him. And besides, it looked like a good "out." Mitter was desperate.

He telephoned a certain cigar store, and asked for Ed. Ed was a taxi driver, who worked independently. Few people knew that he also worked for Mitter on occasion. Mitter told him to come up to the apartment at once.

When Ed got there, and saw the body, he gasped, and started to back out. Mitter intercepted him, and shoved him back roughly.

"You're helpin' me get her out of here, fella, see?" Mitter's right hand made a suggestive move to his left shoulder. "Any argument?"

Ed gulped and looked whipped.

"Come on," ordered Mitter, "down the back way!"

Shortly, they had her in the cab.

"Now," directed Mitter sharply, "north on Sixtieth Street."

Ed turned to look at him, hesitating.

"You heard what I said!" Mitter grated through his teeth.

They drove for miles. At a cross street marked "Ames," Ed slowed up.

"Say, Mitter," he spoke nervously, "ain't you watching where we're goin'? This is North Side territory!"

"Well, what of it?" Mitter's words were hard as bullets. "I know what I'm doin'! Keep goin'."

Ed dared not disobey. He drove on into enemy territory. But he was thankful no one up here would recognize him or his cab.

They drove for twenty blocks. They turned into a badly lighted side street.

"Pull up here," Mitter whispered the order.

Ed pulled up. That is, he slowed almost to a stop. Mitter, without hesitating, opened the door, and pushed the form of the girl out onto the sidewalk. One of her feet caught on the running board. He bent

down to shove it loose. Then he closed the door.

"Now scram out of here!" he told Ed.

They wasted no time getting back to Mitter's apartment building. He gave Ed some money, and dismissed him. It was needless to warn Ed to keep his mouth closed. Ed knew what would happen if he opened it.

As he walked up the back way to his apartment, Mitter straightened his coat and tie, as was a habit with him. Another habit was to give a short pat to the automatic in his shoulder holster. He felt a sudden electrical shock as he patted now. His hand flew under his coat. There was no gun there.

For a moment, it frightened him sick. Some rapid figuring told him it must have been insecure, must have dropped out when he bent to loosen the girl's foot from the car. But, on saner thought, he knew that it didn't matter much. There had been nothing unusual about the gun. Like hundreds of other automatics.

A sudden exhilarating thought came to him. Maybe dropping that automatic was all to the good. It would be lying there beside the girl. Would look like suicide! There wouldn't be any finger prints on it, though. It was a mechanical motion with Mitter to wipe off prints with a handkerchief whenever he used a gun; on the other hand, the girl hadn't held it, so her prints wouldn't be there either. Still, it had probably fallen into the gutter, and, in that case, the cops would figure the girl's prints had been mused up or washed off.

These thoughts flew through his mind swiftly. He entered his apartment feeling quite confident.

"Who'd ever think of connecting it with me!" he assured himself.

He mixed himself a stiff drink.

After he'd downed it, he thought to look at the carpet to see if any blood had dripped. Not a spot. But there was the girl's gun. He picked it up, grinned at the "T. B." on the handle, and spun it contemptuously onto the table. He began laughing. He couldn't help it. He kept it low, but he was quite unable to suppress it.

"The poor saps!" he jeered.

He felt suddenly tired. Must have been the excitement and exertion, coming after a bad case of the jitters. He went into the bedroom, and threw himself down on the unmade bed.

*Trrrrr-ingggggg!*

Mitter started up. The sudden jar made his head feel as if it were splitting. He was still groggy. He didn't pick up the phone at once. Shaking his head, he groaned and cursed himself for doing it. He stared at the clock. He'd been asleep for over two hours!

Finally, he picked up the phone, cursing the caller for disturbing him.

In a temper, he bawled into the phone: "Well, what do you want?"

The voice that came back to him was in startling contrast. It was a low, soft voice—a measured voice.

"Say — your — prayers, Mitter. We're—coming—up—after—you!"

The dread words struck Mitter like a paralysis. He dropped the phone. But instantly, frantically, he grasped it up again, and spoke. Quick, thick, desperate talk!

"Listen! Listen! W-what is this, a gag? I ain't in no mood for jokes!"

A dry laugh issued from the other end.

"This'll—be—your—last—joke—Mitter."

Mitter whined shrilly into the mouthpiece: "What's eatin' you? What've I done?"

The slow, level voice came back: "You know what you've done."

As Mitter's hysteria grew, his reason departed.

"It's a lie! I don't know what you're talkin' about, but whatever it is, what proof have you?"

Again the dry, maddening laugh! "Plenty. The girl isn't dead. One of the boys found her, and took her to a doc. She's gonna pull through. And she told us." The disdainful voice twisted into Mitter like a knife. "You got her too high, fella; in the shoulder. Losin' your aim. You're slippin', Mitter, you're slippin'."

Mitter's voice was a blubber now.

"But, listen! Listen, while I explain."

The voice cut in like fate: "Say—your—prayers."

Mitter dropped the phone. For moments, he lay on the bed, panting. Then, with the madness of desperation, he sprang into action.

He scurried to the hall door first, then the back one. They were both securely locked. He sighed momentarily from relief. But it was only momentary.

Swift realization came to him, and made him snivel. He didn't need to see the outside to know what had happened. He had a perfectly clear knowledge of the methods used.

Silent men were all about this apartment building by now. They didn't interfere with other tenants; they were quite unobtrusive. The management didn't dare talk; it would have been all their lives were worth.

Silently, unobtrusively, these grim men were in control of the apartment. Nothing could go up to Mitter without their knowledge. No service—no drink—no food! No food! Mitter paled and turned sick at the thought.

He scurried and peeked out a back

window. Silent, watchful men out there! He peered out the side. Five stories below, more men. And out in the corridor—well, he didn't dare unlock the door!

The whole of the next day passed, with Mitter Guinness like a squirrel in a cage, a glorified rat trap. He felt hunger. But nothing like the hunger he felt on the second day. Desperate, he called down on the phone.

The dry, merciless voice spoke: "Enjoy yourself, Mitter. We'll be up and get you—after a while."

Mitter then knew that the threat to "come up and get him" was only a calculated bit of cruelty. They meant to starve him! That's what they meant to do, starve him!

But even Mitter didn't realize the lengths to which gangster vengeance could go.

On the third day, Mitter broke.

He clutched the phone in violent, shaking hands, and whimpered:

"For the lovva Heaven, gimme some food! I'm goin' nuts!"

The dry, maddening voice came back: "You are? Ain't that just too bad! All right, Mitter. We'll show you how we get rid of rats."

Silence. Awful minutes of silence, while Mitter's breath came in spasmodic spurts. Then soft, sinister footsteps outside the hall door—and whispering, sibilant voices!

Then, like the sound of a cobra, a sudden hiss!

Mitter, darting his head about like the trapped rat he was, finally located that hiss. It was coming through the bottom of the door. He couldn't see it; he could only hear it. A long, steady hiss!

Panting, he tiptoed near to it. He fell back immediately, choking, as it entered his lungs.

"Gas!" His lips formed the words, but he was barely able to gasp it.

He coughed violently. His hand went to his throat. It felt as if the stuff were stuck there. Then his throat began to burn.

Mitter didn't know it, but this was much worse than ordinary gas. This was mustard gas—the kind used in the late War. Cruel, torturing, agonizing painful in its deadliness!

He backed away hastily, sobbing from hysteria. With the action of utter desperation, he leaped to a window and threw it open. It proved to be a stupid move. The gas drifted sluggishly into the draft and surrounded Mitter as he stood by the window. All reason gone, he slammed the window shut.

Racked by violent coughing, he staggered away to another corner of the room. The gas slowly reached out, like a great boa constrictor playing with its victim. He stumbled into the bedroom. For a minute, there was comparative relief. But slowly, slitheringly, it came in after him. It increased; it thickened. The soundproof material around the apartment did not leave the slightest escape for it. Mitter was sealed in, as was the gas.

The choking in his throat, the painful gasps, were torture enough. But when his lungs began to burn, it was more than human flesh could stand.

Suffering and desperate as he was, he was still the coward. He couldn't make himself run out into the hall; he couldn't make himself jump from a window. Suppose he wasn't killed outright, either by their bullets, or by a fall? The uncertainty, the thought of greater physical pain, made him sick at the stomach. No, his "out" must be quick and sure. Yes, it must be sure.

And quick! He couldn't stand any more. Sobbing, gurgling, his

hand went instinctively to his shoulder holster. No gun there. He remembered; it had been lost. He became like a raving madman, at the thought that there might not be a quick way out for him.

There must be a gun somewhere, his mind told him. Blindly, he staggered into the living room again and tottered toward the table drawer. But his eyes and hands forgot the drawer, when he saw a gun lying on the table top.

He grasped it as if it were a thing of hope. Only a moment, he hesitated. He was in agony. With a

shudder, he turned it to his left chest, and pulled the trigger.

The gun fell from his hand. He sagged down after it.

The last thing he heard as he sank into unconsciousness and death was that snakelike hiss.

The last thing he saw, through filmy, fading eyes—and realization hit him just an instant before death claimed him—was a revolver handle with "T. B." stamped on it.

From somewhere, a ghostly voice seemed to come:

"Mitter, this gun's going to get you some day."

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#### AND THEN SHE SQUEALED

**P**ROBABLY, his wife had been holding it over him for the last thirteen years. Finally, when something occurred which riled her more than usual, she told on him.

In 1913, her husband, who was deputy sheriff at that time, had been living in Louisiana. While there, he killed a man by shooting him in the back. The two had been quarreling violently. He was arrested, but succeeded in getting out of jail and authorities had not been able to trace him. After thirteen years of freedom—at least, freedom from the arm of the law—his wife turned him over to the Oklahoma police.

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#### ALMOST STARTED LIFE IN JAIL

**T**HE child was only thirteen months old when its mother, a resident of Prague, Czechoslovakia, brought suit against the father of the child in the child's name. The court, however, decided in favor of the man and ordered that the child pay thirty dollars and costs, or spend a month in jail. Higher court was appealed to and while it sustained the previous verdict, absolving the child's father from any responsibility toward its support, the prison sentence and costs were canceled, upon the attorney's pleading poverty of the infant.



# DANGER WITHIN

By HECTOR GAVIN GREY

*He was fighting madly to save the city from a terrible disaster.*

## CHAPTER I.

### A FAVOR.

**A** BLINDING blue flash and a ripping crackle of sound! The man on the live rail was helpless. Zane saw this and sickened. He leaped off the timbers of the construction platform into the tunnel. His rubber-gloved hands sought the man's writhing legs. He pulled.

Then there was blackness. Some one had switched off the power. The limbs Zane held twitched spasmodi-

cally and were still and heavy on him. There was a smell of burned flesh.

Zane Prothero bent down and lifted the dead construction worker on his back. He carried him to the newly dug subway station, staggering between the rails. There was light now—torches and lamps—and men to help.

But Zane did not wait. The man was dead. One more killed in the progress of industry! Ghastly, but a small thing to what might come! *Would* come!

How bright was the sun and how clean the air on the corner of Kingsley and Main where Zane climbed to daylight! He filled his lungs, then stood motionless, heeding not the noon-hour crowd, intent and anxious, strained and scurrying, that seethed around him. He had made his decision. He would resign.

But first he would get the job advertised in the *Times-Record* that morning.

He made his way to the drafting room of the Transit Corporation to write a letter of application. He felt sure of success. Was he not an engineer of four years' standing, a member of the Surveyor's Institute? He glanced at the boss's closed door and wrote rapidly:

Age—25. Physical condition—good. My reason for wishing to leave my present position is—

Exactly! Was what? Could he write that he hated that great industrial octopus that settled on his pleasant, tree-shaded town, throwing skyscrapers and smoke into the air, drawing millions into factories, cementing over Mother Earth with steel and concrete? This was not the emotion of an engineer. Civilization must progress.

But progress to what? Zane knew things. He knew that danger with-in each city that menaced its existence. His thin face gravened; his dark eyes grew hot. The pen shook between his bony fingers. The thin-lipped financiers responsible for this gigantic city had reasons for suppressing his knowledge; perhaps the builders of that city who advertised for an expert might be warned in time.

He jabbed his pen point to the start of another line.

My reason for wishing to leave—

The pen clogged. Some son of a

gun had used it on rough fiber paper. Zane wiped it with a strip of transparent linen, glaring around angrily. Then he saw that the boss's door was open.

A girl was holding the doorknob, talking over her shoulder to Considine behind his desk. She was swathed in black velvet. Across her straight back and over her arms, she carried a white-fox stole fashioned of two snowy pelts. Obviously, she was not an employee; her cool laughter was free from subservience. Unconsciously, Zane stared as she crossed the drafting room—and met her eyes.

There are things in life beyond tangible description. The girl slowed her steps, a glint of curiosity in her golden eyes. On her firm, clean mouth came the hint of a smile. Then she looked quickly away and hastened to the corridor. Her profile, as she passed, was a mask of indifference, even arrogance. She left a faint fragrance of lilacs.

Zane sat rigidly and frowned. Why? Because he disliked women intruding into drafting rooms; somehow, he felt it wrong that a few pampered women could wear fortunes in silk and fur on their slim bodies while thousands and millions of cotton-clothed girls slaved over machines in factories. He tightened his mouth and bent over his letter.

A buzzer sounded. A man went in and came out of Considine's office. "Hey, Prothero! Boss wants you!"

Zane slipped off his stool and went into the luxurious inner room.

"Shut the door," said Joseph Considine. His fat white face was slightly uneasy.

Zane did so—with his heel. He was fed up with his corpulently flabby employer who did not know the difference between A. C. and D. C. current, though his millions of

dollars controlled billions of horse power. And suddenly the accumulation of his irritation and of his extraordinary knowledge boiled over.

"I beg to state," he began, "that I am leaving."

Not just as he had rehearsed it!

But Considine withheld his famous glare. He was twiddling with a pencil, licking his thin lips with a colorless tongue.

"Leaving?" he repeated blankly. "Ah, yes! The new rule entitles you to any afternoon off that you wish. I won't keep you, Prothero—but—ah!—sit down a moment, won't you?"

Astounded by the tyrant's softness, Zane sat.

"I mean——" he started.

Considine put down his pencil. "Do me a favor, Prothero?"

Zane quieted. "Why, certainly, Mr. Considine."

A quarter of an hour later, he staggered into the street and looked dazedly about for a trolley car going in the direction of his rooms. A bully at the office, it turned out that Considine was a helpless slave in his social life, plagued by a niece and nephew who did their best to turn his downtown apartment into a salon. Now he had Zane's promise to attend a bridge party that evening.

Zane pulled his old dress clothes from his trunk with mingled feelings. Considine's niece was the haughty goddess in black velvet and white furs. That was one upsetting fact. Another was the headline of a newspaper he bought on the corner as he got off the trolley. It read:

WATER MAIN BURSTS UNDER  
KINGSLEY AVENUE

Causes More Havoc Than Dynamite.  
Stores Wrecked. Electric Power Lines  
Short-circuited.

A third and greater upset occurred to him when he changed his clothes. His dress suit smelled of moth balls.

CHAPTER II.

STABBED.

ZANE reached Considine's duplex apartment at seven o'clock. A supercilious butler admitted him and put his coat away in a closet under the carved-oak stairs. Thereafter, he was left to find his own way to the refreshment tray at the far end of a crowded, chattering room.

"Who invited you here?" asked a hooked-nosed man in a haughty tone.

Zane looked the questioner up and down. He realized that no offense was meant by the tone. It was just the rich man's manner.

"Miss Charmian Considine," he replied, for Considine had given the invitation in his niece's name.

The other grunted. He was thin and brown and cynical-eyed. "Have a drink."

There was a stir in the room, and Zane saw his hostess. She was in blue satin, her head held high. She spoke to but a few before coming to the refreshment tray and beckoning the hook-nosed man aside. She addressed him as Miles. Then, in time to avert Zane's resentment at his casual reception, she turned to him and smiled, and he had the sudden impression that she had been watching him since entering the room.

"Dinner is waiting uncle's arrival," she murmured. Her voice was like herself—controlled and fascinating. "Come to his study. There's something I want to ask you."

They left the noisy chamber with-

out comment. She led the way across the hall to a door concealed by velvet hangings. When the door closed behind them, all noise ceased. They were in a room more luxuriously furnished than Considine's office downtown. The man seemed to dote on extravagant surroundings. The room was hot; red coals glowed in an *emeraldite* fireplace. A roll-top desk overflowed with plans and blue prints as though some one had left in a hurry. The girl laughed softly and sank in an overstuffed divan. She patted the seat beside her.

"Please sit down."

Gingerly, Zane took a chair facing. Amusement flickered on his hostess's mouth. But she did not pat the cushions by her side again.

Zane bit his lip. It came cruelly to him that he was a "fill-in" guest. He wondered if the girl had called him aside to give him instructions about his behavior—whom to speak to, whom to amuse. She did not speak; she just sat there looking at him from under veiling eyelashes, summing him up. The glow of the dancing flames lighted lambent streams of fire in her hair and over the lovely blue silk of her gown, like warm, scintillating rivers. She was wealth personified—wealth, power, and the beauty it brings.

Suddenly, she spoke gravely.

"Are you wondering when this will end?"

Zane was shaken out of his dreams. "This? What?"

"All this." She waved an arm.

There was prescience in her manner. But Zane replied cautiously. "I don't quite understand."

"Not this?"

With a sweep of her arm, she had flicked a map from the desk behind her—a map crisscrossed with red, green and blue lines. Her gaze held

Zane's, and all at once he realized he was dealing with a girl whose mind went far past and beyond trifling social activities.

"We understand this," she said with the authority of knowledge. "We know the plan is the secret survey of the city's foundations made two years ago. We know that steel, like flesh and blood, gets tired; that vibration accelerates fatigue, that the solid roof of steel and iron over the city compresses escaping sewer gases into sidewalk vaults, cellars, telephone, telegraph, lighting and steam-main conduits. We know the city should be replanned or abandoned."

Zane jumped to his feet. Her words stripped him of his embarrassment; now he was the engineer.

"I've tried to tell them. Withers tried."

"And Withers is dead!"

He stopped, vaguely alarmed. "Withers died in an auto accident."

She nodded, the corners of her mouth derisive. "So will my uncle."

Zane sneered involuntarily. "Your uncle's safe. He suppressed this survey."

"But others know of it."

There was a brief pause. "You're telling me," said Zane harshly, "that Mr. Considine feels pity for the people and is kept from disclosing the truth by others?"

"No, no!" Charmian Considine was on her feet also, her breath coming quickly, her eyes level with Zane's. "My uncle is in danger because he is fighting to make a bigger profit than those realtors who have got wind of conditions. They are selling city property short." She gripped his elbows. "I heard of you and asked you here to-night because you must help me. Help all of us—every one. The millions crammed in this city."

Zane gently released her hold. Enthusiasm, hope and suspicion battled in his mind. It was too much—this sudden appeal and confession of knowledge. Beautiful girls are not philanthropists.

And Charmian was beautiful.

"To-night," she went on in a whisper, "uncle confers with the biggest private banker. He is to bring home a contract with this banker and his associates to sell certain stocks that will be driven low by panic following publication of this chart. But I am afraid. I want you to come often to the house. I'm sure—ssh! We'll talk afterward."

She stopped, for Considine was in the doorway. There was snow on his brown overcoat. His forehead was damp, hands shaking, and cheeks pallid. Absorbed, he went to his desk, snapping orders to Charmian.

"Have dinner and get those yapping jays out of the house."

She fled, leaving Zane to do what he liked.

"Fetch Miles!" Considine rapped out.

It eased the situation. And Zane ran into the hooked-nosed man right outside the door. He gave the message.

Charmian presided over dinner. Considine did not appear. Next to Zane, and opposite, both entering late, were Miles and Niegal, the latter a stout, bald man whose building activities supported the ex-Follies girl beside him in a style to which she was not accustomed by birth. It was an orthodox financier's dinner.

Nonbridge players left directly afterward. At a loss for something to do, Zane strolled into the hall in search of Charmian. He was attracted by the attitudes of the butler and the two maids outside the study

door. They seemed to be greatly frightened.

Then Charmian swept out of the room straight toward Zane. She was absolutely colorless, lips parted, eyes distended with terror as a woman who has looked upon some terrible thing.

"Uncle," she whispered, "is dead. Stabbed through the heart, from the back."

A shudder went from her body to his. But when she stood erect, her face was cold and self-possessed.

"Close the reception-room door!" she commanded the butler. "I'll try to get most people away before the police come."

Zane leaned forward. "Don't let *one* person leave."

She whipped around. "Who?"

"The man who was with him last—Miles."

A split-second hesitation, while trouble congealed to cold rage in Charmian's bronze-hued eyes.

"How dare you!" she shot at Zane in a low, accusing tone. "How dare you!"

She turned away to the telephone. Zane followed, amazed. "What on earth——" he began.

Her eyes softened and took on that speculative look.

"Miles," she said deliberately, "is my brother."

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### CHAPTER III.

#### THE PENKNIFE.

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THERE was surprisingly little trouble. The police came and went. Were there clues? They didn't say though they took away a tobacco jar, a box of cigars and several bottles from the study to examine for finger prints. All servants had been

busy with dinner. The study window looked on a service alley, and marks on the sill, indicated a roving burglar had been interrupted by his victim and had killed him silently.

But Zane, as he left the house, was troubled. Charmian had pleaded for reticence regarding Miles's visit to the study. She had pleaded with words. Miles was innocent, and the police so brutal and blundering. She pleaded with her eyes and mouth. Zane left with the unspoken promise that a man gives when a woman throws herself on a man's aid. He was to see her to-morrow and talk things over.

The cold air revived his senses. He turned to stare at the dark windows of the apartment house. The lights in the reception room were turned off. There was a dim glimmer in a window on the second floor. Candles in the death room? He felt a chill up his spine. Shaking off a premonition of evil, he walked briskly to an all-night drug store two blocks toward the river front.

He was seated on a stool drinking hot coffee when some one tapped his elbow. He turned his head and looked into a pair of light, glassy blue eyes set in a tan, leathery face. Their owner was of that heavy, tight-knit build that marks the metropolitan police detective.

"We've got the guy who killed Considine!" said the detective.

Zane was conscious of a great relief. "Quick work!" he exclaimed.

The detective shook his head. "No," he contradicted himself. "It wasn't you." And he seated himself on the stool next to Zane. "Shake me up one," he said to the clerk. "The usual."

"What do you mean, 'it wasn't you'?" Zane said after a moment's pause.

The detective stirred the bubbling,

salty liquid the clerk slapped into a paper cup on the counter. "I mean it wasn't you," he repeated calmly.

"You mean you tried to bluff me into an incriminating gesture," said Zane.

"Or a look or a word or a counter-bluff," augmented the other. "Finished your coffee? Have another on me. I want to talk to you."

Zane slipped from his stool. "Sorry," he said briefly. "I go to work early in the morning."

"I won't keep you long," said the detective mildly. "Of course, I can't hold you except as a material witness, but you'd be doing me a favor by chattin' a bit, and I'm not one to forget favors."

Zane looked quickly back at the past and as quickly into the future. He could tell nothing and he might learn something. He seemed wide enough awake now to keep guard on his tongue, and there was no point in antagonizing the police.

"What do you want to know?" he asked, resuming his seat.

The detective did not answer immediately; he seemed intent on stirring his drink. The drug clerk was called to attend to a customer at the cigar counter.

"My name's Riley," said the detective. "What's yours?"

"Prothero—Zane Prothero."

"Well, Zane, what do you say if we talk outside?"

They walked to a curtained touring car drawn up by the curb. Riley opened the rear door. Zane hesitated.

"How do I know you belong to the police?" he asked.

The detective shined a torch inside the car. Two uniformed policemen were in the front seat. The light played on a radio-receiving apparatus slung across the top of the hood. The driver had ear phones

strapped to his head. It was a regular patrol car.

"O. K.," Zane admitted and stepped inside.

"Cruise into the park," Riley told the driver.

They purred across town. Riley opened with personal questions.

"Known Considine long?" he asked.

"Couple of years," Zane told him.

"Known his niece that long?"

"No. I was invited to-night to fill in at bridge."

"Who was there that you knew?"

"No one," Zane confessed. He had an idea that the policeman beside the driver was making a stenographic transcript of his entire testimony.

"I suppose you know," said Riley, "that no burglar entered the apartment through the alley and nobody climbed in the window. Considine was killed by some one in the house."

"No; I didn't know that," said Zane stiffly.

"The window was opened from the inside," Riley went on easily. "The guy who opened it made a couple marks on the sill with a penknife."

"Yes?" said Zane.

"The penknife might have marks on it too," the other continued without any emotion. "The sill is painted green, y'see." He brought something from his pocket, and, in the light of the torch, Zane saw it was a pearl-handled penknife with three blades. Riley opened these blades one after the other. With a pin, he picked out a film of green from the part where the largest blade sank into the handle.

"Is that the knife?" asked Zane with a queer, uneasy feeling.

"You ought to know," came the reply. "I picked it out of your over-

coat pocket while we were sitting in the drug store."

With an enormous effort, Zane controlled his panic.

"It isn't mine," he said. "I didn't put it there."

"I guessed that much," was the comforting acknowledgment. "Never knew a man to keep a penknife in his overcoat yet. He carries it in his vest pocket or on a key chain. Matter of fact, I picked your pocket because I knew the knife was there; we searched the coats in the closet while we were in the apartment and found it then. The point of searching you was that, if you'd thrown it away, you might 'a' been guilty. The way you answered me when I told you we'd found the murderer told me you wasn't. What I want to know is—who put this knife in your pocket?"

"I don't know," said Zane truthfully.

The detective leaned forward and tapped the driver on the back. The car slowed to the exit of the park on Kingsley Avenue. "Guess the ride's over," he said shortly.

Zane was glad to get out. The detective halted him as he was about to walk away.

"Say," Riley asked, "who left Considine's study first—you or Miss Considine?"

"As far as I remember, we left together," Zane replied.

"Yeah?" was the unsettling comment. "Miss Considine seems to think she left before you did. See you again."

The car shot into the darkness of the park.

Zane stared at the retreating red light and emitted a long whistle of relief. He imagined the detective's final statement to be another bluff, a line thrown out to cause uneasiness should Zane be cognizant of more

than he confessed. But as he rode home on the trolley to his room, distrust began to stab him with tiny poison-tipped darts. Had he, befogged by Charmian's captivating personality, acted like a fool?

He was too engrossed in day-dreams to notice at once the black-coated figure which waited for him in the dim hallway of his rooming house. Halfway up the stairs, a voice called to him.

"Mr. Prothero!"

He turned and looked down into the dark well. There was the blur of a white shirt front.

"Miles!"

The hook-nosed man leaped up the stairs. He moved with the lithe silence of a panther, and yet his voice was calm and matter of fact.

"Can we talk in your room?" he asked.

In the small bed-sitting room, Zane studied his visitor. Miles meant a lot to him; the man was not only a suspect of murder in Zane's mind, he was Charmian's brother. Zane had learned that there were two classes of men—those who did as they liked, and those who did as they feared. Miles and his sister seemed to belong to the former and smaller class. If they did right, it was through desire, not fear. But the corollary held true: fear would not keep them from doing wrong.

Miles swept the plain apartment with a satisfied eye.

"You have not," he remarked, "many interests outside your work?"

"Why have you called?" Zane demanded.

Miles laid a silver-knobbed stick on a table beside Zane's model of a subway station. His gloves and opera hat followed. He lit a Turkish cigarette from a gold case. A scented puff of smoke billowed toward the cracked ceiling. But there

was nothing scented or feminine in his crackling voice and gestures.

"Is this report yours?" He whipped a document from his coat pocket.

Zane glanced at the first page. He reread what he had written two years before:

#### DANGER POINTS OF VERTICALLY BUILT CITIES

A list compiled with special reference to the Transit Construction Plans.

(a) Water mains, which may burst when steel is weakened and strained by vibration or shifting rock.

(b) Steam mains supplying heat to office buildings from power houses. Always temperamental.

(c) Waste from oil-power plants and chemical factories leaking into conduits and:

(d) Sewage wastes generally which in small cities find an outlet through loose earth and trees, but otherwise seep into conduits and cellars.

(e) Gas mains.

(f) Postal tubes, abandoned tunnels, covered cellars of old buildings, collectors of explosive gases.

There were fourteen items in all. And then the notes:

See report of street explosions in London, England; Paris, France. See attached clippings.

"This is my report," said Zane sharply. "It was suppressed."

"By real-estate operators who feared depreciation of values?"

Zane nodded.

"But you suggested a scheme to avert danger," Miles said.

"I did. A system of concrete funnels at each street corner to drain gases away from under the city."

Miles concentrated his gaze on his cigarette end. "Considine's death may lose you your job," he reflected casually. "Always a shake-up after the boss dies."

"What are you aiming at?" Zane demanded impatiently.

"Simply this. If I and my associates hire you—place you at the head of a corporation to erect your safety funnels under city supervision and financing, will twenty-five thousand a year be good enough?"

Miles's voice had not risen. Zane stared at him. He knew the offer was made seriously. But why? At once, he put his finger on the weak point.

"Two years ago, my plan would have worked," he said slowly. "To-day—no! Even if we relieve the pressure of combustible gases underneath sidewalks and buildings, by doing so we further contaminate the atmosphere. Now the volume of gas is too great and the city population too large."

The emotional excitement of the engineer—who is wrongly considered the most unemotional of creatures—grew on him as he elaborated.

"Another thing," he snapped. "The gas funnels will not avert the second great danger of water mains bursting under pressure, weakening through vibration and age. The trouble with cities is that they are not planned with any other purpose than to provide the most advantageous method for selling and reselling real estate. They're laid out for profitable speculation, not for human use. Already, the city is shattering the nerves and minds of its inhabitants."

He rose and talked with unwonted excitability. "Trains are running ninety minutes late; the new subway has automatically created six skyscrapers over seven hundred feet high; sixty thousand more commuters to jam the city. The health commissioner's report puts the increase of sedatives and sleep-producing drugs at four hundred per cent in the last two years. I saw a man blasted to death this morning;

fifty are killed every day. Twenty per cent of our construction engineers suffer from fatal pulmonary disease brought on by working underground, breathing silica dust, powdered rock. The funnels are no use."

During all this, Miles had retained his composure. He gave the impression of a schoolmaster listening to an hysterical pupil.

"When you suggested the gas funnels, you swore they would relieve the conditions," he said quietly.

"I suggested them two years ago," Zane retorted. "To-day the danger is past alleviation."

"So you refuse my offer?"

Zane hesitated. There was a threat behind Miles's gentle voice, menace in the close-set black eyes. A long silence followed.

Miles rose. "Before you make up your mind," he said, "think of my suggestion. Talk it over with my sister. She knew much of our uncle's affairs and she may be able to show you a new slant on things. Remember that a panic will do people no good and an incredible amount of harm. You and I can leave the city; the average man is tied by a house and his job and his wife and children. Let news of the city's danger leak out, and you wreck millions of careers. There is no place for the out-of-work man to live, no job in another city to which he can repair. It would almost be better for him to be blown sky-high as the secret survey prophesies."

And without waiting for a reply, he left the room.

Zane peeped through the window and watched him cross the street; he had not come in a taxi. A man detached himself from the shadow of an area gate and followed Miles. Miles was under police surveillance. They were *all* under suspicion.

That night, Zane slept soundly, but his morning dreams were of crevasses which opened in flames and swallowed screaming men.

A letter in his mail next day offered him a seven-thousand-dollar first mortgage on a tiny plot of land he had been induced to buy two years ago. For a moment, Zane was puzzled. The land was not worth half of that two years ago; it would seem that real-estate prices were rising, not falling. Then he considered that the worth of land within a hundred-mile radius would rise in price if the city became uninhabitable. Population would spread out horizontally instead of piling up vertically. The news of the secret survey was leaking out.

He swallowed a hasty breakfast at the corner cafeteria and went down to the office. The routine there was not disturbed. Plenty gossip, of course, about Considine's death reported in the *Times-Record*, but no one thought it made much difference. Zane collected his instruments and went to Kingsley Avenue.

The same butler ushered him into Considine's reception room, now bleak and dark. Charmian's entry was heralded by a soft rustle of silk, the breath of a refreshing perfume. She was in mourning and dressed to go out. A half-length veil was over her eyes. Black skirt, black fur jacket, black hat, black but very sheerly cased ankles!

She caught his hands in an impulsive gesture. They said nothing for a moment, and then talked stereotyped condolences. Finally:

"Did Miles make you an offer?" Charmian murmured.

Zane explained his opposition to it, all the while fighting against the subjection he felt to this girl's will. "I must first check up on the city's

safety," he said, all the more firmly because he wanted to follow Charmian's wishes.

She agreed with him easily and drew a brown envelope from her small, black muff. "This is the envelope my uncle brought home from the banker last night. The police fortunately overlooked it. Please examine it. There may be something we ought to know—to help you make a decision. I haven't the heart to examine his possessions now."

Somewhat unwillingly, Zane thrust the envelope into his breast pocket.

"Where are you going now?" queried Charmian as he moved toward the door.

"To make the check-up I spoke of," was his grave answer.

"You won't carry the envelope about with you?" she said quickly. "I mean—there might be an accident and——"

"I'll leave it at my rooms—hide it."

"But you'll look it over to-night and then come and see me again?" she said anxiously.

Zane felt warmed by her desire to see him again. He touched her hand with his lips, an unusual and inexplicable gallantry for he had always despised foreign mannerisms.

"Surely," he promised.

She saw him to the door.

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## CHAPTER IV.

### CHECK-UP.

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ZANE deposited his instruments in his room and looked about for a hiding place for the envelope. He ripped it open and realized that examination of the many plans

therein would necessitate several hours' work. The first item on his program was investigation of the city's netherlands. So, finally, he shifted the bed, pulled up the carpet, placed the envelope underneath it, and pushed the bed back into place again.

He reached city hall at noon.

In Room 86, he obtained a key which, as an official of the Transit Construction Corp., he was allowed to take after signing for it. Then he made his way to a depot.

A low, arched doorway off a little-used platform let him into a musty corridor. He carried a gas mask, which he had picked up from the repairman's shanty, a black leather case containing some nickel-plated instruments to which dials were attached, and a wooden, plush-lined box of test tubes and chemicals. At the end of the corridor was an iron door. He lifted a steel flap, inserted the key obtained from the city hall, twisted it, and pulled open the door which creaked. He closed the door after him.

He was now in a drainage tunnel started in 1876 and abandoned eighteen months later. It went for several hundred yards on the level and then sloped downward. The base of the Utilities Building formed one of its sides at this point. Zane flashed his torch on the angular cement piles, opened his bag, and placed a tube, from which a needle projected, against the cement. The pointer on the dial attached to the apparatus quivered violently. The vibration of traffic was three hundred per cent more than the builders of the tower had ever calculated upon when they erected it years before. No one in those days foresaw the future of what had been a lethargic city.

But the huge pillars were safe

enough. Zane's examination was purely routine. He continued the length of the tunnel, stopping here and there to perform similar operations. Once he opened a vial, poured a few drops of a yellow liquid in a test tube, waved the tube over his head, shook it up with his thumb over the mouth, and watched the green discoloration about the sides of the glass. After that, he put on his gas mask.

A droning sound came and went: a trolley flashing through a postal communication tunnel over his head. He found a circular hole leading out of the tunnel, crawled through it on hands and knees, and was in a stone chamber. Half of the floor of this chamber was taken up by a steel disk bolted down with butterfly-shaped screws. Adjusting the gas mask more securely, he unloosened the screws. The disk jumped a foot from its bed of its own volition. There was a dull plop. Compressed gases had raised it. The chamber was saturated with sulphuretted hydrogen.

Zane directed the beam of his torch through the opening. Below him gushed a filthy, putrid stream. He slung the bag from his shoulder by straps made for that purpose and descended an iron ladder. He landed on a concrete platform running by the side of the sewage river, and gingerly made his way along it. The river gurgled and splashed. Presently, Zane climbed another steel ladder which led through the floor of a huge, arched cavern.

There was no steel disk on this floor. Great serpents poured out of the walls and roof and disappeared into the walls opposite. Some of these serpents were new and shining; others corruscated and rusty. Some were hot to the touch. They were gas mains, water mains, tele-

phone conduits, the latter carrying as many as twenty-four hundred wires to the cable. They met here and parted again. Chance brought their paths together at this point.

Zane made his way between and underneath, sometimes above the serpents, until he came to a heavy wooden door, tarred with pitch and studded with iron bolts. This, he opened. He stood well back as he drew the last bolt so that the rush of gas should not bowl him over. He entered a corridor, damp and slimy. When the pressure dropped sufficiently, he pulled the door closed again and secured it by a single latch on the inside. He went along the corridor for half a dozen turns in the passage and stopped where the slime was insufficient to hide the bricks which made the wall. Now he took a short crowbar and pried out one of the bricks at a level with his head. Once loosened, it jumped out of its bed. Gas was collected behind the wall of the passage.

A hundred yards farther on, Zane stopped again and drove a sharp-pointed tube between two bricks. Onto the tube, he affixed a rubber hose leading to a dial. The pointer of the dial sprang to a pressure of seven pounds to the square inch.

When Zane returned to daylight, his skin was yellowish and his eyes bloodshot. His lips were dry and cracked, and covered with a black coating. These were the physical symptoms of his exploration below the city. The mental symptoms were shown in his staring eyes and strained mouth muscles. Conditions were worse than he expected. The foundations of the city were saturated with explosive gases, saturated under pressure.

The drainings from the oil tanks of millions of automobiles, the waste from over a thousand Diesel-engined

power plants, the fumes from a hundred thousand leaking sewer conduits, bedded the great city. One heavy rain, one high tide that would block the sewage mains, one short circuit in a million miles of electrified wire, and the roof of the underground city would be blown skyward.

Zane did not return to Charmian's apartment. It is only old men, not young, who think ideals and duty well lost for sake of a woman's favor. Charmian was forgotten when, ten minutes after leaving the depot, Zane burst into the offices of the *Times-Record*.

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## CHAPTER V.

### THE ARREST.

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**A** PROPHEET is without honor in his own country. Zane's interview with the newspaper's editorial department went through three stages: enthusiastic reception as the bearer of a good story; disbelief when he tried to explain the gravity of the situation; anger when he made his earnestness felt. Explain to a man that he must uproot himself and you make an enemy.

At the end of the interview, during which one after another of the executives of the newspaper were called into conference, Zane realized that he was making an unfavorable impression. The editors closed up like clams, taking their cue from their chief. They took his statement and told him to call the next day.

Astounded and perplexed, Zane returned to his room. As he entered it, he realized that some one had been through his baggage. He jumped to the bed and pulled it

aside, then breathed a sigh of relief when he felt the envelope under the carpet.

When he straightened to push the bed back into place, he saw a man's reflection in his bedroom mirror. He recognized the leathery face and light-blue eyes. Cramming the envelope under his coat, he pretended to be searching for the pipe he finally picked up from a chair.

Riley came forward from the doorway and extended his hand. "I'll take that," he said mildly. "We've been looking for it."

Zane extended the pipe.

"The envelope!" snapped Riley.

Zane forced a laugh. "Oh! The construction plans——"

"Which belonged to the guy who was murdered last night," Riley finished for him. "Didn't you work in his office and weren't you horning into his graft? I guess these plans were what you were after when you invited yourself to his apartment for dinner."

And he took the envelope from Zane's hand.

"I never——" Zane began.

His denial froze in his mouth. He was staring at the steel rings handcuffing his wrists.

Riley said little as he escorted Zane in a patrol wagon to headquarters. He joked in the brutal way that arresting policemen do. A tall, white-haired man took charge of Zane after he left the wagon and stood around while the prisoner was finger-printed and searched. They took Zane's tie off. "In case you get a hunch to hang yourself" commented a sergeant in response to Zane's query.

He was pushed into a plainly furnished office and questioned for an hour. Having but one story to tell, he stuck to it. He was asked a hundred times whether he left the study

before or after Charmian. He answered: "At the same time."

"Take him away," said the white-haired man at last.

He was put into a bare cell whose furniture consisted of a stone bench, a washbasin from the tap of which water continually ran, and toilet facilities. There was nothing in the cell which could be moved or wrenched off to use as a weapon or instrument for any purpose. Light came from an electric globe in the corridor. The prisoner opposite him was stabbing his arm with a fountain-pen filler so that blood streamed down to the wrist. He begged Zane for a cigarette. His eyes were bright with the drug he was inserting.

A white-coated steward brought a tin plate with a sausage and a hunk of bread on it about seven o'clock. For liquid, there was the water from the faucet.

Soon after the unsatisfactory meal, a keeper unlocked Zane's cage and took him to a bare room in which was a table and several chairs. One wall of the room was a barred grille. On the other side of the bars sat a blue-coated sergeant at a desk. Talking to the sergeant was Miles.

"Here's your man," said the keeper.

Miles came through a door let in the grille. The keeper went out. The sergeant continued writing in a large book.

"You," said Miles, "are very unfortunate." He looked around the room with supercilious disdain.

"Why am I under arrest?" said Zane thickly.

"I don't know, my dear chap. The police are stupid." This was said in a lower tone, yet the sergeant looked up quickly.

"They didn't arrest me without reason," Zane snapped. "I told them that the brown envelope was

given to me by Miss Considine to examine, but they didn't believe me. Why?"

"Oh! You told them that, did you?" murmured the other.

"Hasn't Miss Considine explained about the envelope?" Zane queried.

Miles shook his head. "Charmian has broken down. She has gone to the country to recuperate from the shock of her uncle's death."

"Perhaps you can explain," Zane suggested. He was controlling himself with difficulty. It dawned on him with cruel force that the girl had framed him to save her brother.

"I can give satisfactory evidence to your character," Miles answered in a low voice. "I can assure the police that you had no motive to kill my uncle—that you are vitally important to the people's safety. That you plan to build safety funnels——"

So that was it! Miles was taking no chances. He had not relied on Zane's loyalty to his sister, or on Zane's possible infatuation for her. But in addition to the offer of twenty-five thousand dollars a year and Charmian's friendship, he had arranged with his sister to throw such a heavy suspicion on Zane that, without their help, the young engineer would stand trial for murder and no doubt go to the chair. It was now for Zane to choose between silence and safety or the horrible alternative. He had already told the newspapers all he knew.

Only, Zane thought, Miles did not yet know this.

To bow before a stronger force is painful, a struggle, even though common sense dictates it. Zane's voice was not quite steady:

"I'll come in with you," he said harshly. "I accept your offer."

Miles allowed himself to smile. "You promise to say nothing that

may defeat the trust of the people in these safety funnels."

"I promise," Zane agreed and instantly contradicted himself: "No, I can't. I can't let millions go to their death without speaking."

Strangely enough, the other was not annoyed. "At least," he argued, "you can promise not to speak against the scheme you yourself proposed. You admit it alleviates the danger."

Zane nodded. "Yes, it does that."

"Very well," came the calm reply. "I will be satisfied with the lesser promise. Frankly, I think you safer in jail, but my sister has certain scruples about the matter. I will place you in charge of the funnel construction. There will be no difficulty about raising money from the city. The story you told to the newspapers to-day will work them up to exactly the right pitch of apprehension."

Then Miles knew. Zane stared at him.

"You mean," he gasped thickly, "that the editors accepted my story and yet refused to be alarmed—refused to believe the truth?"

"They believe just what they are in a frame of mind to believe," Miles said lightly. He selected a cigarette with care. "I understand you gave the impression of being somewhat fanatical about the subject of the city's danger. So, of course, your prophecies were discounted about sixty per cent. Still, the evening papers have the story, and the city will vote a billion dollars to-morrow if necessary to safeguard lives and property." His tone deepened. "Why fight against the inevitable, Prothero? Your assistance to me will benefit every one. While you stay in jail, anything you say will be put down as the desperate ravings of an accused man."

Rapidly, Zane calculated the possibility of accusing Miles of the murder of Considine; of making himself believed by the police and of convincing people of the danger beneath them. The grim walls of the prison seemed to close in. His helplessness was obvious.

"I'll do anything you say," he muttered.

The other smiled openly. "Have a cigarette," he proffered. "I am about to keep an appointment with the police commissioner to assure him that my sister intrusted the brown envelope to your care. If you are not released at once on my evidence, I will arrange for bail and your freedom will follow as a matter of course once the safety-funnel construction begins."

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## CHAPTER VI.

### KIDNAPED.

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AT ten o'clock next morning, Zane cramped by a night on the stone bench, stumbled out of the prison into Miles's waiting limousine. He was freed in ten-thousand-dollar bail, arranged for by Miles. He was taken directly to a suite of offices the latter had rented in the Metropolitan Building. The headlines of a newspaper on the desk appointed to him, said that:

CITY'S DANGER TO BE AVERTED.  
BILLION DOLLARS VOTED TO-DAY  
TO BUILD SAFETY FUNNELS TO  
ALLOW SEWER GAS ESCAPE. MAYOR  
ACTS PROMPTLY.

And a subhead read:

Zane Prothero, author of funnel scheme, in charge of construction. Says: "City has acted in time."

In a spasm of despair, Zane lifted up the newly connected telephone. "Main 4-2300," he rasped.

He was speaking to the city editor of the newspaper he had approached the day before, within two minutes. He identified himself. Then: "If I prove that the city should be abandoned within a month," he asked hoarsely, "what would be the result?"

"Did you say you were Zane Prothero?" the city editor demanded. "The engineer in charge of constructing safety funnels?"

"The same," Zane assured him.

There was a brief pause. "I should say," the editor replied, "that there would be unprecedented panic. Possibly more suffering than an explosion such as you prophesy would cause."

"How could that panic be averted?" Zane insisted.

"By proclamation of martial law and organized exodus from the city. Only presidential action could meet the situation."

"And to obtain presidential action," Zane went on, "I would have to do what?"

"Convince the State politicians of the immediacy of the danger you speak of," came the editor's husky voice over the wire. "Say!" he added. "Where are you talking from? I'm coming round to see you."

"Room 616, Metropolitan Building," snapped Zane.

The wire went dead. He replaced the receiver and looked up to find Miles smiling down at him.

"I see," said Miles, "that your nerves are overstrung by the responsibilities on your shoulders. You suffer from *dementia præcox*. It is a pity." He sighed and beckoned toward the door.

Two sturdy men in white coats

entered. They carried a stretcher between them, which they leaned against the wall.

"A rest cure," murmured Miles, "will soon put you in a saner frame of mind."

Zane leaped to his feet. As quickly, Miles sprang to the door. He snapped an order to the two men.

They advanced warily. Zane hit one under the chin. The other drew something from beneath his coat. There was a swish of a blackjack, and his head reeled. He sank to his knees, fighting.

A pain shot up his arm. Through a white mist, he saw Miles wiping a hypodermic syringe. His legs went numb; the numbness crept into his body and about his shoulders. Miles's face seemed very large and yet very far away.

An interlude of extraordinary dreams followed. These cleared gradually, and Zane knew he was riding in an ambulance. Through the rear door at the foot of his bunk, he saw fields and trees. He went to sleep again and awakened in a sunny room, tastefully furnished with white dimity covers and curtains. There was no one in the room which made it all the more curious that, just before he came to full consciousness, he seemed to have heard the hard, even voice of Riley, hard-faced police detective, asking him questions.

But when he woke, it was Charmian's brother looking down on him, not the police detective. Miles's face was unconcerned. He watched Zane struggle to a sitting posture and smiled genially.

"How are you feeling?"

Zane glanced about the room. The windows were barred outside. There was an open door at the far left and a curtain over another on

the far right. Miles interpreted the survey.

"Don't try to escape," he warned. He was amused. "You're in my own house in the country. And Charmian is also my guest."

Zane experienced a hot thrill of anger. "Does she know?"

"That you've come here for your health? Yes." He laid a newspaper on the bed and eyed Zane meaningly. "Why spoil a pleasant holiday by foolish antagonism? Charmian expects you to lunch with us on the veranda."

Zane grasped the newspaper. What hopes he entertained for rescue vanished. He was hardly aware of Miles's departure from the bedroom, so intent was he upon the leaded columns.

#### PROTHERO DIRECTS WORK FROM COUNTRY HOME

Isolated from nerve-racking interruptions, Zane Prothero is concentrating every effort on the plans for the safety funnels, at the quiet country retreat of a personal friend. Physicians advised this move when they noted Prothero's nervous condition last Friday. Miles Considine, nephew of the late Joseph Considine, has offered his services to the emergency committee at the nominal remuneration of one dollar a year. Miles Considine is a noted engineer and was the first man to recommend Prothero's safety funnels to the mayor. Citizens may sleep peacefully—

And a lot more of the same sort.

"Blah!" muttered the unwilling invalid.

He threw the newspaper on the floor and went rigid. The white curtain at the foot of the bed had moved. He looked quickly at the dimity curtains over the windows; they were not fluttering; there was no breeze. He called out hoarsely: "Who's there?"

The curtain was pulled aside to reveal a row of coat hangers and,

crouching beneath them, the leather-faced detective, Riley.

Zane jerked to a sitting posture. The detective glided across the room, listened for a moment with his ear to the keyhole and then came to Zane's side.

"I tried to wake you," he rasped under his breath. "They gave you some dose!"

"You—you know what's happened?" Zane muttered.

"I don't know if you've had a nervous breakdown," the detective returned, pointing to the newspaper column, "but I know you're still under suspicion at headquarters."

Zane's heart was heavy again. "You came down here to keep an eye on me, then," he said harshly.

"Just so we'd be able to put a hand on you when we want you," the other replied brutally.

With difficulty, Zane swung his feet to the floor. "Suppose you start by getting me out of here," he suggested boldly.

The detective grinned for an instant. "Not on your life," he refused. "You've had a nervous breakdown and you're in good hands. I'm not a doctor to swear you ought to be back at work."

Something about his manner carried a ray of hope. Zane seized his arm.

"You don't believe I'm a mental case?" he rapped out.

Riley gravened. "I don't and that's a fact," he confessed. "But what's that got to do with me? My job is to keep tab on you, that's all."

"Can you get me out of here?" Zane shot at him.

The light-blue eyes narrowed to pin points. "Why?"

Zane told him. Speaking rapidly and quietly, he outlined the situation from the beginning. He spoke of the secret survey originated by

Withers, of the latter's death, of the invitation to dinner.

"I think Miles expected his uncle's death," he reasoned. "That's why he induced his sister to make their uncle ask me to dinner—because I was one of the engineers concerned in the survey. I believe that Miles belongs to the ring of real-estate operators whose plans Considine tried to break into. You know what I mean? Considine tried to muscle in on the real-estate deals that were being made in preparation of collapse in land values following the destruction foretold by the survey."

"Unknowingly, he stepped on his nephew's coat tails, as you might say. Miles, of course, held all the cards; he had entrée to Considine's house through his sister Charmian, who was her uncle's housekeeper and hostess. He influenced Charmian to bring me to dinner, thus rounding up those in possession of the secret of the survey. Then, perhaps, he killed Considine."

"Why?" snapped Riley.

"Because Considine had just obtained the financial help that would enable him to beat the ring. An agreement with some private bankers."

"Is that what was in the brown envelope?" asked Riley sharply.

"It was what the brown envelope originally contained," Zane told him. "When Miss Considine gave it to me for keeping, the contents had been altered."

"In other words, they tried to frame you."

"They prepared to frame me—if I refused to accept Miles's offer to build safety funnels and keep my mouth shut."

"What's against the safety-funnel idea?" Riley rapped out.

"They're not sufficient protec-

tion," Zane replied. "Two years ago, they would have sufficed; to-day it is too late. I tested the sewer-gas pressure under the city the morning you arrested me. A single high tide or a cloud-burst which will block the sewer outlets coupled with the short circuits usual at such times, will blow streets sky-high."

There was a long silence while Riley gazed at the closed door. Finally, he grunted.

"Your theory about Considine's murder holds water," he rumbled, "but the other don't. You can't tell me that all them buildings is going up into the clouds."

"I can't tell any one," said Zane bitterly. "Wait till it happens, that's all. The public is dumb."

Riley gazed at him admiringly. "You're a good talker and that's a fact," he whispered. "Now hold it. Some one's coming. I'll see you later."

And with incredible swiftness and quiet for one of his bulk, he slid under the bed.

A manservant in black-and-white-striped trousers came into the room. He carried a suit of clothes over one arm.

"Luncheon, sir, will be ready in half an hour," he said suavely. "Your clothes, sir. Miss Considine expects you on the veranda."

Zane glanced at the sunlit window and then at the date line of the newspaper. "Just what day is it?" he inquired suddenly.

"Monday, sir," said the man without showing surprise.

He went out. Zane lay back on the bed. He had been drugged for nearly forty-eight hours.

"Say! Get off my back, will you?" came Riley's grumble from under the bed.

Zane grinned but he showed a serious face to the detective. "Where

are you going to hide while you're watching me?" he inquired when he started to dress.

"Don't ask no questions and you'll be told no lies," snapped the other and added: "For your own good, I wouldn't say nothing about seeing me."

"I won't," said Zane, "because I hope that, before you leave, you'll arrest Miles for the murder of Considine."

"Yeah?" returned the other with a hard sidewise glance. "An' suppose he didn't murder 'im? Suppose some one else did?"

"Who?" snapped Zane with sudden uneasiness.

"Who?" repeated Riley. "The girl, maybe."

Watching the catlike thrust of Riley's head, the glint in the detective's eyes, it came to Zane in a flash that the other had never really suspected him since the discovery of Considine's murder. It was Miles or Charmian whom Riley was after. The detective would never have bothered to break into this house simply to check up on an engineer's rest cure. The trail must be growing hot.

Suddenly, Zane felt tolerant of Riley's hard-boiled manner. He saw in Riley his deliverer. He was about to speak when there came footsteps in the passage outside the room, and Riley vanished into the clothes closet. As he went, he drew a black instrument from his pocket.

Miles entered. "Feeling all right?" he asked Zane from the doorway.

Zane nodded. He found it difficult to speak.

"Lunch is waiting," Miles went on with a quick glance about the room.

Zane was obsessed with his tie. He was afraid that, if he met Miles's penetrating gaze, he would involun-

tarily give away the secret of the closet.

Miles tapped his fingers on the edge of the door and went out. Zane, his tie arranged to his satisfaction, glanced around for his coat. The door reopened, and the manservant entered with the missing article of apparel and a clothes brush with which he brushed the coat. The man did not once look toward the closet, but there was something about his indifference that indicated knowledge of the detective's presence.

As Zane made his way downstairs, he reasoned that Riley must have at least one assistant planted in the household. He had the feeling that the detective had bided his time and was about to pounce on his victim. There was an imminence of catastrophe in the air. Zane hoped that the victim would be Miles and not Charmian. Though he hoped for instant freedom from suspicion of murder, the vision of Charmian languishing behind prison bars was not a welcome one.

Then he was face to face with her, acknowledging her matter-of-fact greeting, and following her out onto the glass-sheltered veranda where lunch was served.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### RILEY STEPS IN.

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**T**HROUGH the large veranda windows, Zane saw a sloping lawn bordered by evergreen trees. Charmian followed his gaze and smiled slightly.

"I hope," she said lightly, "that you will enjoy your stay here."

Her cheeks were as pale as usual; only her burning eyes betrayed any

excitement. She was dressed simply, as befitted the country. Miles had turned silent, menacing. He handed, when the butler withdrew, a telegram over to Zane.

"Read it!" he growled.

Zane smoothed the yellow sheet on the tablecloth.

The telegram gave him both hope and alarm. It read:

INITIAL BORING OF FUNNELS RESULT IN SEWER BLAST AND ACCIDENTAL IGNITION STOP PUBLIC POWER UTILITIES COMPLAIN OF SERVICE INTERRUPTED BY OPERATIONS STOP UNABLE TO REACH LOWER LEVELS UNDER FOLK BUILDING WITHOUT CUTTING OFF STEAM LINES STOP TWO MEN SCALDED TO DEATH NEWSPAPERS COMPLAIN AND INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF LABOR SEEKS INJUNCTION TO CEASE WORK UNDER CLAUSE 961 STEAMFITTER'S UNION STOP SECTION WORKING ON THE FOUR HUNDRED FOOT LEVEL SWAMPED BY BURSTING WATER MAIN COMMA REMOVAL OF PRESSURE OF ROCK ON PRINCIPAL WATER MAINS RESULT IN BURSTING STOP MY SURMISE THAT FUNNEL SCHEME WILL HAVE TO BE ABANDONED

HIRTCH

"Who is Hirtch?" Zane demanded.

"My confidential secretary," said Miles.

Zane could not repress his triumph. "I told you the funnel scheme was two years too late," he rapped out. "There's nothing to do but tell the people the truth and move them out of the danger zone under martial law."

Miles raised his eyebrows. He looked peculiarly vulturelike at that moment.

"Here," he announced, handing over a second sheet, "is the reply I

have sent in your name to the editors of the leading newspapers."

Zane read:

FUNNEL SCHEME SUPERSEDED  
BY CAPILLARY DRAINAGE SYSTEM  
STOP ALTERATIONS COMMENCE  
FRIDAY STOP ASSURE PEOPLE THAT  
ALL DANGER IS PAST STOP  
ZANE PROTHERO

"Who," Zane snapped, "gave you permission to use my name? And what do you mean by capillary drainage?"

"I used your name because you are in nominal charge of operations," said the other calmly enough. "As for capillary drainage, I have no idea what the term means and neither have the editors who will receive the message. But they will take it for granted that Zane Prothero understands what he is talking about and will print the reassuring news on the front page.

"Panic will be averted until Friday at the worst—possibly for another week. By then, the land which my associates are selling will be off our hands, and I have no further interest in the States or your worthy self. You will be free to return and broadcast the news you have been so anxious to proclaim. But my advice to you is to leave the country the instant I set you free!

"When the city collapses, the people will not forget that they put their trust in Zane Prothero." He paused to bite off the end of a cigar. "Should you meet a crowd of refugees, I imagine they will tear you limb from limb."

It was dramatic, melodramatic, and horribly clear. Charmian was clutching the tablecloth, wide-eyed and breathing hard.

"You—you didn't tell me," she gasped.

Miles twisted his mouth in a

covert sneer. "Don't pretend, my dear sister, that you were entirely ignorant of my plans—of our uncle's plans—of all that was going on around you."

She was suddenly self-possessed. "Yes," she murmured, "I knew. But not that——" She turned to Zane. "Is the city truly doomed to destruction?" she whispered.

Zane pulled himself together. Miles would not have dared to expose his hand without anticipating personal attack. The butler was covering over a wheeled tray at the far end of the veranda; there was an ominous bulge on the man's hip. Zane found his voice harsh.

"We are safe until something happens," he said slowly. "A flood tide or a rain burst——"

Instinctively, his gaze turned to the pile of newspapers which Miles was receiving hourly from the city. He picked up the latest one, pointed to the weather report.

"The weather man reports dry and fine," he said with a voice that held a hard, brittle note. "When you see notices of heavy rain——"

He stopped, held by a paragraph that had been pushed to the foot of the page by the local reports of the safety-funnel plan progress. Usually, such a paragraph as he looked at would have spread across the page. The headline said:

TYPHOON HITS ST. KITTS. HURRICANE TRAVELING NORTHWEST.

With feverish hands, he sought the shipping news. On the last page but one, he found that which he read in a cracked high-pitched voice.

"The low depression area," he read, "is traveling northward and is expected to reach the American seaboard Tuesday night. Ships have been warned to put into harbor. An exceptionally high tide washed

over the seaside colony of Beach Grove, driving residents from their homes."

Zane waved the newspaper in Miles's face. "So much for your plans! By Tuesday night, we'll know the worst."

"What," ejaculated Miles with difficulty, "are you talking about?"

Zane calmed himself. If he could talk clearly, he might save the situation.

"A typhoon is raging up from the southeast. It will expend itself around Miami. But the tidal wave traveling after it will sweep American shores and pile into the rivers. Then you will see the repetition of the catastrophe of May, 1925 with the added disaster of a city split open by the monsters that growl under boiling masses of steel." Zane was carried away to eloquence.

Miles pushed by his chair and reached for the paper. "I don't believe——"

But Charmian was standing up. "Miles, you must believe!"

He glared at her. "Are you mad?"

"No! But you are. You'd ruin millions to make more money than you know what to do with. Stop it! Let Mr. Prothero wire the governor. Get the people out of danger!"

She was marvelous! Her slim silken body tense, her eyes sparking fire! Her fingers, fanned on the edge of the table, were white to their almond-shaped nails. Brother and sister, scions of the power that money gives, the money they and their ancestors had wrenched from those of lesser ruthlessness, their wills clashed—and the girl won. The strain eased out of Miles's cheek muscles. His expression became that of a natural man.

He jerked his head toward Zane: "We'll go to the city together."

Zane jumped to his feet. "I'll telephone."

He was the only one who clearly saw what happened. The butler, loitering at the end of the veranda, had drawn a gun. He was pointing it at some one in the house, his shoulders hunched, his face alarmed. Flame spat from the ugly muzzle. Two sharp explosions were followed by others, deeper, more reverberating. Charmian gave a little cry. Miles leaped forward. The butler pitched against a table, crumpled, and slumped to the floor.

Riley stepped through the doorway and over the butler's prostrate form.

Miles's hand dropped to his hip. Riley flashed a smoking revolver.

"None o' that," he snarled and came forward swiftly. "Put 'em up!"

Miles reached into the air. "What the devil!"

Riley's arm shot out. Something glittered in his hand. Came the click of handcuffs.

"You're under arrest for the murder of Joseph Considine. And you," the detective continued, swerving his gun toward Zane, "are held as a material witness."

Charmian choked a sob. "You're not——"

"You're held, too!" Riley snapped.

Zane pulled on his collar which had suddenly grown too tight. "But I'm going to the city," he said wildly. "People are in danger."

"Tell that," said Riley, "to the judge."

He answered Zane's frenzied glare by a mirthless smile. "Don't worry none," he advised. "You're O. K.! I heard this guy admit to her"—he nodded to the rigid Charmian—"about talking to Considine after you'd gone in to dinner that night. That means he lied. I

reckon when he explains why, and why he keeps a known gangster for a butler, and where he hides the plane he bought six months ago, and why its hidden, he'll explain the murder, too."

"Then you knew——"

"I know plenty I'm not spilling now," snapped out the detective roughly.

"Nor any time," sneered Miles. His hard lips were white with passion. "Put a beggar on horseback or a fool on the detective force and you'll——"

"Come on!" Riley interrupted brutally. "I ain't riskin' no get-away after seein' the kind of servants you got around here."

"Then you really arrest me simply because my butler happens to be a criminal?" Miles argued with sudden calmness.

"Happens to be!" Riley gibed. "I guess he happened to draw a gat and happened to help you abduct Prothero—hey! Where are you going?"

Zane swallowed. He had edged toward the steps. "I must go to the city."

"You'll get there."

"When? To-day?"

Riley shrugged. "To-day—tomorrow—next week maybe. I gotta hold you fer the local court. But you're not a suspect." He shook Miles. "He is. No, siree. You and me wait fer a magistrate's order."

He beckoned to Zane and put a heavy hand on Miles's shoulder, pulling the tall man around the table and jerking him toward the veranda steps. Charmian did not follow; her face was white, her eyes, meeting Zane's, full of a question. Her brother had turned a *volte face* to save the people. Now it was up to Zane.

"What are ye waiting fer?" Riley demanded, turning a savage face.

Zane made a resigned gesture. He stepped clear of his chair. Then he bent forward and hit the hand that held the revolver. The weapon clattered to the wooden floor. Riley grunted and swung his arm. But Miles, handcuffed as he was, dragged on the detective's other side. The blow lacked force. Zane took it on his shoulder and hit with all his might at a point below Riley's ear. The man gasped and stumbled. Zane hit him again and again. Riley went down, pulling Miles with him.

"Help me unlock these handcuffs," the latter snapped.

Zane found the key in the detective's right-hand pocket. He shifted the handcuffs to Riley's wrists, locking them around a pillar supporting the veranda roof.

He allowed but one glance at the butler. The man was dead.

"Hurry," called Miles from the veranda steps. "That fellow's only a gunman I hired in New York to help in your abduction."

"Where's Charmian?" Zane asked sharply.

"Gone upstairs to get wraps and things. We're leaving here for good."

"One of the servants will release the detective," Miles augmented as they drove a seven-passenger limousine from the garage.

"That's what we can't risk," Zane snapped. "He'll get on the wires and stop us before we reach the city."

Miles brought the car to a stop before the front door. "I'll settle with him," he said shortly. "Wait here for my sister."

"What did you do to him?" Zane queried as, with Charmian between them, they whirled down the drive and onto the road.

"Locked him in the cellar," Miles returned shortly.

"Can he——"

"Get out? No! There's provisions down there—and wine for a regiment. If he's a teetotaler, he's out of luck."

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### MILES STEPS OUT.

---

THE roar of the engine and rush of the wind, as the speedometer crept up to ninety miles an hour, drowned further conversation.

Miles drove recklessly and yet with a certain high-strung caution. He slowed at corners; the brakes were pouring blue smoke before they had gone half a dozen miles. Now and then, the smell of burning rubber came to Zane's nostrils when the speed dropped to the comparative safety of thirty miles per hour.

Charmian nestled against him; her eyes were fearless and glowing with excitement. There was the same relief in her expression that was in her brother's when he made his momentous decision on the veranda. For the first time, they were all working together toward the same end. Zane felt a rush of confidence in Miles; the brain that successfully wrought out Considine's murder and his own abduction would surely be of stanch assistance on the right side of the law.

They rode madly through towns and were but a dozen miles from the outskirts of the big city when Miles swung the car off the main road along a cart-rutted track. The limousine swayed and rolled over the weed-lined path. Zane frowned. He wondered what improvement Miles could have thought of upon their original plan to interview the mayor and the leading newspaper

editors and force abandonment of the city. Charmian's eyes, too, were puzzled. Under the fur lap robe, she gripped Zane's wrist.

The path turned sharply to the right and behind an unpainted barn. A sow and her litter heaved themselves from the mud and under a five-barred gate. Miles turned the car about facing the way they had come. He switched off the ignition and lit a cigarette.

"I'm sorry," he said briefly, "that I cannot accompany you farther." He let down the window by his side and flicked a match through it.

"Your detective's arrival and my arrest complicated matters," he went on in a matter-of-fact tone. "I've been thinking, and the result is that I've decided not to return."

Zane's right hand slipped down to the revolver he had taken from Riley. He thumbed its hammer.

Charmian sensed the movement. She emitted a little gasp. But she made no move to prevent Zane aiming the gun.

Miles had opened the door. As he turned, he saw Zane's motion. He smiled grimly.

"My dear fellow," he said coolly, "please don't imagine that I am stopping you from continuing your journey and saving the city." There was a trace of sarcasm in his voice. "You can drive a car, of course?"

Zane looked at Charmian. She returned his gaze with a mute appeal. Yet Zane had the feeling that she had definitely aligned herself on his side.

"Where are you going?" he asked Miles with peculiar self-consciousness.

The other delicately blew a cloud of cigarette smoke into the air. He buttoned his overcoat and reached for a thick Malacca cane on the floor of the car.

"I imagine," he said nonchalantly, "that I will go to Mexico." He stepped carefully out of the mud to the side of the barn. "Good-bye, my dear sister."

It argued much for his perception that he did not inquire whether Charmian would accompany him. Zane lowered his gun. There was the faintest flush on Charmian's cheek.

"Don't wait," she murmured.

Zane eased himself across her to the steering wheel. Miles was still standing by the path, regarding them from an altitude of easy unconcern.

"If you meet," he called, "any of my associates in the real-estate business, please don't mention Mexico. I rather imagine they might construe your release and my departure in an unpleasant way." He paused. "I am not anxious to follow my uncle to the next world."

He was obviously waiting for them to depart. The air was frosty. Clouds were coming up from the southeast. One could hear the hum of automobiles tearing along the main road five hundred yards away. The sow returned to her trough, grunting. Zane felt a curious tug at his heart. Either the self-possessed man by the side of the path or the charming girl beside him in the car was the murderer of their uncle. The ugly fact poisoned the admiration he unwillingly felt for the man and the captivating spell of the girl—a spell which he had succumbed to without a struggle.

"Who killed Considine?" Zane shot at Miles.

There was a moment of tense silence during which Zane could hear Charmian's gasping breath behind him. But he did not look at the girl but kept his gaze on the man.

Studying the ash on his cigarette,

Miles tapped it gently with his forefinger. "A pertinent question," he said deliberately, "and one which I cannot answer."

"Did you?" Zane snapped.

There was a little sound from Charmian. Zane resisted the impulse to look at her. Miles's expression hardened.

"You are not," he said, "as bright as I thought. What makes you think——"

Charmian leaned across Zane to look out of the window. "I asked him not to tell the police that you went into the study after we left."

Miles started. He came to the running board of the car. "Do you mean to say," he inquired of Zane, "that you suspect *me* of murdering my uncle?"

His voice was gritty, contemptuous. Charmian's eyes were gelid. Zane flushed angrily.

"If you're innocent, why did your sister ask me to conceal your movements that night?" he demanded furiously.

Charmian made an impatient movement. "Didn't you understand that Miles could not afford to be held as a suspect just when his real-estate deals were coming to a conclusion?" she scoffed. "Do you think innocent people are never arrested by the police?"

There was horror on her mouth. It was Miles who eased the situation.

"I rather imagine," he said shortly, "that our friend has had quite a bad time of it. Just why," he queried Zane, "did you withhold your knowledge from the police?"

Involuntarily, Zane's eyes shifted to Charmian's. The movement told all. The girl's expression softened. Miles coughed.

"To satisfy your need of a suspect," he said, "I may tell you that

we imagine Horlick Niegal knows how Joseph met his death; Niegal, the promoter of building programs. He was aware of the secret survey and hoped to squeeze us out of the profits of selling city property short."

In a flash, there came to Zane a memory of a stout, bald man sitting at a dinner table beside a former Follies girl.<sup>6</sup> He remembered the expression of sly satisfaction on the man's face just before Considine's body was discovered.

"As a matter of fact," Miles was saying, "I left uncle's study the minute after you did. As I passed along the hall, Niegal was taking something from his coat which hung in the clothes closet next to the pantry. Probably a cigar case."

Zane jumped. "Did you see him again near the closet?" he asked quickly.

Miles pondered a moment. "Once again," he admitted. "He seemed to be replacing something the second time. I was on my way to the telephone and caught a glimpse of him slipping a small article into his coat."

"His overcoat?"

"A black one like yours."

"It *was* mine," Zane snapped with a flash of inspiration. "He was planting the penknife with which he scored the window sill of the study: planting it in my overcoat pocket. Riley found it there afterward.

"But Riley knew," he added thoughtfully, "that a man does not carry a penknife in his overcoat pocket."

A chill wind bearing the threat of rain swept over the fields. Miles turned up his overcoat collar. Zane stepped on the starter.

"If you'll come with us," he suggested, "I'm certain we can obtain Niegal's arrest."

He was answered by a slight smile. "If your prophecies are correct," Miles returned, "there will be no arrests and no criminal trials in this district for a long time to come."

He stood back and waved his hand. Charmian pulled on Zane's sleeve.

"Leave him," she whispered. "He can take care of himself well enough."

"How do you know?" asked Zane as they bumped toward the high road.

There was a sisterly pride in her voice as she replied: "He owns that farm. There's a Sikorsky amphibian in the barn."

"An airplane? Can your brother pilot it?" Zane exclaimed.

"Wait and see," Charmian murmured confidently.

Soon, there was a roaring drone over their heads. Zane craned his head out of the window. Banking above him, glittering against a black, wind-driven pile of storm clouds, a metal albatross wheeled toward the north. A lump rose in Zane's throat.

"He leaves you to me," he commented somberly.

Charmian laughed delightfully. "He leaves me in good hands," she declared.

Absorbed by her vivacious eyes and teasing mouth, Zane narrowly escaped running into a truckful of market garden produce.

He regained control of himself and the car and slowed to enter a road which was blocked by a stream of cars. To the right was an open space between two building subdivisions. Across this space, small gray shapes ran swiftly. Zane did not point them out to Charmian, she saw them and cried out softly:

"Look! Look, Zane! What are they?"

"Rats," Zane muttered. He was

worried and drew the car to a halt by the side of the road, opposite a gas station.

"I think," he told Charmian, "you should go with your brother. We may never get out of the city once we arrive."

Her eyes widened. "Why?"

Zane hesitated. "You've heard," he said slowly, "about rats leaving a sinking ship?"

She laughed with difficulty. "That fairy tale?"

"It is founded on scientific fact," Zane explained. "Rats detect the leakage of water, hear the creaking of weakened plates and timbers, long before passengers or crew. They live, you see, in the bowels of the ship."

"Those rats we saw," he went on gravely, "are only a few of the ones we've passed during the last half hour. Rats never come out in the daytime unless something serious is threatening them."

Charmian gazed at him to see if he was serious.

"You're not suggesting that they're town-dwelling rodents fleeing from danger to come?"

Zane nodded.

Charmian tilted her chin. "Nonsense!"

Zane opened the car door for her to step out. "They are," he insisted. "They are the real denizens of the underworld. Only backing up of the waters in abandoned tunnels and in the sewers and spreading of gas would drive them out of their strongholds. They are migrating, like the lemmings of Norway."

The girl leaned back. "I'm going with you," she said firmly. "Miles would have taken me in his plane if he thought for a moment that I wasn't seeing this through with you."

"He didn't realize the danger."

"No?" There was a scornful inflection in her question. "Do you imagine he has sold a billion dollars' worth of real estate on a premonition? He knows the danger as well as you do."

Zane drummed his fingers on the edge of the door.

"Are you getting out or not?" he snapped. "I suppose you have money to see you through?"

"No money at all," Charmian said after catching the purpose on Zane's hard eyes.

He leaned forward and snatched her purse. Opening it, his expression grew relieved.

"You have more than a thousand dollars," he said sharply, and, laying the purse on the running board, stretched his arms into the car.

Charmian fought in silence. Zane locked his arms about hers and drew her out of the car. A gas-station attendant came running up with a grim face.

"Can I help you, lady?" he rapped out to Charmian.

She stood shaking, obviously undecided. Zane hurriedly slid into the front seat and jammed in the gears.

"Your purse!" he shouted at Charmian.

She laid a hand on the edge of the door. The gas-station attendant edged her aside, picking up the purse from the running board. He glared at Zane.

"Come outta that, you dirty scum!"

Zane kicked the accelerator. The car leaped forward, throwing the attendant backward. Zane flashed a glance through the rear window of the car to see Charmian taking her purse from the knight in overalls. He breathed a sigh of relief. She would be able to gain the safety of another city before the metropolis's

exits were blocked by panicked millions. He shifted to high gear and stepped on the gas.

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## CHAPTER IX.

### THE COMMITTEE MEETING.

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**T**RAVELING on, he caught an atmosphere of unrest in the streets. People were carrying bags and piling trunks into automobiles. A fat woman boarded a street car with a hamper tied by string. The string broke, strewing a collection of household utensils over the road. Yet newsboys were crying headlines: "Prothero Says City Safe."

Before every catastrophe, there are always those gifted with a sixth sense, warned by physic messages. Already, people were leaving the city: some of them poor, like the fat woman with the hamper, some of them wealthy, like the occupants of a sporty sedan which was stalled on the opposite side of the street in a traffic jam. The car was piled behind with trunks; the two girls inside were white of face and wrapped in furs. From the loose strap ends hanging from the trunks and the scratches on the enamel of the car, Zane deduced that they had packed and loaded the car in a hurry. Curious, that some should be warned of danger and others be allowed to die! He wondered whether there was a meaning behind it all: whether a Higher Power selected some for saving for this world and others for an exit to the next.

The traffic was heavy. This was natural at five o'clock in the afternoon, yet it seemed heavier than usual. The mayor was not at the city hall. Zane went to the room put aside for the purposes of the

newly created safety council and there found a blond stenographer. She was preparing to leave for the day. With an ill grace, she telephoned a list of members pasted on her directory card.

"The mayor is at his house but he has a dinner engagement," she told Zane.

"Let me talk to him," Zane snapped.

He seized the instrument and found himself connected with the mayor's secretary. The urgency in his voice gained him contact with the great man himself.

"Put your statement before the council to-morrow morning," the mayor replied querulously in answer to Zane's feverish demand for an immediate meeting of the safety committee. "I'll be in the chair."

"You'll be in Hades," said Zane, "if you don't leave the city by to-morrow night. This is Zane Prothero speaking—Zane Prothero, the engineer in charge of safety. When the flood tide sweeps into rivers to-morrow, we're finished."

An angry mutter came over the wire. "But your bulletin to-day assured us of safety."

"I was held prisoner," said Zane, "by real-estate dealers who have tried to unload downtown property before the crash. The bulletin was forged."

A short silence! Then: "I'll be at city hall within fifteen minutes," came the mayor's voice. "Communicate with the rest of the committee."

For the next fifteen minutes, Zane was busy at the switchboard, the stenographer helping him connect the right lines. The mayor arrived first, top-hatted and in a fit of nervous indignation. Zane postponed explanations until two thirds of the committee had arrived.

Then he explained, in brief, telling sentences, just how millions of defenseless men, women and children, were threatened.

"A hostile nation, armed with a hundred bomb-carrying airplanes, could do no more grave hurt than will be done within the next twenty-four hours by the water mains, sewer gases, inflammable waste and explosive mixtures under air-tight streets," he flung at them, pounding his fist on the board-room table. "The very rock on which you've put your trust, which supports skyscrapers a quarter of a mile high, has played its part in accentuating the danger by compressing the fumes of inflammable waste products. There's no 'give' to the land. There's too great a weight on its surface. Instead of blowing up vertically, it will split longitudinally, and your magnificent skyscrapers will be shorn from their foundations."

He paused, looking from one to another, searching the doubtful eyes of those who listened. The door of the board room opened, and a short, stout man entered. Zane clenched his fist. The newcomer was Horlick Niegal.

He came in quietly, stripping off a pair of light-fawn gloves. The mayor turned in his chair.

"Let us ask Mr. Niegal's opinion," he said in a troubled voice. "Mr. Niegal knows more about building problems, drainage and transport, than any one of us here in my estimation. Repeat what you have just told us, Mr. Prothero."

Zane remained silent. There was an inimicable self-assurance on Niegal's placid face which augured little good for Zane's hopes. While he stood, doubtful, one of the committee members recapitulated proceedings of the meeting to the moment.

Niegal shrugged his shoulders. He

took a seat languidly. His small, flesh-incased eyes, scanned the table with an amused glint.

"Whether Mr. Prothero is right or wrong in his dire speculations," he said lightly, "I can assure you of this fact: that publication of his prophecies will do more harm than good. Last week-end, some three million persons left the city in daily vacations, unladen, please note, by baggage. Twenty-five people were killed in the streets. Twenty-two sections of extra trains arrived simultaneously at West and Central Stations. The roads were choked beyond all endurance. Trains ran two hours late; busses six hours late.

"The jam was so prodigious that motorists left their cars in the gutters and fought for standing room on the ferries and tubes. The main roads approaching the city were packed solid with lines of cars forty miles long, moving at a rate of three miles an hour, jammed bumper to bumper." His voice rose slightly while the rest hung on his words.

"There is no possible chance of moving our two million downtown residents to surrounding cities in less than two months. I say nothing of our total population. And even then, many would have to leave their possessions behind them. A prophecy of disaster given now, would panic millions into a deathly rush. There would be looting, killing, arson——"

The mayor turned to Zane. "According to your calculations, the danger will be over by to-morrow night?"

Zane nodded with a sense of helplessness. "After the high tide is expended, there will be a few months of comparative safety."

The mayor pushed back his chair, seeming to take in the committee at a glance. "Therefore, gentlemen,"

he said suavely, "it seems to me that we can best serve the city by going about our usual business and keeping calm. Personally, I am attending a dinner party to-night and do not expect to return to—ah—the city hall until the day after to-morrow."

"A dinner party where?" Zane shot out suddenly. "Your secretary told me where. You are visiting friends out of the city. You will be safe. And you—and you—and you——" he snapped, pointing to each of the committee in turn. "But those will not be safe!" And going to the window, he threw it open and waved his arm over the twinkling lights of the city and down to where idlers thronged about city hall square.

The committee moved uneasily, as one man. Niegal coughed, preparatory to counteracting Zane's influence. He was about to speak when Zane forestalled him.

"The reason," Zane went on loudly, "that we have come to this critical condition is that certain real-estate operators, knowing of the danger to the city, suppressed the facts in order to unload their holdings before the inevitable crash of land values. There is one of these men," he shouted, raising his arm toward Niegal.

Niegal's thin mouth closed like a trap. "Rid——"

A gray-haired committee member leaped to his feet.

Pointing to Niegal, he snapped: "You have been selling downtown property. My brother bought two hundred feet on Kingsley Avenue from you at one half of its usual value."

"Aren't you associated with the Marmon Corporation?" one other member put in suddenly.

Niegal made an involuntary back-

ward movement. Zane followed up his advantage.

"Incidentally," he accused, "Joseph Considine was murdered by this man or at his instigation over a fight for the profits to be made by the city's destruction."

There was a hushed silence. Niegal came forward, his lips twisted in a vicious snarl.

"Before you listen to further accusations," he demanded of the committee at large, "will you telephone to police headquarters and ask for Detective Riley. I think he will tell you something about Prothero——" He left the sentence unfinished, insinuating more than he could say by direct statement.

The mayor moved toward a telephone. Zane made a movement to stop him and desisted. Niegal smoothed his white face.

Those in the room listened to the mayor talking over the phone. By the executive's expression, Zane knew that bad news was coming over the wire. He estimated the distance between himself and the door.

The mayor replaced the receiver. "Detective Riley is out of the city," he said and made a sign to Niegal. "But he has telephoned from long distance——"

Zane did not wait to hear the rest. He had caught the mayor's signal for Niegal to block the doorway. At any other time in his life, he would have remained to face his accusers. But there was one gesture he might yet make to save the city. He bunched himself and leaped toward the door.

As he jumped, he drew back his right fist. Niegal was not quite in the path; nevertheless, Zane hit him. The building promoter stumbled back, handicapping those who would have stopped the fugitive. Zane whipped open the door. A police-

man was standing on guard a few yards down the corridor.

"Officer!" shouted Zane. "Officer!" He pointed back into the room. "Quick! Help!"

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## CHAPTER X.

### ON THE AIR.

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THE policeman drew his baton and charged through the doorway, colliding with those who rushed out. Zane sprinted down the corridor and took the wide marble steps to the ground floor in five bounds. Another policeman was on duty outside the main door to the street. Zane drew himself erect, slowed to a dignified walk, and strolled down the steps. A taxi was standing in the rank to his left. He hailed it.

"To the *Times-Record* radio broadcasting offices!" he ordered. "Step on it!"

The cab driver, thinking that the men who shouted from the city hall steps were also in search of taxis to pay a rush visit to the radio station, chuckled.

"I'll get you there first of all of 'em," he called back over his shoulder. "What's up? More news about these safety funnels?"

"Yes," said Zane truthfully. He looked behind. "Step on it!"

The taxi beat a red light by a fraction of a second and the cross-town traffic swept Zane's pursuers from sight.

They went two blocks before the lights went against them and a police siren sounded behind. Zane leaned through the window between the driver's seat and the rear of the cab.

"Turn east," he snapped, "and circle the block."

Without questions, the driver obeyed. They came into Kingsley Avenue again, and Zane found himself on the tail of his pursuers, in an open lane cleared by the police sirens ahead. The cab roared, barely half a block behind the hunters. The traffic policeman, evidently thinking the cab belonged to the pursuit, let them by. Once a policeman jumped on the running board and held on for a dozen blocks.

"Who are ye chasing?" he shouted.

"An absconding clerk," Zane replied. "I'm from the district attorney's office."

Soon, the policeman bethought himself of his routine duty and dropped off the cab. They shot ahead again.

"Turn right now!" Zane ordered.

The driver shot out of the procession and came to a halt by the curb. Zane leaped out and handed him a twenty-dollar bill. Then he was racing the short half block to the broadcasting offices.

There was a crowd by the door on the eighth floor of the building—pressing into the announcing room. Zane elbowed his way to the side of a hawklike man with graying hair.

"Remember me?" he asked.

The gray-haired man wheeled. "You're Zane Prothero—the chap who brought that cock-and-bull story into the *Times-Record*."

"Still think it's a cock-and-bull story?"

The other hesitated. Then he gripped Zane's arm and pulled him into the studio. "I don't know what to think," he said quickly. "There's something afoot that we can't grasp. People are leaving the city. The wires are jammed with calls about a disaster."

In one corner of the room a sleek-headed young man was mumbling into a microphone. There were a

few instrumentalists nursing their saxophones with an injured air. Two heavy-set men conversed rapidly by the door. A cabinet fixed to the wall over Zane's head suddenly ceased its musical sounds and screamed in a high-pitched whine.

*Zing-g-g-g Zing-g-g-g Zing-g-g-g* whined the cabinet. *Ting-ting-ting.* *Zing-g-g-g Zing-g-g-g Zing-g!*

"Get it?" Zane rapped out. "That's an S O S call from a ship at sea. The storm's blowing onto the southeast coast. The tide's rising. It will flood the drainage mains, block the sewers, increase the pressure of gas."

"What you're telling me——" began the gray-headed man.

"——is that the city must be cleared of people within twelve hours," Zane urged. He dragged the other across the room. "Put me on the air!"

There was a hurried talk with the sleek-haired man. The two heavy-set fellows cleared the saxophonists out of the room.

"Are you dead certain you're right?" demanded the gray-haired man feverishly.

"Sure!" Zane urged.

"Then talk," said the other and closed a switch on the table.

Zane found a microphone in front of him. He drew a deep breath. "Zane Prothero, engineer in charge of the metropolitan safety committee, announcing," he said loudly.

"Don't shout," advised the regular announcer.

Zane moderated his voice.

"A storm is blowing up from the gulf which may precipitate the disaster we have been trying to avoid," he told the microphone. "I advise all listeners to leave the city for the next few days. Tell your friends. Don't rush. The railroads will run extra trains every half hour."

"Every five minutes," intercepted the gray-haired man in an undertone.

"Every five minutes," Zane amended. "Do not try to take more than one piece of personal baggage with you. Choose unfrequented roads out of the city if possible."

"Tell them to take provisions," the gray-haired man advised.

"Take provisions with you, flasks of water and canned goods," Zane's voice went over the ether.

Then the gray-haired man stepped in front of the microphone. "Wells Margo, managing editor of the *Times-Record* talking," he said easily. "Mr. Prothero has just told you why you should leave the city for the next few days. I will now broadcast instructions to all bus drivers, railroad executives, owners of automobiles, and others who can assist the city in this emergency."

With a sigh of relief, Zane turned toward the door of the broadcasting room. His work was done; the rest remained in good hands. Margo was talking clearly and slowly, assembling plans as he spoke. Zane could see a million homes, a million women packing food and drink and their most valued possessions and choosing routes and destinations.

Then this mental picture faded, and he saw three tangible persons enter the studio. They were Niegal, Riley, and Charmian.

Behind them came the mayor and the police commissioner. Apparently, they had all arrived at the studio at the same time, accidentally brought together by Zane's radio broadcast.

Riley stepped forward before the others. Zane allowed himself a little bitter smile. But the detective's hurried whisper wiped the bitterness from his face.

"I ain't saying nothing about what

happened in the country," Riley whispered. "Leave the talkin' to me."

He turned to face the police commissioner.

"There was some mistake about my phone call on the way back from the country," he blurted quickly. "Seems that Mr. Prothero got taken wrong by some people." He eyed the mayor. "I didn't say nothing definite 'cause I was goin' to make an arrest. Didn't want some one to be scared away. The detective bureau wired me that they'd found the finger prints we've been hunting for. Found 'em on a brown envelope the murderer picked up and threw down again, not knowing it was what he killed Considine to get." The quick grateful glance he cast at Charmian indicated the source of his information. "She gave the envelope to Prothero to keep and I got it from him and turned it in to the station.

"The ultraviolet ray picked out the finger prints we wanted—the ones that oughtn't to have been on the envelope. Not," he added half to himself, "that I ever believed in them newfangled things before."

Then he lunged at Niegal: "Let's see *your* fingers!"

Niegal twisted helplessly, his head turned toward the mayor. "This is a frame-up."

Charmian intercepted the commissioner's remonstrations. "I'm sure Niegal killed my uncle," she cried.

Riley was pressing Niegal's finger tips on a strip of plastic material.

"We'll know for certain in a minute," he rumbled.

He compared the strip with a photograph taken from his breast pocket. His lips drew tight; he made an almost imperceptible sign to the commissioner. Niegal, freed of the iron grasp for the moment, leaped

across the room to an oaken door. He wrenched it open, disclosing a closet full of musical instruments and score sheets. He turned like an animal at bay. Then Riley had him in his grip.

Five minutes later, the room was cleared of all except those who directed the city's exodus. The mayor had taken up his position before the microphone and was broadcasting quiet directions. Charmian and Zane descended to the street.

"Now," said Zane, "we have to make our own way out."

The street was packed solid.

"Fools!" Zane muttered. "They'll stay there and rubberneck until the streets blow up under their feet."

"But millions are pouring into the country," Charmian reminded him. "You can't help people who refuse to be helped."

They fought their way to the Central Station. All incoming trains had been stopped. Time-tables were abandoned. It was two hours before they gained standing room in a fifty-car special.

At eleven o'clock next morning, they reached their destination. The railroad ahead and behind was a line of coaches and engines running coupling to coupling. A special guard whom Zane approached estimated the number of people who had left their homes at approximating four million.

"The city's practically deserted," he swore.

"There's one person who hasn't left the city," Zane remarked as he stood outside the telegraph office. "Hear the messages coming through?"

*Click—clickety-click*, went the telegraph bug beyond the frosted-glass windows.

Zane waited until he picked up part of a message.

"A newspaper reporter on the job," he told Charmian. "He's probably standing side by side with a telegraph operator in the Liberty Square Western Union office watching the streets below ripping up in mile lengths."

"Is that what he says?" Charmian whispered.

"His actual message," Zane said gravely, "was: 'Kingsley in flames.'"

The telegraph instrument all at once stopped clicking. After a moment, it started again with a different timbre. The practiced ear can always distinguish between operators.

"Some one else has taken up the job of sending news," Zane reported. "Message coming through from a coast-guard station: 'The city's going up in explosions.'"

He walked to the edge of the station platform and looked along the crowded railroad. Charmian hung on his arm.

"Isn't it terrible?" she whispered.

"Perhaps," Zane replied cryptically. "At least, those who are left are working or dying at their job. The four million helpless have been saved. And maybe a new and better city will spread from the site of the old one."

"You're hard," said Charmian.

"I'm hungry," said Zane. "Hungry for food and hungry for you."

She pulled him round to face her. "Let's follow Miles to Mexico!" she pressed.

Zane tightened his arm round her shoulders. She yielded sweetly. There was promise in her bronzed-tinted eyes. There was also alarm as he pushed her to arm's length.

"You heard," he said, "that reporter on the telegraph, sending messages until the building gave way with him? He was on the job." He waved his arm around the horizon, including the lines of trains and thousands of men, women and children who crammed the windows and hung from the rods.

"There's four million people to be fed and sheltered and housed," he said sternly. "The men who do that job are engineers. I'm one of them."

"You mean," gasped Charmian, "that you'll have to stay here until—until they're looked after?"

Zane nodded. He was stamping down the temptation that beckoned so desirably. Charmian—and Mexico. His lips were white.

Then Charmian smiled. "Don't you think," she suggested, "that I could find a job here, too?"

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In Next Week's Issue, "FAITH AND A THIEF,"  
by JOHN FOLAND.

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### HIS OWN BOOMERANG

**T**HE trouble with having a revolver in the house to kill burglars with is that it is often shot off at the wrong person and kills a beloved member of the family.

At New Hope, Pennsylvania, a doctor conceived the idea of a spring gun attached to a closet door, which would go off when the night prowler opened it.

Unfortunately for the doctor, he had forgotten the trap was set, and, when he opened the door, he was killed himself by his own invention.



# HER SECRET WITH DEATH

By DONALD G. McDONALD

*As she bent over to kiss the dead man, she hoped for a miracle.*

**J**OHN BOTANIO was unable to drive to the front door of the address he was seeking because of a torn-up street, so he slammed on the brakes a block away from his destination, climbed out and banged the auto door viciously behind him. Indeed, if the windows of his new special sedan had not been of bullet-proof glass, one or more would have been shattered at the impact.

He strode along the street with his jaw thrust forward and his eyes glittering; and, if any of his intimates had come upon him at this moment, they would have sworn that he was out for blood. Further, he was mumbling to himself as if he were unable to contain, longer, the anger and jealousy that seethed within him and was permitting some of it to escape through the safety valve of speech and profanity.

Soon, he came to the address he sought—a narrow, three-story rooming house—and he leaped up the steps two at a time. Ignoring the bell, he pushed inside and ascended the stairs to the second floor. No noise accompanied his present movements, and he had stopped his mumbling, for it seemed to be his intention to take somebody by surprise.

At the head of the stairs, he paused and exhibited just a shade of uncertainty; but only for a moment, then he continued his progress to a certain door at the left of the landing. He knocked and stood close to the knob, the muscles of his tall, heavy body drawn tense—waiting.

The soft voice of a woman asked who was there.

“A telegram, miss,” replied “Trigger” John Botanio in a strained pitch that threatened to crack at any moment.

A key scraped in the lock, the knob turned, and, the next instant, the man stood inside the room, his back against the door.

Facing him, her black eyes wide with terror, her right hand grasping a heavy center table for support, stood the one that Trigger had come to see.

Doris Melga had recently passed her twenty-fourth birthday. She was trim, dainty, and attractive, with lustrous, honest eyes that were of such a deep cast of brown they appeared to be black. In height, she was under five feet; but this point was exaggerated because of her slender figure. Until six months ago, she had been employed at the ticket window of one of the large downtown theaters where her decision to leave had been received with actual dismay. “For where,” the proprietor had said, “are we go-

ing to find another honest girl as pretty as Doris?”

For a moment, it seemed as if the hard glitter in Trigger’s eyes had softened; but, in the next instant, his eyes burned with a fiercer fire than before.

“So—I’ve found you!”

She gasped and put her free hand to her throat. “Why did you hunt me?” she whispered.

“Why? You ask me why? After goin’ around with me steady for three months and then skippin’ out on me with never a word—leavin’ your job at the theater—leavin’ your old room—you ask me why I tried to find you? Well, I’ll tell you. I want to know why you did it! That’s what I came here for—to hear from your own lips why you played me such a dirty trick!”

“But surely, John,” said the girl, “you must know—you must suspect.”

“Yeah, I know some things—suspect some thing, too; but I want you t’ tell me for yourself. The truth, now!”

The girl hesitated. She knew the type of man before her; but she hadn’t known until her married brother, a city detective, had warned her six months ago. Before that time, she had never suspected that John Botanio was anything other than what he claimed to be—a commission merchant. When she had found that he was one of the principals in a notorious gang, she had taken the advice of her brother and fled—away from the theater, away from her old room and into another part of the great city where she hoped and prayed she would be able to remain undiscovered.

And now he had found her! What would she tell him? She knew the terrible jealousy of the man; and his eyes, staring at her there from the

door, which he barred, warned her to be cautious. And what was that thing he had in his pocket—something that he was fingering constantly through the cloth of his coat while he waited for her reply?

The bare suspicion of what the article might be caused her words to choke up in her throat. She coughed, hating herself for her fear, and again tried to speak.

"John, I—I heard——" She could not go on.

"Yes, yes," he snarled, "what did you hear?"

"I heard you were a gangster." Again she was frightened, this time, by her frankness.

"Oh, you did, eh? And who told you?"

She couldn't answer that—truthfully. Trigger knew she had a brother but he had never asked her the nature of her brother's business, and, somehow, she had never told him. That had been one comforting thought to her after she had learned Trigger's identity—that she hadn't told him Ed was a city detective. Desperate trouble might have resulted, after she ran away. And now, if she told the truth, she felt certain that Trigger would go out and plan some terrible vengeance, for he was just that sort of a man—passionate, jealous, and always ready for a fight, but concealing these things, ordinarily, under a mask of suavity and soft speech.

"A friend told me," was her careful reply.

"I see." The words clipped from his lips like chopped ice. Then, a moment later, he added: "And, of course, that was the *only* reason you shook me."

"What do you mean?"

He laughed—a short, hard laugh. "It wasn't, of course, any other man?"

She could feel the blood leave her face. Unconsciously her eyes sought the clock that stood on the end table. "Any other man." Could it be possible that Trigger had heard of Allan Drake, the one and only man who had ever found a place in her heart—the only man she had ever loved? Trigger, she had looked upon solely as a friend, until Ed's disclosure; but Allan she had loved from the moment she met him three months ago. He lived up on the third floor with his brother, and the two boys earned their living as singers at local theaters, socials and parties.

Allan was coming for her this very afternoon—to take her for a ride in the flivver that he and his brother had acquired recently. At two thirty, he had said, and it was two twenty now.

Trigger left his position at the door and approached her. In spite of herself, she shrank back. That was unfortunate, for her obvious, though unexpressed repugnance was like a red flag to a bull.

"Well, was it?" he snarled.

Her mind was in such a whirl that she had forgotten his question. "What?" she asked weakly.

"Was it another man?"

"N-no! Of course not, John."

"Don't try pussyfootin'," he warned, and she could see that his rage was growing by leaps and bounds. His cheeks were an unhealthy color and his dark eyes glared.

"I'm not. Oh, won't you please go?"

But he persisted and came closer. His jaw was set. "There is another man, isn't there?"

"I told you before—no!"

"You lie!" He reached for one of her slim, white arms, but she jerked away. Her heart was pound-

ing in terror for the gleam of madness was in Trigger's burning eyes. The mask he wore habitually, of suavity and soft speech, had vanished, and the thing that was left was not a man but a veritable wild animal.

"I know," he leered, backing off a pace, to the girl's intense but momentary relief. "I know all about it. And a 'friend' told me, too—see? I hear you're goin' around with one or the other of those Drake boys—those singers. I hear you're practically engaged t' one of 'em." His voice had been rising higher and higher as the words tumbled out. Now he shot out his hand and gripped her arm before she could prevent him.

"Listen, cutie! Listen good! You ain't goin' t' marry no other fella, see? No girl's goin' t' give me the sort of a deal you did and get away with it. I can love and I can hate just as well—maybe better—and no song gargler is goin' t' bust in between you and me!"

Then came one of those startling and swift transitions peculiar to temperaments of his kind. His eyes softened; his voice deepened and became mellow, vibrant with a new emotion. It was like the calm that precedes the cyclone.

"Come on, Doris, be friends with me again. Remember the swell times we used t' have—the dinners I used t' take you to? I got more money now. I can give you a bigger time. You can have anything you want. How about it, cutie?"

She shook her head. "No," she said, "I could never be friends with a gangster. I don't think I can ever forgive you for deceiving me, for permitting me to think that you were in a legitimate business. Now, won't you please go away?"

Trigger's face grew livid, and his

eyes narrowed to mere pin points that shot their fire from under his shaggy brows.

"Oh, so I'm not good enough, eh? You think you'll throw me over for this warbler, do you? Say!" Here he lowered his voice and shot the words out one at a time, with heavy emphasis on each. "You'll never marry him!"

The jealous rage shaking the man was fearful to behold, and Doris threw a hand to her lips to stifle an outcry.

"W-what do you mean?" she cried, her lips quivering. "You wouldn't—surely you wouldn't—do anything!"

He didn't answer for several moments but stood motionless save for the fingers of his right hand which continued to caress that sinister bulge in his coat pocket. His eyes were on the girl with the fixed regard of a snake about to strike, and the fleeting impression darted across Doris's mind that, if she had started to run from him, he would have drawn the gun and killed her. Then she observed that his gaze had shifted from her eyes to a point lower down.

"Where'd you get that necklace? You never had them beads when you was goin' with me!"

"I bought it," she told him, hoping that her lie would avert the danger that seemed to draw closer; but her words were stammered and unconvincing.

"*He* bought it for you, didn't he?" Trigger stepped toward her.

"No! Oh, no!" Her voice would have ended in a scream if his hand had not been flung across her mouth. He held her in a viselike grip while he seized the beads and tried to tear them from her neck. But they were strung on a wire and before the latter broke and the colored balls

went rolling over the floor, she had all but strangled.

Trigger's strong fingers crushed on those that came away in his hand and he dropped them into his pocket; then, he flung Doris away.

Dazed and gasping for breath, she sank to the davenport. She lay with her eyes closed, and the only sound that came to her when she had recovered enough to heed, was the man's heavy breathing and the ticking of the little clock on the end table.

By and by, he spoke. "That'll show you, baby, that I ain't kiddin'. Now, I'm goin' t' beat it. Jus' remember what I told you a minute ago. You ain't goin' to marry him! The first time I lay my eyes on them Drake boys, it's goin' to be too bad. Yeah, I'll lay 'em both out, to play safe."

Then—Trigger didn't know that these brothers lived on the third floor—right in this house! Doris felt a sense of relief. She had feared that the gangster would go upstairs after leaving her, and the contemplation of what this madly jealous man might do had filled her with a horrible fear.

True, Allan Drake, her fiancé, wasn't up there now, but his brother was. Allan, she knew, had gone out into the quiet and solitude of the country to work out the lyrics for a new song. He often did that. And to-day, when he had finished his work, he was coming back to get her and take her for a ride, then for a little supper and, lastly, her place of employment. She had found a job on the night shift of a large bindery.

She saw that Trigger was about to leave. He took a step toward the door when, suddenly, upon it sounded a knock.

The girl sprang to her feet while

the man backed away from the entrance.

The knock was repeated.

Trigger, with his eyes fastened on her face, saw her agitation. Obviously, he had read the thought that had flashed into her mind, and he had seen her quick glance at the clock and had interpreted that correctly, as well. His eyes were snapping. "Well, tell him to come in," he whispered.

Again—the rapping!

"Come in," faltered Doris.

The door opened and a tall, fair-haired youth stood on the threshold. He stared in surprise at Trigger and then his gaze turned to the girl.

"My brother just phoned and wanted me to tell you that——" He stopped abruptly and advanced a foot or two into the room as if to examine closer something he had seen.

"W-why, Doris, you're hurt! There's blood on your neck and red marks. What happened? Isn't there——"

"You're one of the Drake boys, aren't you?" snapped Trigger, edging toward the newcomer.

"Yes," admitted the other. "And who are you?"

"How'd you get here?" countered the gangster.

"Walked from my room upstairs. What's that to you? Doris, did this man put those marks on your throat?"

Trigger silenced her reply with a glance.

"That's all right, Doris," said the fair-haired youth, clenching his fists, "I understand." He whirled on Trigger. "Get out of here, you scum! Get out qu——"

Trigger's hand dropped to his side coat pocket. Doris saw the movement, screamed and threw herself on the gangster's arm.

"Get away!" he snarled and swung her backward with one vicious sweep of his arm. She tripped, fell, struck her head against the edge of the heavy table in the center of the room, and everything went black.

She returned to her senses to discover Trigger looking anxiously out of the window at the street below. Her head ached frightfully, and twice she attempted to sit up before she was successful.

In that instant, she saw the body of the fair-haired youth stretched out at her feet, face down on the hardwood floor. His arms were extended on either side of his body; his hands were clenched, and there was a hole in the back of his head from which blood had been flowing; it formed a little pool on the wood.

At the cry which came from her lips, Trigger whirled and ripped out an oath. "Shut up, you!" he snarled. He hurried to her, leaping over the body that lay in his path.

"Get up!" He seized her roughly by the arm and dragged her to a chair. She went into a limp heap and moaned. Speech, at the moment, was impossible.

His hard hand seized her by the chin and jerked her head up.

"Listen," snapped Trigger, his eyes dancing in nervousness, "you're goin' to help me. Help me, understand? Now that things have started, I'm goin' to wind 'em up right. Listen to me!

"No one heard the shot. I had a silencer on my gat. Oh, you needn't stare at me like that. I killed him. He had it comin', the meddler. But he's only one, and now I'm goin' to get the other brother while I'm about it. I don't know which is your lover and I don't care. You wouldn't tell the truth if I was to

ask you. But I'm goin' to get out of this mess with a whole skin myself, and I know a mighty swell way to do it.

"When this guy came in, he spilled the beans that he and his brother live upstairs. All right, that's fine. I'm goin' to tote this guy's body back to his room, then I'm goin' to fire a shot without the silencer and beat it back here. Yeah, and I'm goin' to wipe the gun clean of finger prints. I'm not forgettin' a thing. See?" He broke the weapon, removed the discharged cartridge and dropped it in his pocket; then he inserted a fresh one from a supply he apparently carried in his vest pocket.

"There," he continued, clicking the revolver shut. "Now, when I fire the shot upstairs, the cops'll find one empty shell instead of two which might not look so good to 'em.

"I'm not trustin' you either. I'm goin' to lock you in this room until I get back. If you stick your head out the window and scream while I'm upstairs, I'll be down here faster'n anybody can get to help you and I'll kill you, understand—kill you!

"While you've been asleep here, I've looked over the house. There ain't a soul in it except you and me and this stiff. But when I fire the shot upstairs, the neighbors are goin' to come a-runnin' and pretty soon—the police. When the cops, or anybody else comes in here to ask you how come and all about what you know, you're goin' to tell 'em just what I want you to. Why? Because I'm goin' to be parked just inside the door of that closet over there, listenin' to every word you say and watchin' every move you make. And believe me, sister, before I'll let 'em get their mitts or

the drop on me, I'll kill a half a dozen if I have to—you among 'em."

Each word seared into the girl's brain like a hot iron. In spite of the after effects of the blow which had knocked her unconscious, she heard and understood every detail of the ghastly plan. What in the world ever made him think he could succeed in a ruse like this? A thought occurred to her.

"You beast! You skunk!" she cried. The words sounded strange, coming from her lips. "You can't frame a man like that. I see what you're trying to do—frame this boy's brother!"

"Oh, no? And why not?"

"Because the brother isn't in the house. He hasn't been since noon."

"What about it? You're goin' to swear you heard him runnin' down the stairs and that you stepped out of your room and saw him on the way to the first floor—runnin'."

"Never!" cried Doris.

"Oh, but you will. You're goin' to do just like I say."

"But the brother may have an alibi." She said this, hoping that it hadn't occurred to Trigger and that it would dissuade him from his purpose. In her own heart, she knew that Allan Drake would have no suitable alibi. He had simply driven out into the country, alone. He would work on his lyrics and then return. His course, either way, would lead him through a section of the city where he would be unlikely to meet any acquaintance.

"I'll chance that," said Trigger grimly. "Now, you shut up! Your job is to listen to me and do what you're told in order to save your own life. Have you got a phone?" His eyes searched the room.

"No," said Doris.

"Good. If the cops ask you why

you didn't send in the phone call—that's the reason. You were excited, too. If they want to know which way the brother ran—front door or back—you don't know that. If they want to know whether any one was in here callin' on you today, nobody was. You can drop a hint, too, that you've heard the brothers scrappin' between themselves for some time past and was always afraid they'd do somethin' just like this. Got those things in your head? Yeah, I know you have, in spite of your dumb looks. Come on, cut out that cryin'!" While talking, he had taken the key from the single entrance to the room; now, he moved toward the body.

Doris flung herself to the floor at the side of the murdered man.

Trigger started in surprise. "Hey," he cried, "what's the idea?"

She looked up at him out of eyes that streamed tears. "I—I just want to k-kiss him," she said, "before you take him away. He was a real friend—a wonderful boy!" Her voice broke in a sob. "Besides—he died—you killed him while he was trying to help me. Are you such a cad that you can't permit me this?"

Trigger made a gesture. It might be interpreted as a magnanimous gesture—as much as to say, "Why, sure, go ahead. If it gives you any satisfaction to kiss a dead man, you can." But no sound came from his lips. Instead, from the other coat pocket, he produced a second gun; while the girl drew the lifeless arms to the side of the fair-haired youth, clasped his hands in hers, and bent low to press a kiss on the back of one clenched fist, Trigger made sure that all the chambers were loaded in his reserve weapon.

When she arose, tottering, and then fell back into the chair she had left, he stooped, picked up the form

in his strong arms and went to the door. He disengaged one hand, turned the knob and stood listening to make sure his progress would be unobserved by any one who might have entered the house since his earlier investigation. Then he stepped into the hall, closed the door behind him, and locked it.

No one saw him as he ascended the steps to the third floor with his burden and no one saw him descend after he had executed the first part of his plan.

This time, when he reentered the room, he did not lock the door but closed it, and, in the sight of the girl, fitted her key on to his own ring. "I might as well," he said. "After this, I'm your manager. Take it from me, kid, when the big powwow is over with the cops, you're goin' with me when I leave."

Beside herself, Doris struck the key ring from his hand and sent it spinning to a corner of the davenport.

"Oh!" she cried, wringing her hands, "you devil! You monster! How can you breathe, live? Why doesn't Heaven strike you down? How can you stand there and grin when you've killed a man—a fine man—because of your vile temper?"

"Kid," he said, "I'm accustomed to have my own way. Hello! Listen! Yes, there they come! Remember, you're tellin' 'em what I've told you to tell or this'll be your last day on earth. Another thing—if any one takes it into his fool head to start investigatin' this room and the closet where I'm goin' to be listenin' and watchin', it's goin' to be up to you to stop 'em. I'll not be taken, y'understand? Never!"

Three heavy knocks sounded on the door of a second-floor room at 462 Clinton Street.

Doris Melga, acting on faintly whispered instructions that came from the closet at her back, arose, opened a magazine and laid it spread out, over the arm of her chair. With nervous steps, every one of which seemed to call forth a special effort, she approached and opened the door.

"Hello, sis. You know Tom, don't you?"

"Yes," she said. "Come in."

"Well," continued Ed Melga when he and his teammate had seated themselves, "Tom and I were at headquarters when some neighbor phoned that there had been a murder at this address; so, naturally, we came. We've just looked things over upstairs and they don't seem to appear so sweet for a fella by the name of Allan Drake. He's your particular friend too, sis, isn't he?"

"I love him," she replied brokenly.

"We're lucky to have you on the scene," continued her brother. "Outside of yourself, there doesn't seem to be any one else who was in the house at the time of the shooting. There are plenty of your neighbors in the houses that lie around here who tell us of hearing the shot and most of 'em came running to their doors and windows. So far, though, we haven't found any one who saw the murderer escape." He paused, as if he expected that his sister would fill in something at this point.

Doris was calling upon every ounce of strength, every bit of self-control she possessed to pass to her brother, Ed, an outward appearance of calm. Fortunately, Ed was aware of her affection for Allan Drake, though he knew the latter not at all, save from the glowing descriptions she had given him from time to time. For that reason, he would suppose that any agitation she might exhibit would be natural under the circum-

stances. Though Ed was married and had a family, the tie between himself and his "kid sister" as he called her, was strong. She had kept few secrets from him but now she must lie to him, deceive him or see him die before her eyes.

"How about it, sis? Suppose you give Tom and me your story in your own way. Yes, I know this is tough on you, kid. It's a queer twist of fate, isn't it, that I should be askin' you to sort of testify against the man you love?"

Doris could only nod. She pressed her handkerchief to her eyes and then sat in silence for a moment, looking down at the floor. The hardwood was perfectly clean. Trigger had wiped up the blood carefully, before her brother and Tom had come downstairs.

"Come on, sis, buckle to it. I know that you'd never protect the man if he's a murderer, much as you might love him. Just tell me the truth, as you've always done. The truth can't hurt, you know."

Oh, the irony of it! The truth couldn't hurt? Why, the truth right now would kill—kill Ed, Tom—probably herself—kill them all in a twinkling. For back there in the shadows of the closet behind her chair, stood Trigger, his loaded revolver ready, his ears and his eyes straining to catch the slightest word or gesture that would betray his presence. She might wink at her brother in a manner that would indicate to him that all was not right, but she knew his face would betray his surprise. Even then, what could he do? She couldn't permit him to rise from his seat and approach the closet. One such motion and the hidden gun behind her would spit flame and death.

No, she would lie. She had to. It meant the sacrifice of herself to

the wretch, for Trigger had said he meant to take her with him when the coast was clear; but better so than to see her brother die before her eyes. She was hoping, praying that something might occur to solve this hideous problem, but that was like expecting a miracle.

Slowly, carefully, lest her tongue run away with her and precipitate a tragedy, she told the great lie. Agitation and nervousness marked her recital, but she hoped her brother and his teammate would attribute it to the natural repugnance she must feel at uttering such fatal testimony against her lover. When the last word came from her lips, she all but collapsed. The next instant, her heart leaped in terror when her brother, arose from his chair, strode across the room to her side and patted her sympathetically on the shoulder.

"You say, Miss Melga," interposed Tom, speaking for the first time since he had entered the room, "you say that you don't know whether Allan left the house by the front door or the back."

She nodded.

"And after you stood out in the hallway there and watched him disappear from your sight on the lower floor, did you return immediately to your room?"

"Yes," she said.

"And you didn't leave it again?"

"No; I have been here ever since."

Her questioner sank back in the cushions. "Well, then," he said, with an air of finality in his words, "he surely couldn't have hidden in here."

Surely, Ed and Tom must have seen the color leave her face at these words. How thankful she was that she had answered as she had. Otherwise, they would have proposed a search and she would have

had no logical means of dissuading them from their purpose.

"Of course not," she forced herself to say.

Ed, during Tom's questions, had been standing at his sister's side, giving her little reassuring pats. Suddenly, she became aware of the continued pressure of his hand and realized that he was bending his head to look at something.

"Sis, how did your neck get cut?"

It was the greatest shock that, so far, she had experienced. But she went through it with a steadiness of nerve and poise of manner that would have done credit to a Bernhardt. The only thing which might have betrayed her inner feelings was the moment of hesitancy that preceded her answer.

"I—I was lying down on the davenport, when the shot was fired. I sprang up quickly, and somehow my beads caught under that end table."

"Yeah," corroborated Tom, "some of 'em are lying around now." He stretched out a broad-toed shoe and kicked one of the little balls so that it rolled across the room and struck the wall a foot from the closet door.

"But surely," persisted her brother, "that couldn't have cut your neck like that. My gracious, girl, it's a real cut!"

"Of course, it could," he replied. She must get any suspicion out of his mind at all cost. "The beads were strung on wire, not thread."

"Oh, I see." Ed left her now, recrossed the room and threw himself into his former seat while a great weight lifted from Doris's heart.

"One more question, sis, before we go," said her brother. "You haven't seen anything of that rotter, Botanio, have you? You know—the fellow I tipped you off to as being a big bum and gangster in private

life while he posed as a real gent in public?"

Of the three in the room, she was closest to the closet door. Was that a faint movement she had heard? Oh, why had Ed uttered these words? Her very skin crawled in her abject terror—her fear of consequences! Now Trigger would know who was responsible for tipping her off, for telling her the truth about him. Trigger would never let this go unavenged. A sane, normal man might, of course, but not this beast in the closet. Never! Would this torture never cease? Would Ed and Tom never leave her? Her own plight would be nothing compared to this situation.

She was shaking her head negatively.

And now Tom was speaking once more. "Was Allan in here to see you to-day?"

"No."

Suddenly, Ed got to his feet. "Come on, Tom. Sis, we'll be going now. It's a pretty clear case you've made out against Allan. What you've got to do is to put him out of your mind entirely. Forget him as if he never had existed. No man who would murder his brother as he did is fit for any girl—much less my own sister. Well, Tom and I'll turn this town upside down to find Allan and we'll get him. Don't you worry." He put his arm across her shoulders, drew her close and planted a kiss on her forehead. "That's not from me," he said. "That's from my kid. He's crazy about you. Said next time I saw you to kiss you for him."

With parting smiles that both detectives meant to be cheering, they left her and went thumping down the stairway in their heavy shoes. When their backs were turned, Doris seized the door to prevent her-

self from falling. The after effects had set in. She had borne up bravely in their presence, to save their lives. Now that they were out of immediate danger, all her strength left her.

She swung the door shut, swayed for a brief moment, and fell to the floor.

Trigger, out of his hiding place now, with the broad grin of victory on his face, picked her up and laid her on the davenport. She was conscious but she did not protest or resist. She was too weak physically to raise a hand; too distraught mentally, to sort and find words to utter.

"Swell, kid," he said. "You were simply swell!" He patted her unresisting arm in a perfect ecstasy of delight. "I'll see that you have everything you want; autos, wraps, dresses, jewelry—everything, y'understand. Now, come on, buck up a little. Here, drink some of this." He offered her his flask, which he fished out of his hip pocket.

She moved her head from side to side.

"Aw, sure, just a nip. It'll fix you up swell."

The front door downstairs banged shut. Trigger leaped to the window and cautiously looked out. He saw the two detectives swing down the street, and he smacked fist against palm in the exuberance of his feelings.

"How you feelin', kid? You're lookin' better. Come on, try to get to your feet. That's the stuff. Sure. You're all right now. You don't need to pack any bag or nothin', because I'll see that you get what you need, right away."

"I've got to rest a bit," she told him, and he looked at his watch.

"All right, then. We're not havin' any more visitors to-day, so I'll just

sit down here beside you and have a swallow of this stuff myself. Maybe you think it wasn't hot in that closet. Whew!" He got out a great handkerchief of checkered blue silk and mopped his perspiring face. He laughed. There was no mirth in it; it was just a mockery. "You know, kid—that time your brother left his chair and started across the room—I almost let him have it. I thought he was headin' for the closet." And so he talked on and on.

Doris, forced to listen, could not shake off her wonderment at the dual personality of this man. He was a totally different being, now, from the one she had known six months ago. The mask was torn entirely away. Not a vestige of the soft speaking, quiet youth remained. She shuddered involuntarily. Like most women, she looked upon a snake as the most repellent, repulsive living thing on the face of the earth; yet she would have preferred to have a boa-constrictor coiled at her side than this serpent in man's form.

In ten minutes, he arose and took her by the arm. She stood up and walked with him to the door. He opened it and waited for her to pass.

"Stick 'em up, Trigger!"

Ed and Tom suddenly loomed from the shadows of the hallway. It was the former who had uttered the command and who jammed the muzzle of his service revolver into the ribs of the gangster.

"All right, Tom. You can search him now. One move out of you, Trigger, and you'll cheat the hot seat. How about it, Tom, anything good?"

"Perfectly swell!" enthused the other detective. "Look here! Here's the rest of that string of beads and here's an empty shell that I reckon'll

fit the gun on the floor upstairs. Yeah, and here's the gat he must have had trained on us every second we were in your sister's room. I still think you were a darn fool, Ed, to have walked up to your sister to pat her that time. I expected a gat to bowl you over any second!"

A burst of profanity came from Trigger's lips. "You fools!" he yelled, beside himself in his rage at this sudden upset to his plans. "You haven't got a shred of evidence against me!"

"Oh, no?" snapped Ed. "Guess again, big boy. We've got the finest evidence you ever set your eyes on. How about it, Tom? Isn't that so?"

"Grand evidence," affirmed Tom. "You discovered it, Ed. You show him. I've got him covered, too."

Ed reached in his vest pocket and took out one of the beads that had fallen from the broken string. "Trigger," he said, "do you know where we found that?"

The gangster's lower jaw sagged perceptibly. It appeared that he was at a loss for speech or profanity. Nevertheless, Ed seemed to think that the desire was there even though Trigger couldn't express it, for he said:

"In one of the clenched hands of the murdered lad. I'll say that Providence stepped in and took care of things. It was just like a miracle

that he should have clutched up this bead for the last act of his life. When we discovered it and then came down to my sister's room and found 'em scattered all over the floor, you can bet we were suspicious right off the bat. And when, in addition to this, we spotted a full key ring lying in the corner of the davenport, with an automobile ignition key among 'em, we were certain somebody was hangin' around pretty near at hand. So we figured this would be the safest way to get the murderer—let him think we had gone away, then come back on tip-toe and lay for him.

"I'll just bet you, Trigger, that my sister'll be glad to give us a revised version of her story, now that she knows you're in good, safe hands, won't you, sis?"

"I certainly will," said Doris. "Ed, I hoped it would happen like this. I prayed it would, but I felt that I was praying for a miracle. I did so want you to open the poor fellow's hand and I was afraid you wouldn't. You see, Ed, I pushed that bead in his clenched fingers before Trigger carried the body upstairs—when Trigger let me kiss Allan's brother. It was the only clew I could give you and even that might have failed if this snake had thought of picking up the beads that spilled over the floor in my room."

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Coming Next Week,  
"THREE BUTTONS AND A TOOTHPICK,"  
by M. I. H. ROGERS.

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#### LIQUOR IN THE PARKS

ONE faction of London wants to drink its beer or what-have-you out of doors, beneath the trees that grow and flourish in the public parks. Mr. George Lansbury, commissioner, has been considering granting liquor licenses with park concessions, although another faction of London is very much agitated by this project.



*His freedom was just one more ruse in the trap of the law.*

By JOHN JAY  
CHICHESTER

## “Two-three”—Free

Synopsis of Preceding Chapters.

**M**AXWELL SANDERSON writes to Lefkowitz and asks him to be in the auction room of the Acme Merchandising Company in Atlantic City because he wants to sell him some jewels. Clark is to go in Sanderson's place. Lefkowitz goes to Atlantic City, and Blodgett and Miss Doyle and Sol Metzger follow.

Lefkowitz is unable to connect with Clark because he is being shadowed. Then, by a trick thought up by Miss Doyle, Clark is arrested. Sanderson reads of Clark's arrest. He goes to Atlantic City.

Under guise of a reporter, he is allowed to talk to Joe Church in the police station. Sanderson asks Church to deliver a magazine to Clark in return for twenty dollars. However, Church tells the authorities about it when he discovers that Sanderson had given him only ten dollars.

(BACK NUMBERS ARE EASILY PROCURED.)

### CHAPTER XI.

#### BLODGETT'S PLAN.

**W**HEN, after three or four minutes, the Atlantic City chief of detectives hadn't come downstairs, Peter Blodgett pushed his way through the entrance door of the police-head-

quarters building to wait outside in the fresh air. He stood on the top-most step, rocking his heavy bulk on his heels, thumbs hooked into the armholes of his vest.

“Now, if I was in Sanderson's place,” he ruminated, “what would be the first logical move I'd make?”

He was prodding his imagination

in this direction when he became vaguely aware of some sort of a commotion, that was taking place within the police station, but he paid no particular attention to it. In fact, Blodgett gave it no thought whatever, other than to hope that it was nothing that would detain Grigsby, the local detective chief. Grigsby had invited him around the corner with the promise of a really good drink, said to be a part of a pre-War stock of excellent liquor belonging to a personal friend. With practically no sleep since Thursday, Blodgett felt that a drink or two might be exactly what he needed to speed up his mental processes. His brain felt as weary as his body, and that, most emphatically, was no proper state for him to be in when matching wits with the Noiseless Cracksman.

Perhaps a minute had passed when Patrolman Kenny, who had come rushing excitedly from the cell room and up the police headquarters stairs, now came rushing down again.

"Where's that fellow, Blodgett?" Kenny shouted at the desk sergeant. "Grigsby wants him upstairs—quick. Grigsby said that he'd be waiting down here."

The desk sergeant was talking on the telephone.

"Noticed him a couple of minutes ago. Maybe that's him standing out there on the steps." He craned his neck for a better view through the large glass panel of the entrance doorway. "Yep, that's Blodgett. What's all the excitement about, Kenny?"

But Patrolman Kenny didn't take the time to explain. He plunged for the door and swung it open.

"Mr. Blodgett!" he cried. "Chief Grigsby wants you should come up to his office right away."

It was the patrolman's tone rather than the words of his message that spun Peter Blodgett around on one heel, startled and apprehensive.

"Yeah?" he barked. "What's the matter? My prisoner, Clark—is that it?"

Patrolman Kenny jerked his head in assent. "You see, sir, it was like this: a newspaper reporter from New York—but I haven't got time to explain. Chief Grigsby has given me orders to hot-foot it over town and see if I can find——"

Peter Blodgett's face had become apoplectic in the rush of blood to his face. Out shot his hand to clasp detaining fingers about the uniformed officer's arm.

"Has Clark escaped?" he demanded hoarsely. "Is that what's happened?"

"Oh, nothing like that, Mr. Blodgett! Not on your life! Clark's safe enough in his cell. An effort was made to get a message to him. Grigsby'll tell you all about it. I've got to move fast——" And, leaving the sentence suspended in mid-air, Patrolman Kenny was galloping down the steps and up the street in blundering search of the fictitious staff correspondent of the *New York Globe*.

Peter Blodgett flung himself back into the building and took the steps in a ponderous rush, three steps at a time. He was breathless when he had completed his climb and burst into Grigsby's office.

"Yeah?" he snapped. "What—what's happened?"

Grigsby appeared to be unconcerned; but this impression was created by the fact that he appeared to be browsing idly through the pages of a magazine. He flicked over another page before he raised his eyes.

"I'm trying to find out what would have happened, or might have hap-

pened, if they'd got away with it. Here!" Grigsby passed the magazine to Blodgett. "Maybe you're better at this sort of thing than I am. See if you can figure it out."

"See if I can figure out what?" roared Peter Blodgett, recovering the normal use of his voice.

"Didn't Patrolman Kenny tell you? We've got a prisoner by the name of Joe Church who's been good copy for the papers. We've been letting the reporters have their own way with Joe Church."

"What's that got to do?"

"I'm telling you, ain't I?" snapped Chief Grigsby. "A guy who said he was a newspaperman from New York breezed in here this afternoon—not more than half an hour ago—and wanted to buzz Joe Church. We let him, just as we've been letting all the others. Well, to boil it all down, he slips Joe Church that magazine and a piece of change and tells him to ease it into Clark's cell."

"That wasn't any newspaper reporter," shouted Blodgett. "Sanderson! Maxwell Sanderson was right here in the police station, and we let him slip right through our fingers!"

"Yep," Chief Grigsby grimly agreed, "there's not much doubt you're right. And, would you believe the cheek of the fellow, he called himself Anderson! Just took the first letter off his name."

Blodgett believed it readily enough; this wasn't his first experience with such samples of the Noiseless Cracksman's humor—humor which Blodgett himself failed to find amusing.

"How much start has he got on us?" blurted the head of the New York detective agency.

"Five minutes at most," answered Grigsby. "I've got Kenny out looking for him, and have already flashed a general pick-up order for a bird

with a black trick mustache, a gray fedora, and a camel's-hair topcoat. I don't know how good our chances are of gathering him in, but we'll do our best. There's an out train in exactly twenty-five minutes; maybe, you'd better get down to the railroad station yourself."

Peter Blodgett's face suffused with color, a dark flush of chagrin, as he realized that "five minutes at most" meant that he had stood on the first floor of the police station and had allowed Maxwell Sanderson to walk right past him. In fact, he vaguely remembered that a man carrying a camel's hair topcoat *had* walked past him as he himself stood on the bottom step of the stairs.

"I know exactly what our chances are," he groaned. "They are exactly nil. Your men are looking for a fellow with a black trick mustache, eh? Well, it was a trick mustache; you can bet your life on that. Sanderson's got rid of it by now, along with the gray hat and the camel's-hair coat. Why, confound it, Grigsby, Maxwell Sanderson can even change his face!"

"But hardly so you wouldn't recognize him, Blodgett."

"Even so, I couldn't recognize him—unless I got a look at his hands, for his hands, you see, are the one thing he can't disguise except by wearing a pair of gloves."

Chief Grigsby smiled faintly. "At this time of the year," he said, "we could hardly arrest every man in Atlantic City who's wearing a pair of gloves. Nearly everybody's got a pair of those yellow ones with black stitches on the backs of 'em."

"And it's no use pegging the railroad station, either," went on Blodgett. "Sanderson's not leaving Atlantic City just yet. He's down here to get Barton Clark out of this jail, and he'll stay so long as there's any

possible chance of his putting it over.”

“And he hasn’t got one chance in ten thousand,” grunted Grigsby. “Nevertheless, I’d like to know how he means to go about it, and maybe that magazine gives his plan of escape. See if you can figure out what the message is. I’ve gone through every blasted page of the thing, and I can’t find any sort of message, or anything that looks suspicious. Go ahead; let’s see what you can do.”

Peter Blodgett sat down at the desk opposite Chief Grigsby and drew the magazine toward him. Swiftly, he began turning the pages, as Joe Church and the Atlantic City detective chief had done before him. He was looking for some written word that might appear upon the margin, or perhaps some faintly underscored word of the printed matter which would spell out a message.

From first page to last, he searched without result. A puzzled, exasperated frown pinched his bushy, beetling eyebrows together.

“No luck, eh?” grunted Chief Grigsby. “Then maybe I’m not so dumb myself.”

“It’s here somewhere,” muttered Blodgett. “Bound to be.”

“I guess this Sanderson is one clever bird, all right,” mused the other. “I’ve read a lot of stuff in the newspapers about him from time to time, but I always thought some of it was exaggerated.”

Blodgett made no reply. He was going through the pages of the magazine, this time much more slowly. Still, he was baffled. Harassed beads of perspiration began to appear upon his forehead.

“If he’s written on the margin in invisible ink,” he speculated, “I don’t for the life of me see how he could expect Clark to have the facilities to make the message legible.

But I guess we’d better try it anyhow.”

Grigsby’s swivel chair creaked loudly as he suddenly leaned forward, excited by a sudden inspiration.

“I guess the both of us should have thought of this before; maybe the cover’s been torn off and glued back in place, and Sanderson’s message is hidden under it.”

“Yes!” exclaimed Blodgett, deeply chagrined that he hadn’t thought of this himself. Instantly, he started tearing loose the cover of the magazine.

“Careful now!” warned Chief Grigsby, leaning tensely forward across the desk. “Take it easy, man, or you may destroy the very thing we’re trying to find.”

Blodgett accepted this advice and curbed his impatient haste. Very carefully, very slowly, using the point of a paper knife where the glue stuck stubbornly tight, he removed the brilliantly lithographed cover of the magazine. As it finally came free, he let an exclamation of triumph escape his lips.

“You hit it, Grigsby!” he cried. “You guessed right. Here’s what we’re looking for!”

He held a narrow slip of paper in his hand. It was folded over once. His fingers were fairly trembling with eagerness. Chief Grigsby had bounced out of his chair and had come around to the other side of the desk, enabling him to read what was written on this slender scrap of paper at the same time that Blodgett’s eyes were absorbing the neatly, precisely written words. This is what they read:

DEAR BART: Everything looks pretty black for us. So far, I’ve racked my wits in vain. I am here in Atlantic City but, being broke and my health being what it is, I am practically helpless. Keep your

own wits working every minute, and, if luck does play on our side and you should get a chance to escape before they extradite you to New York, go to No. 69 McGuinness Street. It is an abandoned house and I will have supplies there.

If you can't find the house number, you will know the place by the hip roof, which has got a flat place in the middle with a railing around it. This will make it plain. Keep your courage, *bon ami*, and maybe we'll get a break. I'll do everything I can.

Chief Grigsby looked disappointed.

"Huh!" he grunted. "That's not a plan; it's just a lot of banana oil. How does he think his pal is going to get his lucky break he's talking about?"

Blodgett saw that there was still more of the communication on the reverse side of the paper. He turned it over.

It's best, old fellow, that we leave nothing whatever to the chance of misunderstanding. If you do get the opportunity of making a break for it, I'll be watching for our old two-three signal.

Max.

"Hm-m-m!" said Blodgett, frowning heavily. "Maybe it means just what it says—and then, maybe it doesn't. I have had too many run-ins with the Noiseless Cracksman not to suspect that there's something brewing. A good many times, Grigsby, I've discovered that Maxwell Sanderson has been playing with an ace in the hole. What I mean is that while he's talking about hoping for a lucky break, he may, actually, have some plan of escape already arranged."

Chief Grigsby returned to his own chair on the other side of the desk. He sat down and, opening one of the drawers, produced two cigars, one of which he tossed over to Blodgett.

"Smoke? Seems to me I can always think better when I've got a

good cigar between my teeth. Now, before I forget it, what do those two words mean—'bon' something or other? Is that some kind of a code they got between 'em, do you suppose?"

Blodgett looked at Sanderson's message. "You mean *bon ami*? Just a way the French say 'good friend,' that's all."

"Oh!" grunted Grigsby, his face flushing slightly. "I guess I'm not very well up on them fancy French phrases."

It was no intentional discourtesy on Blodgett's part that he ignored Grigsby's cigar and took one of his own from the pocket of his vest. He clamped his teeth hard upon it, and broodingly studied the slip of paper in his hand. After a moment or two of this, he got to his feet and began striding heavily back and forth.

"If we take the proper precautions," he finally said, "I don't see how Clark can escape."

"That's exactly what I say," agreed the detective chief. "There ain't a thing for us to worry about, Blodgett."

"But that's not landing us Maxwell Sanderson. It's Sanderson we want—Sanderson!"

"You're right," said Grigsby. "The Noiseless Cracksman is worth fifty thousand smackers to us, and Clark ain't worth a plugged dime." Silence for an instant, shattered by the crashing of Chief Grigsby's fist against the desk top. "Say! I've got an idea, a real idea. It just popped into my mind."

"Yeah? All right, Grigsby, let's have it."

The Atlantic City chief of detectives leaned forward excitedly.

"It's one peach of an idea, if I do say so myself. Y'see, Blodgett, we'll give it out to the newspapers that Clark's escaped. We'll cook up a

good yarn that'll read good—like the real thing, y'know—and Sanderson will swallow it. Then, you understand, we'll have that house at No. 69 McGuinness Street surrounded, and when the Noiseless Cracksman shows up, we've got him in the bag. Neat, don't you say?"

Blodgett made a gesture with the slip of paper which was in his hand.

"No, not so neat, Grigsby, when you consider the last sentence of this. 'I'll be watching for our old two-three signal,' is what it says. And that stops us, don't you see? It's some kind of a secret signal that Sanderson and Clark have got between them. Unless Sanderson gets it, he'll know there's something wrong, and give the McGuinness Street place a wide berth." He stopped dead in his tracks.

"No, Grigsby, that won't work, but I've got an idea that will."

"I hope you're right."

"We won't pretend that Clark's escaped," went on Blodgett. "We'll let it be the real thing."

It required Chief Grigsby several seconds to digest the full meaning of this startling suggestion. When he'd finally got it, his mouth sagged open a little.

"You mean let him actually escape?" he blurted. "Why, man, you can't be serious!"

"Serious? You bet I'm serious!" Blodgett energetically persisted. "It's the one real chance we have to get our hands on Sanderson."

"You must be crazy, Blodgett."

"Crazy to put Maxwell Sanderson behind the bars, yes. Clark's not going to get away from us; he'll only think he's making an escape. There'll not be a minute, from the time he walks out of this police station, that we won't know exactly where he is. If he makes any move *not* to go to 69 McGuinness Street,

we'll simply reach out and gather him back in. If he does go to McGuinness Street, we'll have such a tight guard about the place he can't get away from us. Not a chance in a million of our losing Clark—and a good chance of Sanderson walking right into our trap! Come, Grigsby, what do you say?"

Grigsby hesitated, but not because Blodgett's plan didn't appeal to him—for it did to him. But he was shrewdly thinking that a little reluctance might increase his share of the reward for the Noiseless Cracksman's capture.

"Well, I dunno," he objected, "I don't like the newspapers printing a story like that. In all my police experience, I've never had a prisoner escape from my custody."

"I'll take all that on my shoulders," urged Peter Blodgett. "You see, Grigsby, I'll let him escape from me. We'll bring Clark out of the cell room and have him up here for questioning; I'll take all the blame, as I say, on my own shoulders. After all, he's not a Jersey prisoner."

"Yeah, that's right," replied Grigsby. "Looking at it one way, he's really your private prisoner. I turn all kinds of handsprings, and all I get out of it is a five-thousand-dollar slice of a fifty-thousand-dollar reward."

"Suppose we step your cut up to ten thousand then, how's that?" suggested Peter Blodgett.

Chief Grigsby had got exactly what he wanted; he jerked his head in a quick nod.

"All right," he agreed, "we'll take a chance on it."

"Fine!" beamed Blodgett. "Now get me a bottle of glue so I can fix up this magazine like it was when we got it. We'll have Joe Church slip it to him at the exercise hour tomorrow morning."

## CHAPTER XII.

## GIVING IT TO CLARK.

HIS head between his hands, as low in spirit as he had ever been in his life, Barton Clark sat on the edge of his cot, listening to the heavy breathing of his cell mate. The fellow was surly, unfriendly, and smelled of garlic.

"If I had somebody I could talk to," Clark thought, "that would help a little; anyhow, it would keep my mind off my troubles. Only one thing I've got to be thankful for; they haven't put me through the third degree."

Day and night, Bart's unpleasant cell mate—a planted stool pigeon, had he known—seemed to do nothing but sleep. Worst of all, he snored; he started snoring again now. Clark could no longer endure it.

"Cut it out!" he shouted. "Do you hear me? Cut it out, I'm telling you!"

The man on the opposite cot stirred heavily and opened his eyes, blinking stupidly.

"Huh?" he grunted.

"Can't you stop that infernal racket you're making? Do you want to drive a chap crazy?"

Another grunt was the only answer as Tony Latso, who was getting five dollars a day for being not so stupid as he appeared to be, turned over in his bunk with utter indifference to the protest.

Clark took half a dozen turns up and down the six-foot length of the cell.

"I guess I might as well start in getting used to it," he muttered. "I'm in for the next ten years of this sort of thing—ten years at least." And a groan escaped him.

All hope had long since fled. The

one slender chance that Max might be able to rescue him from this plight wasn't, he felt, to be even remotely considered, for he had left Sanderson an ill man, and with less than fifty dollars. How was even the miraculous Maxwell Sanderson to overcome two obstacles like that?

Yet there was, of course, the possibility Max would make the attempt, and this was one of the things that weighed so heavily upon Clark's mind. Sanderson, he feared, would be easy prey for Peter Blodgett under the circumstances.

Yesterday Bart had fancied, for one brief moment, that he had heard Max's voice down the cell-room corridor. For this bare instant, his nerves had tingled with hope and, at the same time, tightened with apprehension. When nothing had come of it, he was both disappointed and relieved.

Again, Clark paused at the door of his cell. There reached his ears the sound of clattering metal pails and wooden handled mops. It was nearing the hour for the morning clean-up. At any moment, the cell doors would be unlocked and, for sixty minutes, the prisoners were allowed to walk up and down, chatting with each other if they liked—all but himself. He was a special prisoner, a very special prisoner!

His mind floundering heavily about in an inescapable bog of despair, Bart absently took a cigarette from his pocket and put it between his lips; just as absently, he struck a light. It was the last match in the box, and he made a gesture just as he was in the act of tossing the container away. Then he remembered that this was the most valuable penny match box in the world, that it contained the check-room receipt of the bag he had left at the railroad station the morning of his arrival in

Atlantic City, and that it represented a fortune in jewels.

"Might as well throw it away at that, for all the good it'll ever be to me," he thought bitterly. "I wonder what'll ever become of the stuff, anyhow."

Bart speculated again, that, thoroughly as he had been searched, no suspicion had become attached to the innocent-looking match box. They had ripped open the lining of his coat, taken off his shoes, pried open the case of his matches; but the match box had been carelessly returned to him without any more than a glance inside of it, since it appeared to contain nothing besides a couple of dozen matches.

At times, he had tried to think this a good omen, but he was long since resigned to hopeless pessimism as to his own fate. He extremely doubted that it would even be possible for him to get the receipt for the bag containing the Cosden loot into Sanderson's hands.

There was the clatter of releasing locks, the clang of steel doors being swung open, the mingled sounds of many feet, some tapping sharply, and others scraping and shuffling. Bart sat down on the edge of his cot again, puffing disconsolately at his cigarette. Two or three minutes passed. He flung the cigarette onto the stone floor and ground it beneath his heel as he put his elbows upon his knees and rested his face in his hands.

"Pst! Pst!" The subdued, hissing sound came from outside the locked bars of Cell 16, and Bart raised his eyes to see Joe Church standing there; only, of course, he didn't know that it was the fellow whose name had been occupying the front pages of the newspapers in company with his own.

Joe Church darted his eyes fur-

tively as though watching up and down the length of the cell-room corridor. With one hand, he was concealing something under the edge of his coat. Clark's pulse bounded with excitement as he leaped to his feet. The next instant, Joe was hurriedly pushing the magazine through the bars.

"A fellow give me that yesterday," he whispered. "Said I was to slip it to the guy in Cell 16. This is the first chance——"

"Get away from there, you!" It was the raucous voice of the regular turnkey who had been carefully prompted when to speak. "Don't you know that nobody ain't allowed near that cell?"

"I wasn't talking to him; I was only looking at him," protested Joe Church.

"You heard me!" roared the turnkey. "Scram!"

As Joe obediently moved away, Barton Clark hastily got the magazine out of sight. As he did so, he darted a quick glance toward his ever-sleeping cell mate. Tony Latso's face was toward the wall, and he had seen nothing; if he had heard anything, he displayed no interest.

Clark was holding his breath; every muscle in his body was held rigid, but his nerves were trembling. Heavy, plodding footsteps were coming along the stone corridor. He hastily sat down on the edge of the bunk until the turnkey passed by. Suspicion might mean a search of the cell and the confiscation of the magazine before he had a chance to discover what secret communication it contained.

A message from Max, not the slightest doubt of that! The voice he had heard within the cell room the previous afternoon actually had been Max's voice after all; it hadn't

been a trick of his fancy. Amazing, unbelievable, yet true! He had left Sanderson in Baltimore, ill and physically helpless; yet, within little more than forty-eight hours, Max had pulled himself together, mastered the weakness that had followed a long siege of malaria, and had successfully run Peter Blodgett's gantlet.

"Good old Max!" thought Clark. "I might have known that he wouldn't leave me here without at least trying to get me out of this."

The turnkey passed by. With a feverish eagerness, Bart took the magazine in his hands and began hurrying through the pages, pretty much as Blodgett and Chief Grigsby had done before him. He, like them, was looking for a message written upon the margin, or, perhaps, certain of the printed words faintly underscored—a word on this page, another on that—until there would be a completed message. He even thought of looking for pin points in the paper.

Half a dozen times, he fingered through the pages, from first to last, in a baffled hunt for the elusive key to Sanderson's message. Under his breath, he cursed his own stupidity. Was Max's risk to come to naught because he himself was so dumb?

Having exhausted all the other possibilities, it was, of course, inevitable that he should think, finally, of tearing loose the paper binding; and, when he did think of it, he marveled at his own stupidity.

His cell mate was still lying with his face to the opposite wall, apparently asleep. His eager haste making his fingers clumsy, Bart began removing the magazine's paper-bound cover, and tore it rather badly, with the result that, when he finally discovered the slip of paper underneath, he had it in two separate pieces. This, however, did not seriously in-

terfere with the legibility of Sanderson's message.

As he read it, Barton Clark had a suddenly let-down feeling; he was poignantly disappointed to discover that Max had evolved no definite plan of engineering an escape; it was, in a way, an admission of impotency.

"I am practically helpless—if luck does play on our side."

It wasn't like Maxwell Sanderson to take such an attitude; always, he had pretty much made his own luck. Now he was leaving everything to luck and to Bart himself. No plan, not even a suggestion!

The next instant, it also occurred to Bart that it wasn't like Max to take the long chance of capture by braving the hazards of visiting the Atlantic City police station, merely to get through a note such as this.

Clark read the note through a second time. All of it left him deeply puzzled and bewildered, especially the closing sentence.

"I'll be watching for our old two-three signal." Clark read this over, again and again.

"What sort of nonsense is that?" he murmured. "Max and I have got no two-three signal—whatever that may mean." He squinted shut one eye. "But it *does* mean something! Underneath all the tone of pessimism, he's apparently taking it for granted that I *am* going to get the chance of making a break for it." He shook his head slowly. "Looks like it's too deep for me."

Out in the cell-room corridor, the exercise hour came to an end. The prisoners were herded back into their steel cubby-holes. Doors clanged shut, locks snapped. Clark scarcely was aware of the commotion. With his mind racing at full speed—mostly traveling in endless circles, it must be admitted—even Tony Latso could snore as loudly

as he pleased without in the least disturbing him.

Shortly before noon, just as the clatter of tin plates announced that the noon meal was to be served, Bart's profitless concentration was interrupted by the rattle of a key in the lock of the cell door. He lifted his head to see the turnkey and another man whom he remembered as the Atlantic City chief of detectives.

“Come on out, Clark,” Chief Grigsby said gruffly as the door was swung open. He had a pair of handcuffs which he quickly put on Bart's wrists. “We're giving a little party for you upstairs. Some friends of yours want to talk to you—and, if you're smart, you'll talk to them.”

That sounded ominously like the threat of a third degree. Barton Clark set his lips tightly together and submissively allowed himself to be led out of the police headquarters' cell room. A moment later, concrete walls and steel barriers no longer closed him in. Forty feet ahead of him was the street. What a temptation it was, as he passed within two or three strides of this unguarded exit, to jerk free from Chief Grigsby's hand upon his sleeve and make a break for it! But that would have been folly, insanity.

“Keep your wits working every minute!” That was what Sanderson's message had said, and this was the advice that Clark meant to follow.

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## CHAPTER XIII.

FREE.

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THAT morning, Miss Doyle had come down from New York. By medium of the long-distance telephone, Peter Blodgett had apprised

his indispensable secretary of the situation and she had straightway caught the first train for Atlantic City, leaving the routine details of the detective agency to shift for themselves. The capture of the Noiseless Cracksman had become something of an obsession with Miss Doyle, and she went to be in at the kill. Moreover, she was conceited enough to feel that the chances of bagging Sanderson would be vastly improved with her own intelligence helping to bring about that much-desired and long-delayed happening.

Blodgett hadn't desired Miss Doyle's presence. True, she was very important in the successful operation of his business, but she also had a way of irritating him, at times almost unendurably. He gave her full credit for the capture of Barton Clark, but now he considered that he could get along quite well without her. Besides, there was no telling just what was happening back in the New York office with Miss Doyle away.

Well, so long as she was here, Blodgett thought he might as well make use of her presence, and he had brought her along with him to the police station. At that, she did conveniently fit in with his scheme of permitting Clark's escape.

Miss Doyle, however, didn't look upon the plan with the enthusiastic approval Blodgett had expected. Almost immediately, much to his annoyance, she had started in finding fault with the idea. These objections, Blodgett had ignored.

He and Miss Doyle were sitting in Chief Grigsby's little private office on the second floor of Atlantic City police headquarters, waiting for Grigsby to bring Barton Clark upstairs.

“Not another word out of you!” growled Bulldog Blodgett. “I'm sick

and tired of hearing your croaking. The trouble with you, if you want to know, is that, you think nobody's smart but yourself. If it had been *your* idea——"

"I wouldn't be likely to think up any such crazy idea," snapped back Miss Doyle. "Again I tell you, I don't like it. You're playing into Maxwell Sanderson's hands. It's a Sanderson trick. I can feel it!"

"Bah!"

"It's Sanderson's trick, I tell you, to get Clark out of this jail." She gestured toward the typewritten copy of the Noiseless Cracksman's message to his pal. "Would Sanderson be fool enough to risk coming to this police station, risking bumping into you, just to tell Clark that he had nothing to tell him?"

"No, I tell you! No! He didn't mean Clark to get that magazine without your seeing it first. He knew you'd fall for it, exactly as you're doing; he figured you'd jump at this bait—and how you have! He figured you'd take a chance on letting Clark walk out of this police station in the hope of nabbing the both of 'em when they met. You've swallowed it whole!"

Peter Blodgett stirred uneasily and chewed viciously at his inevitable cigar. But he stubbornly refused to concede that Miss Doyle might be right.

"You'll admit," he argued back, "that Clark will go to No. 69 McGuinness Street? Or do you think he's going to walk down the front steps and vanish into thin air?"

"Don't be sarcastic; I don't like it, and I don't have to stand for it either."

"Sure he's going to No. 69 McGuinness Street," went on the head of the New York detective agency. "That's what Sanderson tells him to do—the abandoned house with the

square-topped roof. All right, suppose it is a game of Sanderson's. Suppose it is, I say. They've got to meet at the McGuinness Street house, haven't they?"

"Yes," Miss Doyle was forced in honesty to admit, "I don't see how Sanderson can possibly avoid going to the McGuinness Street house."

"Then we've got him; when Sanderson shows up in McGuinness Street, we've got him!" Blodgett exclaimed triumphantly. "Grigsby's detailing eight men, with himself in charge. Altogether, we'll be an even dozen. We'll have three sub-Thompson machine guns and mow Sanderson's legs out from under him if he gets within shooting range. Get away from us? I ask you, in the name of reason, how can he get away from us?"

"It sounds all right," snapped back Miss Doyle, "but the fact remains that Maxwell Sanderson has been making it quite a regular habit, this business of slipping through our fingers."

"And what have you got to suggest?" challenged the head of the detective agency. Miss Doyle didn't answer. "Ah! I've got you there, eh? You try to puncture holes in my idea when you haven't got one of your own. Have you, now?"

Miss Doyle had no choice but to admit that Blodgett was right. She started to speak, but at this moment there was the sound of ascending feet on the stairs, and Chief Grigsby's voice warned them that Clark was being brought in. She hastily picked up the typed copy of Sanderson's message and thrust it into her purse.

"All right," she said in a hurried undertone, "I'll help you play this little game, but, mark my words, it's going to be a losing game for us."

The door opened, and Chief

Grigsby came into the room, roughly pushing Barton Clark before him. This treatment was his own idea of giving the little drama a convincing touch of realism.

“Easy, Grigsby; there’s nothing to be gained by that sort of thing,” said Blodgett.

“I’d make him talk quick enough, if it was left to me,” growled the other man. “Plenty of these stubborn birds was begging to talk before I got through with ’em. Send Miss Doyle back to the hotel and turn him over to *me* for the next thirty minutes!”

Peter Blodgett shook his head. “I’ve tried that on Clark before—haven’t I, Clark? Remember that time down in Connecticut? Been a good while ago, hasn’t it? You’ve changed a lot since then, gained a lot of weight; even when we’d nabbed you, it took me a couple of minutes to make sure who we had.”

He paused briefly to light a fresh cigar. “No, Clark,” he went on, speaking with deliberate amiability, “I guess we won’t waste any time trying rough stuff on you. But sit down. Here; have a cigar.”

“Thanks, no,” Barton Clark responded, but he did sit down; his eyes wandered from Blodgett to rest for a moment upon the grimly set features of Miss Doyle whom he very clearly and very unpleasantly remembered as being the tenacious female who had been responsible for his capture. Even now, she seemed to be gloating over that victory of hers on the board walk two days previous.

“I had you brought up here,” Blodgett went on, “so that we could have a quiet little talk. It occurred to me that maybe you and I could strike a bargain.”

Bart stiffened resentfully, his eyes beginning to snap.

“To turn my best friend over to you in exchange of maybe getting off with a light sentence myself, I suppose! You ought to know me better than that Blodgett. If that’s all you brought me upstairs for, then you might as well take me right down again. I’ll swallow my medicine and let it go at that.”

Peter Blodgett coughed hintingly behind one of his massive hands and looked meaningfully at Chief Grigsby who had planted himself against the wall just within the door.

“Chief,” said Blodgett, “I’d like to speak with Clark a few minutes alone, if you don’t mind.”

“Oh, sure; sure,” responded the other. “I’ll be across the hall in the wardroom if you want me.” He took his departure. So smoothly and naturally did it run that there was no attachable suspicion that it was all a rehearsed “stage business.”

Blodgett hitched forward in his chair. Barton Clark made an impatient, irritated gesture that clinked the steel links of his handcuffs, and an angry flush spread over his cheeks.

“You’re wasting your breath, Blodgett; I’m telling you that before you begin. If you insist on talking, I’ve got no choice but to listen; but I’d think you’ve got brains enough to know——”

“Take it easy, Clark,” broke in the detective. “Don’t blow up until you’ve heard my proposition. I know well enough that you and Sanderson have got a regular *Damon-and-Pythias* friendship between you, and that you wouldn’t even remotely consider turning in your pal in exchange for a short sentence—or even immunity, for that matter.”

“You can bet your life I wouldn’t!”

“This proposition of mine is the promise of a short sentence for both

of you. Here! I'll make myself clear. Sanderson has led me a long chase and a hard one. A dozen times or more he's made a monkey of me, and yet, to tell you the truth, I've got a sort of liking for him."

"Yes, I'll bet you have!" thought Clark. "I wonder why you're spreading the salve?"

"My failure to get Sanderson," went on Blodgett, "has hurt my prestige as well as my pride. Sooner or later, of course, I'll land him. You know that, Clark, and Sanderson knows it. Both of you know, too, that when I do gather him in, it means a long stretch in prison. Not a day less than twenty years. You may possibly get off with ten. Now, here's my proposition. If you'll get Sanderson to give himself up, I'll agree to it that neither of you will get more than five years apiece."

All this was merely for the purpose of lending verisimilitude. Blodgett couldn't possibly keep a pledge like that. Clark knew it. Bart laughed shortly.

"Do I look so simple as to fall for such stuff as that?" he jeered. "You know very well you couldn't deliver, and, even if you could, my answer would still be no."

The telephone rang. Miss Doyle was nearest the instrument, and she answered it; all this was part of a definite prearrangement.

"Yes, Hanlon," she said, "he's here, but he's busy." Listening for a moment to whatever was being said, she pushed the phone toward Blodgett. "He insists on talking to you."

Peter Blodgett took the phone. "Yeah?"

There was some more conversation from the other end. Blodgett gave a convincing imitation of being concerned. "That right? Guess I ought to have a look at him. Stay

right where you are, Hanlon, and I'll be there in three minutes."

He slammed the receiver onto its hook and took three broad strides to the door.

"Grigsby!" he called loudly. "Come here, will ya?"

There was no response from the wardroom where the Atlantic City chief of detectives said he would be waiting. Blodgett ripped out an oath.

"Go ahead," said Miss Doyle, "I can look after Clark until Chief Grigsby comes." She patted her purse. "I'm prepared for emergencies, you know."

Blodgett apparently hesitated for a moment. "Wonder if my key will fit Grigsby's handcuffs," he muttered.

Blodgett's handcuff key did, as he quickly demonstrated. Swiftly, he released one of the steel bracelets from about Barton Clark's left wrist and transferred it to the arm of the oak chair in which his prisoner sat.

"Guess that'll be all right," he grunted. "But keep a sharp eye on him, Miss Doyle. If Grigsby's downstairs, I'll send him right up."

"I can manage," said the confident Miss Doyle.

A moment later, the detective had gone plunging out of the room and was thundering hurriedly down the stairs, leaving Clark handcuffed to the chair. Seemingly, this was a good and sufficient precaution.

Bart was in an agony of apprehension. That telephone call! Did it mean that one of Blodgett's operatives had spotted Sanderson but wasn't quite sure? So it had sounded.

Miss Doyle cleared her throat. "You'd better think over the proposition Mr. Blodgett made you," she advised.

Clark made no response. His

pulse had bounded with the sudden discovery that the chair in which he sat had become weakened in the joints, that the arm of it, to which he was bound, was by no means secure. It could, he saw, be pulled loose with no great amount of muscular effort, and thus one steel hoop of the handcuffs would be entirely clear. While the handcuffs would still be fastened to his right wrist, it would not seriously interfere with the freedom of his movements.

Blodgett gone from the building, the chief of detectives temporarily absent from the second floor, there was only this grim-faced woman between him and a dash for liberty. While he might not successfully get down the stairs and gain the street, it certainly was worth the effort. Such an amazing opportunity might not come to him again. Miss Doyle had a gun in her purse; he was pretty sure that was what she had meant about the remark of being prepared for emergencies. He'd have to beat her to the weapon; otherwise, she'd use it on him. And, doubtlessly, she would let out a yell for help, but these were risks that had to be taken.

Clark watched his best chance. It came quickly. Miss Doyle was toying with a paper knife; she allowed it to slip from her fingers and to clatter down upon the floor. As she bent down to retrieve it, Bart's muscles snapped into action. He gave his imprisoned arm a violent jerk; the arm of the chair cracked loose and that end of the handcuffs slid free. Almost with the same motion, he catapulted himself forward and dived for the desk. He had the woman's purse in his hand, fumbling swiftly to open it. The next instant, Miss Doyle's stubby little automatic pistol was in his hand, and Miss Doyle was simulating speechless sur-

prise as she gaped into the muzzle of her own weapon.

"Not a sound out of you!" gritted Clark. "One yelp will be your last. Stand up!"

Miss Doyle obeyed the command.

"Get over there to that clothes locker!" Clark ordered.

Miss Doyle seemed to hesitate.

"You heard me! I've never knocked a woman cold, but it won't take much to make me do it now."

Miss Doyle backed away from the desk, moving toward the clothes locker in the corner.

"Open it," said Clark.

Miss Doyle did.

"Get inside!"

It was a narrow fit, and for a moment Bart had his doubts that she would be able to squeeze herself within the narrow space, but he helped her with a hefty push, and it had been accomplished. He slammed the metal door, turned the catch, and spun around on his heel. Seconds were precious to him.

"Steady, old boy!" he told himself. "Steady, now! You're not out of the woods yet."

As he hurriedly let himself out of Chief Grigsby's office and closed the door behind him, there reached his ears the muffled sound of Miss Doyle trying to make herself heard. There was nothing to fear from that. The walls of the police headquarters' building were thick, virtually sound-proof. She could yell without it doing her any good.

Bart thrust one hand into his coat, burying it so deep into his pocket that the dangling end of the handcuff was concealed from view. Then he set his hat firmly upon his head, braced his shoulders, and started boldly down the stairs. He even attempted a careless whistle, but quickly gave up the attempt; his nerves were too high strung for that.

Just short of the bottom step, he paused and darted an anxious glance ahead. The desk sergeant's throne-like platform commanded a strategic position, giving that police officer a view of the stairs and of the entrance. But the desk sergeant was sitting at a relaxed ease, reading a newspaper. Bart was finding it a little uncanny how everything was breaking for him, yet it didn't even remotely enter his mind that he was deliberately being allowed to escape.

He fairly held his breath as he pushed his feet forward. The three or four yards between the foot of the stairs and the street door was perhaps the longest distance he had ever traveled in his life. Having gained the door, his impulse was to fling himself through it and go sprinting down the steps, but he managed to restrain himself, and even paused for an instant to avoid any possible appearance of haste.

No cry of "Halt" followed him. A patrolman in uniform came hurrying into headquarters, and passed him by without so much as a glance.

The ease of it all was simply incredible, and Clark had a strange and bewildered sense of unreality as he found himself in the public street without a hue and cry rising behind him.

"No. 69 McGuinnes Street!" Bart said under his breath. "How's the quickest and the safest way for me to find McGuinnes Street?"

A block clear of police headquarters, he frankly made haste, walking very fast. But, for all he knew, he might be getting farther away from McGuinnes Street with every step he took. Two squares farther on, he stopped a bright-looking small boy and made inquiries. The youngster gave him an amazed look as though he couldn't understand anybody so ignorant as not to know, without

asking, where McGuinnes Street was.

"Next corner, mister," the lad answered. "Say! You're losing something out of your pocket."

The loose end of the handcuffs still attached to Bart's right wrist had slipped up and was dangling conspicuously outside his coat.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

### FORCED TO STEAL.

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THE previous afternoon, Maxwell Sanderson had been a dapper, somewhat natty middle-aged metropolitan who exactly looked the rôle he had played, that of a Manhattan newspaperman; this morning, the trick black mustache was missing, and, also, the gray fedora and the camel's-hair coat.

This morning, he appeared to belong in the second-rate hotel where he now sat in the rather frowsy lobby, looking out upon the unpretentious side street of the resort city. His age, one would have said, was about fifty-five, and he had the air of being not very comfortable in a new pair of shoes which squeaked when he walked. A chance observer might have classified him as one of those innumerable small-townners who, once in their lifetime, are dragged down to Atlantic City by their families.

There was, however, no family in evidence, and the hotel register recorded him merely as Mr. J. C. Denison of Centerville, Pennsylvania.

Sanderson was stopping at this hotel for two reasons; one because it was respectable and inconspicuous, and, second, because it was inexpensive. The latter reason was by no means the least important; even

with the proceeds of his pawned watch, his cash had dwindled perilously down. Every dollar must be made to count.

All morning, Maxwell Sanderson, alias Mr. J. C. Dennison of Centerville, Pennsylvania, had sat quietly by the window in the lobby of the hotel. At times, he appeared to be drowsing. Having parted with his watch, he frequently looked at the hands of the large clock on the wall. As the hour passed noon, he glanced at the clock more often.

"It should be happening soon," he said under his breath. "Yes, soon—if at all."

There was a popular-priced cafeteria, and, between twelve and one, such guests as were about wandered in there for their lunch. Sanderson didn't move from his chair; he wasn't hungry, and he had always disliked cafeterias.

Time dragged; one o'clock became two. The minute hand of the clock started upon another circuit of the white-faced, black-lettered dial. Suddenly, the comparative quiet of the street was broken by the sounds of excitement. Competitive voices were loudly raised as newsboys began crying the afternoon edition of a paper.

"Extra! Extra! All about the sensational escape!"

Maxwell Sanderson drew a deep breath; a gleam shot into his eyes. Yet he still did not move from his chair.

The hysterical newsboys reached the hotel; two of them came rushing within the lobby, overlooking no opportunities to make some extra money. The regular edition of the paper sold for three cents; with the wide black letters "Extra" at the top, it could be sold for a nickel.

Sanderson displayed no undue interest. He knew that he had but to

wait a few moments longer, for the enterprising lads were soliciting every one.

"Paper, mister? Extra paper? Read all about the sensational escape from the Atlantic City jail."

The Noiseless Cracksman produced a coin and gave it in exchange for one of the papers. His manner remained one of no great concern. Spreading out the folded page, he read the screaming headlines. Not every day in the week did the city editor of an Atlantic City paper get the chance to turn himself loose like this.

Notorious Criminal Escapes from Atlantic City Jail. Confederate of Maxwell Sanderson, Master Jewel Thief, Overpowers Woman, Makes Get-away Still Wearing Handcuffs. City-wide Search on for Barton Clark.

There was more of it, a lot more of it. Sanderson read the story through with scarcely a change of expression. Slowly, he folded up the newspaper and tossed it aside. Then he took another look at the clock. The time was now half past two. Without haste, he got to his feet and moved toward the hotel exit.

Still without haste, he made his way toward the ocean front and headed down the board walk. Nor was his leisurely manner entirely from choice. There were moments when his slender store of strength seemed about to fail him, and it behooved him to husband his energy. For once in his life, he was failing to thrive upon excitement. Unless one has experienced a long siege of malaria and has tried strenuous activity before a normal recovery, it is difficult to appreciate what Sanderson was going through, what a tremendous effort it required to keep him going. At times, attacks of giddiness seized him.

Down at the farther end of the

board walk was a vacant lot which displayed this huge sign:

FLY IN AN AUTO GYRO  
BE ONE OF THE FIRST  
TO ENJOY THIS NEW  
THRILL OF THE AIR  
ABSOLUTELY SAFE  
FARE \$10.

The enterprising aviator, who was one of the first to commercialize this revolutionary flying machine, doubtlessly thought that he was going to coin a mint of money when he paid fifteen thousand dollars for his auto gyro and brought it down to Atlantic City to take up passengers for a brief five minutes at the rate of two dollars per minute. But he was very swiftly becoming disillusioned. While there was every argument on the side of absolute safety, the auto gyro was too much of a novelty for many to trust themselves in it. He was finding passengers very scarce, and most of his time was spent in making explanations to the curious.

Questions, and more questions; the same questions, over and over again.

Why didn't it have wings? Why did it have two propellers, one on top? Could it actually land on a space no longer than a tennis court? Was this machine the same one that had been in the news-reel pictures, landing on the White House lawn and greeted by the president? Suppose the engine stopped—was it really true that nothing but that big blade on the top would keep it from falling?

Again and again, the pilot owner of the machine, who had expected to get his investment back at the rate of something like a hundred dollars an hour, answered these queries and countless others. But he didn't take up very many passengers.

This wasn't Maxwell Sanderson's

first visit to the auto-gyro concession. He had been there for hours the day previous, asking a number of questions himself. This afternoon, however, he meant to take his first ride in the novel machine, and this was a matter very speedily arranged. He surrendered one of his few remaining ten-dollar bills and was given a place in the cockpit.

The pilot owner, whose name was George Mitchell, warmed up the motor for a few minutes and then climbed in behind the controls. A little run of less than a hundred feet and the auto gyro made a pretty take-off, lifting steadily from the ground.

Sanderson glanced at the overhead blade, spinning so steadily, but he looked mostly at Mitchell, watching how he handled the controls. Mitchell shut off the motor. The overhead blade continued to revolve.

"That's what keeps us from falling," he explained. "The auto gyro is foolproof. Anybody who can operate an automobile can run one of 'em."

Sanderson nodded. "I've done a bit of flying myself," he said.

"Yeah?" said Mitchell, looking faintly skeptical. "Where?"

"In France during the last days of the War," truthfully replied the Noiseless Cracksman.

"That so? I wasn't in it myself. Too young. How do you like this machine?"

"Great," answered Sanderson. "Ride me fifty dollars' worth if you like."

That sounded good to Mitchell, mighty good. He turned on the motor again and swung his auto gyro in a wider circle. The Noiseless Cracksman continued to watch the little tricks of operation.

"Let's see you hover again." He

had to shout in order to make himself heard above the roar of the motors.

Mitchell switched off the engine. A fifty-dollar passenger was decidedly to be humored.

"Y'see," he explained, "you can keep her almost motionless. No chance of a bad smash-up. You can get close to the ground looking for the right landing and then, if it's no good, just climb right up again—like this." He demonstrated.

Sanderson had to shout again. "Go over that way," he said, pointing. "Fly a little lower, if you don't mind."

Mitchell obliged. Once more, he hovered.

Below them was a baseball diamond.

"Would that make a good emergency landing field?"

"Why, sure, mister; sure. Any level piece of ground is a good landing field for this little baby of mine. That's why they're so safe. Y'see, a regular plane has to come down at a speed of a hundred miles an hour. I can throttle the gyro down to twenty-five—and stop in fifty feet."

"Let's see you make a forced landing down there on that baseball field," said Sanderson.

Mitchell shook his head in refusal. "Nope; against the law. Can't do it."

A faint smile flickered across the Noiseless Cracksman's mouth, a tight-clipped grim little smile.

"I'm afraid that I sometimes ignore the law, and this happens to be one of those times." His hand went swiftly to the pocket of his coat and reappeared with a very businesslike automatic pistol nestling against his palm. "Your respect for the law, Mr. Mitchell, is a highly commendable attitude, but, as a matter of expediency, you will be wise to have,

for the moment, a greater respect—for this." He planted the muzzle of the pistol firmly against the aviator's side. His eyes became hard and cold, and his voice cracked out like shots. "Do as I tell you, Mitchell. Land this machine where I tell you."

Mitchell gaped. His handling of the auto gyro suddenly became clumsy in his nervousness.

"Hey! W-what's the idea?" he stuttered.

"Haven't I made myself clear? If not, I'll try once more to make you understand. Unless you land this machine at once, I'll kill you—and do the landing myself."

Mitchell was an expert birdman. Not since his first solo flight had he made such a poor landing. He was so startled, bewildered, and frightened that he was hardly aware what he was doing. Yet, because flying had become instinct with him, he didn't wreck his machine. The wheels struck the surface of the baseball diamond with a bump; they ran some fifty feet and stopped. Limply, he relaxed the controls and stared with wide eyes and open mouth.

"Sit still, Mitchell," Sanderson told him steadily. "There's a something I want to say. You're a nice kid, and I'm sorry, but circumstances make it necessary for me to borrow your auto gyro for the remainder of the afternoon. I'm only borrowing it, you understand. You'll get it back, and I trust undamaged. Now get out!"

Mitchell had an investment of fifteen thousand dollars in his gyro. It represented everything he had in the world.

"I'll——" he began.

"You'll be a pretty dead man if you don't," said Maxwell Sanderson, and jammed the automatic pistol hard against the others ribs. "Hop!"

Mitchell hopped, caught his foot on the edge of the cockpit, and fell sprawling to the ground. As he staggered dazedly to his feet, the motors roared and his precious machine was slipping away from him. While he watched, it began to rise in the air, smoothly and easily.

"As pretty a take-off as anybody would want to see," he had to admit.

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## CHAPTER XV.

### FLYING FOOL.

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THE abandoned house at No. 69 McGuinness Street had been deserted for several years. Long since, the owner had despaired of getting a tenant and had surrendered the place to nature and the elements. The grass was uncut; a fallen tree blocked the sidewalk. Panes were missing from one of the upstairs windows. The neighborhood kids walked past it at night with their hearts in their throats; they liked to believe that it was haunted.

In McGuinness Street, no great distance from No. 69, stood a truck. It had been standing there since noon. The driver's seat was unoccupied, but concealed within the paneled body were three policemen with a sub-Thompson machine gun. Chief Grigsby meant to have his ten-thousand-dollar slice of that reward for the capture of the Noiseless Cracksman.

In the alleyway behind the abandoned house at No. 69 McGuinness Street were three more Atlantic City police officers; they also were armed, in addition to their service revolvers, with one of those deadly instruments of spewing lead, the sub-Thompson.

The block was entirely surrounded with a cordon of police deployed at

the most strategic points of vantage. It seemed utterly impossible that even the magical Maxwell Sanderson could venture into this grim square circle and escape.

Peter Blodgett and Chief Grigsby had preceded Barton Clark to the vicinity of No. 69 McGuinness Street by the matter of almost a quarter of an hour. They had established themselves upon the second floor of a building across the street. From the windows of this lookout, the tattered shades partially drawn, they could see the house across the way; from here, they had seen Clark's arrival; they had watched him do a cautious bit of reconnoitering before venturing through the sagging gate and vanishing within the dark, ugly ruin.

It was now five o'clock in the afternoon.

Peter Blodgett stood with his shoulders hunched forward, a cigar clamped rigidly between his teeth. His bulldog jaw jutted far out, and his eyes held a gleam of anticipated triumph. Never, he felt, had his chances of capturing Maxwell Sanderson been so good as they were to-day.

Presently, Peter Blodgett spoke.

"It's my guess," he said gruffly, "that Sanderson will wait for darkness."

"Doesn't worry you, does it?" responded Chief Grigsby. "When it comes dark, y'see, we'll have a chance to move some of the boys closer. They can sneak through the fence and hide in the tall grass."

Blodgett jerked his head in a nod. "Yes, I'd thought of that. When it gets good and dark, we'll close in more."

"Sanderson will probably come in a car," guessed Grigsby.

"Sure," grunted Peter Blodgett.

"He sure will," grunted Peter Blodgett.

any of his clever tricks on us,” said the chief of detectives.

“Not a oance,” agreed the other. “We’ve got every hole plugged—tight. You’ve particularly warned all your men about shooting for his legs?”

Chief Grigsby grinned. “Would I be likely to overlook that when Sanderson’s worth fifty grand to us caught alive, and not a dime dead?”

Silence fell between the two for a few minutes. Grigsby then spoke again.

“I wonder,” he mused, “how Sanderson thought Clark was going to escape? I wonder if there *is* any way Clark could have crushed out of my nice little jail?”

Blodgett made no reply. His attention had been attracted by a humming sound that seemed to come from overhead. He didn’t immediately recognize it for what it was, the approach of a flying machine. The noise became more distinct.

A moment or two later, flying low, an auto gyro seemed barely to clear the building above them.

“Isn’t it against the law down here for ’em to fly so close to the ground?” demanded Blodgett. “We’ve got a law like that in New York.”

“Sure; and it’s against the law down here, too,” answered Chief Grigsby. “They say those things are safe, and maybe they are. But suppose something happened to that windmill business they got on the top of it, huh? I’ll get hold of that guy and tell him a thing or two.”

The auto gyro began climbing, went a little way, as air distance is measured, and then swung back. Over the top of the house at No. 69 it hovered for an instant or two, almost without forward motion, then it lifted again, banked and turned.

Blodgett idly watched these gyrations.

He felt no particular interest until the strange aircraft had passed and repassed overhead for not less than the twelfth time. Suddenly, it occurred to him that the machine always dipped low at precisely the same spot—directly above the house they were watching. A frown clipped down between his eyes.

“Grigsby!”

“Uh-huh.”

“I’m not so sure I like that, Grigsby.”

“What?”

“That crazy-looking air bug. It’s staying mighty close to this spot. I don’t like it.”

Chief Grigsby laughed depreciatingly. “Oh, I know that guy. Name’s Mitchell. He’s got a concession down on the board walk. Gives the public their first ride in one of them things at ten dollars a ride. Not doing very good at it, though.”

Peter Blodgett’s frown deepened. “I don’t like the look of it,” he muttered, “and I like it even less when you tell me that Mitchell isn’t doing so good. Sanderson may have given him a fat piece of money to——” His voice trailed off.

“To do what?” snorted Grigsby. “You’ve got the jumps, that’s all. Clark’s in that house, ain’t he? How could he get aboard that air bus, huh? Maybe you think even one of them things could land in all that high grass? And, even if he did, we’d see to it that he’d never get up again. Aw, forget it! Mitchell is just doing some stunting. Probably wants to get arrested and some free advertising. He’ll get arrested, all right; I’ll see to that myself first thing to-morrow morning.”

“I don’t like it!” Blodgett persisted. “If you’d had as many

brushes with Maxwell Sanderson as I have——”

“Aw, forget it!” growled Grigsby again.

The low-flying auto gyro's pilot seemed to tire of his little game of making the residents of McGuinnes Street gasp, for he suddenly shot off and away.

“Didn't I tell you there was nothing to worry about, Blodgett? You've got the jumps, that's all.”

Peter Blodgett heaved a sigh of relief, and for a moment he turned away from the window.

This relief, however, was of short duration. Again, the sound of the auto gyro's motors beat upon the air, now flying very high, at an altitude of perhaps three thousand feet. Suddenly, the throbbing engines were silent. The queer-looking ship began to descend, almost vertically. Something flashed out of the cockpit; it looked like a bit of string fluttering down out of the sky.

A mighty oath roared up out of Peter Blodgett's throat.

“Look, Grigsby! Look!” he shouted. “Get hold of your men down there in that truck. Have 'em open up their machine gun on him. Come on, you fool! Don't you understand? That's Sanderson up there—Sanderson!”

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## CHAPTER XVI.

### PUTTING IT OVER.

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**B**EFORE Clark had been in the McGuinnes Street house a quarter of an hour, he began to be obsessed by the feeling that the place was being watched. It was based upon nothing stronger than intuition, yet it persisted and grew.

As the afternoon wore on, he went

time and again to the windows and cautiously looked out toward the street. He could see nothing to support his apprehensions, for, as it happened, the truck, with three policemen concealed in it, was screened from his view by a bush of forsythia blooming profusely near the street. Nevertheless, he was increasingly disturbed. Furtive, hunted men do develop, as a second nature, this uncanny intuitive sense.

Clark had found that the abandoned house contained a few nondescript pieces of furniture which the last tenant had considered too worthless to move away: a broken chair, a three-legged table that wobbled crazily and noisily, and a wreck of a couch with the springs sticking through gaping holes in the upholstery.

He had also found, on the table, a package of sandwiches wrapped in waxed paper, and several packages of cigarettes. Sanderson had left them there, of course, but this was the only thing he could find to indicate that Max had been here. He was disappointed, even exasperated, when diligent search failed to turn up any sort of communication from his friend.

“Why couldn't he have left me a note?” Bart muttered complainingly. “Confounded thoughtless of him, I'll say! He might have at least let me know what to expect.”

Clark helped himself to the cigarettes but let the sandwiches remain untouched. He wasn't hungry. Now and then, he walked the floor, but the bare boards clattered so loudly beneath the tread of his feet that it seemed to him that every passer-by must hear the racket. He moved the broken chair near one of the front windows and sat there, watching for Sanderson.

“Chances are,” he thought, “that

he'll wait for night. Darkness will make it much safer. Probably somewhere around midnight. That's why he left the sandwiches."

Time wore on. Clark brooded uneasily. Suddenly, a thought leaped into his mind and strained his nerves even tighter than they already were.

"Why didn't I think of that before?" he exclaimed under his breath. "I wonder if I'm right?"

It had abruptly dawned upon him that his escape had been too easy, that it wasn't reasonably conceivable that Blodgett would have so carelessly allowed him even the barest opportunity of making a break. The more he thought of it, the more convinced he became that his miraculous get-away from the Atlantic City police station had been no miracle at all, but entirely voluntary on Blodgett's part.

Now that he looked back and analyzed what had happened, it all became so utterly transparent. Blodgett asking Chief Grigsby to leave the room! The fortuitous telephone call! Grigsby not within call! That chair with the conveniently insecure arm!

And, by no means least, the submissiveness with which Miss Doyle had allowed him to cram her into the clothes locker!

Clark groaned in his mental anguish.

"Fool that I am! Did exactly what Blodgett wanted me to do! He read Sanderson's note before I did, and deliberately framed this whole business. That's why I've got the feeling that the house is being watched. It is watched. Max is going to walk straight into their trap—and there's no way I can stop it!"

Bart leaped to his feet and began walking up and down, ignoring the creaking and the rattling of the loose

boards underfoot. What difference did it make now how much noise he made?

It was at this moment that Maxwell Sanderson piloted his stolen auto gyro over McGuinness Street. The silence of the heavens was shattered by the vibrations of the propellers and the humming beat of the motors.

But Clark gave no heed. He wasn't interested in such a trivial thing as an airplane passing overhead. He didn't even bother to look out the window. His thoughts were concerned, to the exclusion of all else, with the utterly baffling problem of how to prevent Sanderson's walking into Blodgett's trap.

Hovering directly over the house, flying low, the noise of the auto gyro was terrific, deafening. The window sashes shook, and the three-legged table trembled with the force of the vibrations.

"Curse that fellow!" muttered Clark, and sat down again.

The auto gyro arose, descended, arose again, and continued its circling of the abandoned house in McGuinness Street. Clark finally caught a glimpse of it. This was the first auto gyro he had ever seen, but he recognized it for what it was from pictures of the much-discussed innovation in heavier-than-air machines. He, like thousands of other moviegoers had witnessed, via the news reels, the spectacle of an auto gyro landing on the White House lawn.

But he hadn't realized that one of them could dare fly so close to the roof tops or that it could remain so practically motionless in mid-air. Abstractly, he watched it for a moment.

Suddenly, something clicked. An excited cry burst from his lips as he jumped to his feet.

Sanderson's note! "The house

with the square top in the middle of the roof, and a railing around it." Max had picked this particular house for a definite purpose! "I hope this makes it plain." Plain—plane! That had been a clew.

"And I've been sitting here, too cursed dumb to realize that it's Max flying right above my head!"

Bart plunged for the stairs, taking the steps three and four at a time. He reached the second floor, panting for breath. The roof was his objective, but how did one get to the roof? For one confused moment, he blundered about before finding a short, steep flight of stairs that led into the attic.

Finding a way to the flat-topped roof's center was now easy. The attic space was low of headroom at the eaves and raised to no great height in the center. Above him was a trapdoor. A crack of light showed him where it was. He could, by merely lifting his arms, push it open. After this, it was but the matter of catching the edge of it with his hands and pulling himself up. As he jackknifed his body over the rim of the opening, a groan escaped him. The auto gyro was roaring away. Apparently, it was gone.

Was he to lose his chance by a mere margin of seconds? Had Sanderson, after hovering above the place for nearly five minutes, finally come to the conclusion that the plan had failed?

"He must have thought I couldn't make it," he muttered. "He couldn't possibly realize that I'd be so utterly dumb!"

Then the auto gyro swerved sharply in the sky. Bart's pulse bounded hopefully. Max was coming back!

Clark, crouching low on the flat space of the roof so that there would be slim possibility of his presence

being observed from the street, jerked a handkerchief from his pocket and waved it cautiously. Would Sanderson see that signal?

The auto gyro was flying high. The motors became silent. The machine was settling, very slowly and easily in its leisurely descent. Closer and closer, it came. Something flashed out over the edge of the cockpit—something that looked like a dangling piece of string. It was a rope, a rope ladder, perhaps fifty or sixty feet long. It came snaking downward, weaving and twisting like a thing alive.

An instant later, it swayed directly above Clark's head, just beyond the reach of his fingers. One breathless second and the end of it brushed against his shoulder. He grabbed with both hands, and had the sickening feeling of having his feet jerked out from under him. For one harrowed instant, he thought he shouldn't be able to hold on and would be sent hurtling down across the slanting side of the roof's edge to a mangled death. His arms felt as if they were being literally pulled out of their sockets.

Back and forth his body swayed, like the pendulum of a clock gone crazy, before he was able to connect his feet with the limp rungs of the rope ladder.

In the auto gyro forty feet above, Sanderson was able to look down and see that Bart had hooked on. The motor burst back into life, but these were not the only explosions that barked through the air. From the ground below came the blood-chilling sound of machine-gun fire as Chief Grigsby's men unlimbered their death-spraying sub-Thompson and sent a hail of lead toward that dangling, swaying figure silhouetted so clearly against the sky.

*Rat-tat-tat; rat-tat-tat,* spoke the

voice of the machine gun. More than once, Barton Clark could hear the bullets whistling past his head. His coat had come open and fluttered like a flag flying in a stiff breeze. Not until later did he discover that his coat had become a souvenir to attest the narrowness of his escape—a perforated ring of bullet holes.

The auto gyro began climbing swiftly, taking a forward motion at the same time. Fainter and fainter became the vicious stutter of the machine-gun fire until the sound was drowned altogether by the droning hum of the air motor.

Clear of the menace on the ground, Maxwell Sanderson again shut off the engine and hovered, giving Bart a better chance to climb up the rope ladder. Max was leaning out over the edge of the cockpit, and held down his hand.

"Climb in, old boy," he said. "Make haste, for they're likely to be after us with a couple of fast planes. These gyros are mighty neat little tricks, but they're not greyhounds. A cruising speed of ninety an hour is about the best you can get out of 'em."

The motors roared and conversation was difficult. For the moment, Clark had no breath left for speech. His body went limp with the reaction and his hands were trembling.

"What an escape!" he said thickly, but the wind drove the words back into his mouth and they were inaudible.

The auto gyro was pointing toward Philadelphia. Bart recovered the use of his voice. The questions he wanted to ask would not wait:

"Max!" he shouted. "Where did you get it—the auto gyro?"

"Stole it at the point of a pistol," the Noiseless Cracksman yelled back. "I've committed larceny a

good many times, but never did I think I'd steal an airplane."

"Max!"

"Yes, Bart."

"Where are we headed for?"

"About fifty miles from here I've got our car. Drove it from Baltimore night before last."

Silence for a moment. Clark filled his lungs again.

"Max!" he screamed against the rush of the wind. Sanderson turned his head attentively. "I'm just getting something through my head. You schemed the whole thing. That right? What I mean, you knew that Blodgett would get the magazine before I did."

Sanderson admitted it with a jerk of his head. He hadn't the strength to howl against the wind and explain all the details, how he had given Joe Church a ten-dollar bill instead of the agreed twenty to insure Joe's indignation and turning stool pigeon to the police.

"But, Max," protested Clark, "why in the name of common sense didn't you tip me off? How was I to know you were coming after me like this? Why didn't you give me a hint of what to expect?"

"I did," Sanderson raised his voice to answer. "If you'd looked under the ham in one of those sandwiches, you'd have found a note. Didn't you notice that one package had three sandwiches and the other two?"

"Oh, so that was your two-three signal! I must be dumb! But, Max, I've good news for you; we've still got the Cosden jewels." He reached his hand into his pocket and rattled the one remaining match in the penny box. "Checked the bag at the station and put the receipt in here. Blodgett missed finding it—and that's some consolation."

Maxwell Sanderson nodded but

made no verbal response. He had started flying low again, his eyes searching the terrain under them. This was, he felt sure, approximately the place he wanted to land. Their automobile was parked in an abandoned road no great distance.

Dusk was closing in, dimming the visibility. He nosed the auto gyro toward the ground.

Exactly what happened, neither of them never could explain. Maybe the lowered visibility was to blame; perhaps, it was Sanderson's inexperience with the machine; perhaps, he had another of those attacks of light-headedness. The result was that he made a bad landing. The auto gyro struck the ground; one wheel caught in the too soft earth and turned over with a violence that catapulted the two passengers out of the cockpit and sent them spinning head-first through the air. The machine turned completely over and

immediately burst into flames. Within the space of seconds, it had become a roaring furnace of blazing gasoline.

Sanderson's face had struck against one of the struts. He picked himself up with a gush of crimson flowing from a cut in his cheek. Clark, himself unhurt, rushed forward.

"Max!" he cried. "You're hurt!"

The Noiseless Cracksman stared at the burning mass of wreckage as he pressed his handkerchief against his cheek.

"I'm glad you've got the receipt for the Cosden jewels," he said. "As quickly as I can turn 'em into money, I've got to send Mitchell fifteen thousand dollars. He's the fellow who owns the auto gyro; and, you see, I promised him that he would get it back. Poor devil! I guess he'd rather have the money at that."

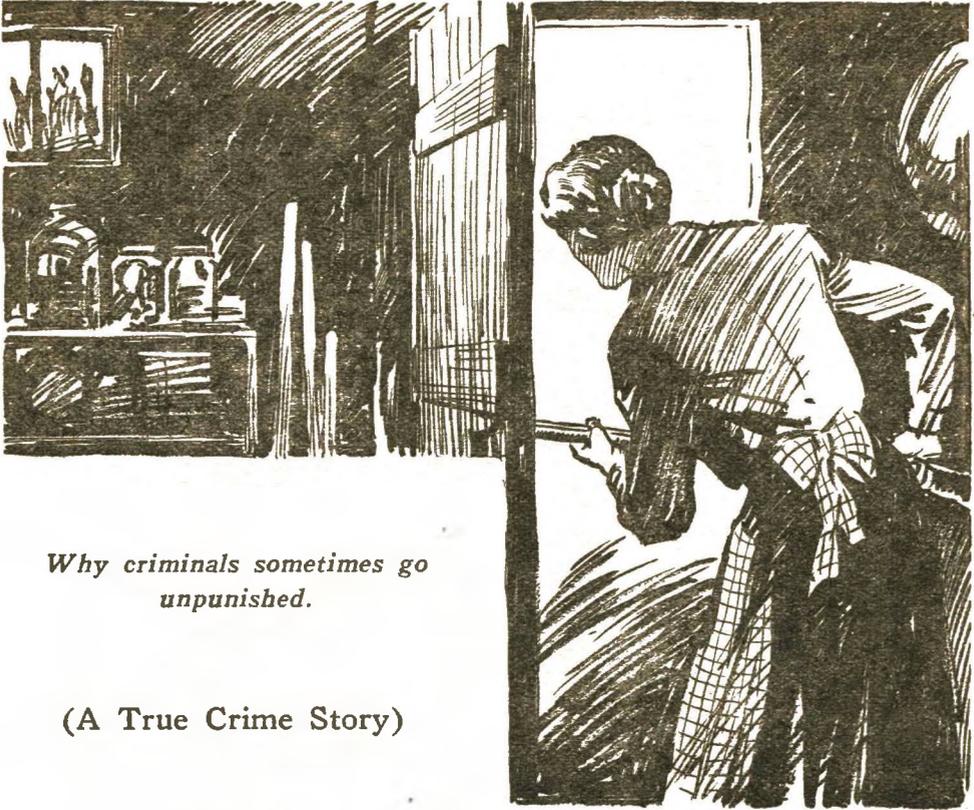
THE END

### SIX MILLION TAGS

IT is said that more than six million sets of tags for hunters, motor cycles, and dogs were manufactured by prison convicts in the State of New York during the past two years. This is a big increase since 1920; even in 1929 there were only one hundred and twenty-five thousand sets of tags made—there are two tags in a set. During times of business depression it has been found, men will spend their unemployed time fishing and hunting, rather than driving cars, and that the demand for small size tags increases during those times.

### A ROOMING HOUSE HAUL

BURGLARS entered a rooming house at Revere, Massachusetts, recently. Perhaps they intended to steal money but could not find any, or else they were optimists and merely took what was at hand. In this case, it was one hundred and sixty-five sheets, thirty blankets, and three hundred and fifty pillow cases. Possibly, the burglars intended to set up housekeeping on a large scale. Certainly, they would not be able to get very much for these used articles in case they wanted to sell them.



*Why criminals sometimes go  
unpunished.*

(A True Crime Story)

# UNPUNISHED CRIMINALS

By CYRUS CHAPIN

NOTED POLICE EXECUTIVE AND CRIMINALIST

**M**ORE often than the general public knows, many major or serious crimes such as killings, kidnapings and blackmail are committed and never known, at least in the true version. Even the police and newspapers may remain ignorant of the real facts; however, this means no lack of ability on their part.

A great many cases are handled by skilled private investigators and internationally known detective agencies and settled out of court without graft or crookedness being apparent.

A prominent motion-picture magnate whom I will call Hale was said to have died of a sudden attack of heart failure. This was at Holly-

wood where he was well known, well liked and respected. He was in the prime of life.' It was not known that he ever wandered from his own fireside in search of affection from the fair sex; in fact, he bore the best of reputations in every way. He was a steady-going, normal, talented producer and director of motion pictures.

Following his death, his wife, who was absent in San Francisco, was wired for, and, on her arrival, she found the body at the undertaking parlors of a reputable firm. In her natural excitement and grief, she did not even so much as think of foul play until a friend voiced a suspicion that all was not as it should be. Mrs. Hale called in an expert private investigator who was a member of an international agency of high standing.

The investigator, to whose reports and data I happened to have had confidential access, reported first to his chief:

"Mr. Hale was shot through the heart."

"What?" cried the excited chief. "Do you mean to tell me that a crime like that was pulled off and—and——"

"I'm handing it to you straight chief," replied the investigator, "impossible as it may seem. Money and influence aplenty are keeping the true story from getting out, though, as far as I'm able to learn, only a bare half dozen perhaps know what actually happened. You know"—he gave the name of a rich and influential publisher, Mr. X—"Mr. Hale was being entertained on board his yacht by Mr. X's sweetheart. Mr. X happened to appear as the yacht lay tied to the wharf in Los Angeles harbor. He wasn't expected. It was a case of jealousy at white heat. He pulled a gun and shot Hale once—

that was enough—straight through the heart.

"The crew all happened to be away except a flunky and a watchman; the watchman heard nothing; must have been down below or on some other part of the craft; the flunky received a big piece of jack to keep quiet, and the girl stands pat as to the original story that Mr. Hale and she were dining when all of a sudden he collapsed and fell out of his chair at the table, stone dead.

"The police were not called in at all. The girl phoned for the undertaker who looked after the remains, took them down to the city to his parlors; he must have worked hard and fast, but, as it was late, about midnight, there were few if any people about the wharf; at any rate, no questions were asked. I've seen everybody but the man who fired the gun who should be——"

"In the hands of the police," began his chief, then added slowly: "Perhaps! Who knows!"

It will be said that this was a case of graft, hush money and crookedness all around. My friend, the investigator, does not say so. He does not admit any such charges, and he and his chief are exceptionally fine, honest men. They got the principals together, that is, the widow, the publisher, the girl, the flunky and the undertaker. There was a long and serious consultation. Although the publisher was guilty of killing a man, he had considered the act justifiable at the time, and though he confessed to having made this horrible mistake, he pleaded humbly for forgiveness. He paid the widow a very large sum of money; he also paid the others handsomely enough, but it appeared to be the avoiding of a scandal for all most closely concerned in the matter that

was considered the principal motive for not punishing the publisher.

One will hear this case talked of occasionally in Hollywood among motion-picture people, but, as far as the case ever being revived again, it is a foregone conclusion that it will never be done.

A few years ago in Canada, a millionaire in Toronto was shot and killed in the library of his home by an unknown hand. A large internationally known detective agency had the case. They had not worked long on it when they discovered that the millionaire's son-in-law had shot him. Now, it is a hard thing to explain just why this agency did not have the son-in-law arrested at once for the crime. There are two or more sides to this kind of a question. When a lawyer is retained on a case, he is supposed to be and usually is loyal to his client. Should the same principle not apply with detectives?

At any rate, this agency, I happen to know, was not even suspicious of the fact that the son-in-law, who retained it on the investigation for the family, had anything to do with the killing. It found out also that the millionaire had been in the habit of threatening his son-in-law and had been mean—so it was said—to some of his family. He had a large amount of life insurance which went to his wife and daughter.

The agency was not paid a cent more than the regular rate for the case, yet it let the son-in-law go free because the daughter and the widow pleaded for him and because an arrest and trial would cause a great scandal. Besides, a trial does not necessarily mean a conviction. This murder, as a matter of course, belongs to the long list of unsolved murder mysteries, and yet, to those

who know the facts, the case is simply one of many where the party who did the killing goes free.

My mention of detective agencies is not meant to imply that the oldest and most reliable ones ever do anything underhanded or dishonorable, for it is my opinion from my experience with them that they do not. There are occasionally dishonorable and grafting police officers; and the same condition may be found among private detectives, but those with the very largest of the agencies have to be straight and honorable in every way or they could not exist.

Among crimes committed under cover, that is, infractions of the law that are never known outside the principals themselves, the many cases of poisoning for insurance money used to cut more of a figure than now. It used to be a frequent occurrence for a beneficiary to find his or her way into what appeared to be easy money through the arsenic route. Doctor Henry Meyer of Chicago and New York, a good many years ago, was accused of poisoning seventeen victims for insurance money. He had a great deal of money, accumulated through his practices, and succeeded in avoiding the chair though he was convicted on three counts of fifty years each, a total of one hundred and fifty years in the pen. But for a great many years, his crimes were all done under cover; that is, no one but his sweetheart, to whom he married several of his men victims, knew that he was a poisoner, and she appeared to be hypnotized by the doctor.

The idea that murder will out is not true in all cases if we mean by that statement that the public, the newspapers and the police eventually know who committed the killings.

Every mining camp in history is full of true tales of victims of the assassin found in abandoned shafts; and the killers often remained unknown for all time.

In the days of old San Francisco, the killings that must have occurred in Chinatown and on old Barbary Coast were undoubtedly many compared to the present day, but many of these went into police records—when reported to the police at all—as disappearances. All that has been written and told about underground Chinatown in San Francisco, in the days before the earthquake, we cannot accept as literally true because the Chinese themselves are not naturally an evil lot. They are, on the contrary honest, high principled and not given to deeds of violence. But the toughs that used to roam the Barbary Coast and hang out in and around the dens and dives of these sections—Chinatown and Barbary Coast—would apparently stoop to do anything, no matter how low, for money.

I personally know it was possible to get a party "bumped off" for from ten dollars up. I never had occasion to drive bargains of this kind, but knew tough customers who could always put one in touch with still tougher ones who were in the bumping-off business, or any other kind of business to turn a dishonest dollar. Nowadays, we hear a lot about gangsters and racketeers, much of which is true, but we must remember that everything is made public much more freely, more quickly and widely than it was just a few years ago.

It is not the intention of this article or anything I write in any way to advertise any detective agency; however, without my mentioning any names, the reader may take it from me that the oldest detective

agency in the United States, now in existence since 1850 is reliable and honest. There are others, understand, that are, no doubt, just as honorable, but I mention the *oldest* one because I was with it during part of my experience in that line of work. During my time with it I remember that its records of criminal cases it handled all over the world showed that just about one in every ten cases was ever known to the police!

Of course, if not known to the police, then such cases were not known to the newspapers, and consequently never to the public. From this, it would be consistent to figure that there are even more than ten times as many crimes committed as are reported to the police, because the police quite often learn of crimes or have reported to them crimes or suspected ones, about which they say nothing and which never come to trial. They are treated in a confidential manner, perhaps, or may be of insufficient importance to report. All of us certainly have broken some kind of a law for which we have not been punished. It may have been nothing more serious than "borrowing" a watermelon or an apple or—among boys in country districts, of course—stealing a pigeon, or a ride on the back of a cart when the driver didn't know it.

Among the criminal cases handled by the large detective agency I mention above, when I say only one in ten cases was ever known to the police, I mean there was no good, honest reason why they should be known to the police, the newspapers or the public. Some were cases of embezzlement or defalcation, where a bank cashier had gone temporarily wrong, and the case would be settled out of court. All publicity would be avoided because the defaulter had

made the shortage good and had been allowed to go free without disgrace. Other cases were suspected murders, and also cases of disappearances, which latter sometimes were found to be murders.

So often in writing about crime, criminals and detection, one comes up against the matter of a lack of data. Actual decisive and definite figures cannot be given to back up all statements. Much has to be left to what you or I actually think about it.

But it is safe to say that the number of crimes like murders, done under cover, and never known as homicides, must be very large, as well as the number of killings reported as "heart failure" or disappearances.

But we are not losing our faith in humanity, yet. The papers, the motion pictures, the radio, feed us crime in torrents, but we still believe there is more good than evil in mankind.

Murder is, of course, a gruesome subject, but it does most forcibly confront us now. It is, and has always been, a problem in all stages of civilization, that is hard to solve. I handled an unusual case some years ago in which the Law, as represented by the sheriff and myself, decided to be kind-hearted and lenient to the killer and incidentally never regretted it.

A miserly old devil of a farmer in a farming community down in Indiana disappeared, leaving his wife and neighbors in absolute ignorance as to where he might have gone. He had a hard reputation with everybody who knew him; was known as a mean, surly, ill-natured man, so stingy he practically starved his wife in a condition of feeble health. He could not keep hired hands because he was too mean to work for; any

occasional help he had only remained for a time because they felt a certain sympathy for the woman.

Weeks went by, and the wife remained alone in the old farmhouse, and the sheriff advised her to employ the international agency to which I was then attached to find her missing husband. I was detailed on the case; it was what we called an open investigation. When I arrived on the ground, I saw the sheriff first. He said, among other things—and casually enough, as though attaching no importance to it—that the wife of the missing man had not taken a very active part in searching the woods on and adjacent to their farm, when parties had gone out to hunt for her husband.

When I called on the woman, I found her to be a frail, forlorn-looking sort of creature of probably forty. Her health was feeble, and her interest in life seemed to be distinctly on the wane. I had some difficulty getting her to talk about the case and about her husband, but she finally got started and confessed that he had been very mean to her in every way except actually to beat her. He had mistreated and driven away pets she had tried to keep about the place; in her presence, he had strangled a poor, innocent little canary bird she had tried to keep. When tears finally came to her eyes, she said it was a relief to cry; this was the first time she had wept in years.

"I thought," said she, pitifully, "that I had forgotten how to cry. Oh, I should not talk about him, now that he is gone—gone."

She had turned suddenly chalky white. She looked at me with agony written on her features, and then all at once she moaned:

"I believe you are good and honest and will be fair to me if—if I tell

you something—tell you all, in fact, I know about this—about my husband's disappearance."

I knew by the way she looked and acted she was about to confess something to me that was important. Little did I know its real importance, however, until she spoke again. I nodded for her to go ahead.

"You see," she began, "when they hunted for him, they did not look around the house or in the cellar because they did not suspect me in any way. In a corner of the cellar which has no window, there's a room with a heavy door, and in that room, which he always kept locked, I've often thought he kept some of his money hidden. The walls and floor are of heavy cement and stone. One day, when he had been more than usually horrible to me I saw him go downstairs and I followed him. Catching him unawares, I locked him in the room.

"I could just hear him squealing faintlike through the door; upstairs, I couldn't hear him at all. He kept begging for me to let him out. I told him I wouldn't let him out until he promised to give me my freedom and enough to live on in money or property; that I would write out a paper to that effect and he must sign it; otherwise, he could stay there and die for all I cared. He refused, and I could tell by the way he squealed he was almost mad with rage. Three days and nights went by and then I heard no more noises, not even the slightest suspicion of a movement coming from behind that door.

"I took his shotgun and held it in front of me and told him I was going to open the door, and, if he tried playing any tricks on me, I would shoot him. I don't know whether I would have shot him or not, but that was what I said, anyway. I

managed to unlock and open the door, and inside I found—I found—that he had hung himself to one of the big rafters over his head. It was—horrible—horrible. I shut and locked the door again and closed the main cellar door and came upstairs, and I—I've been waiting, praying for strength to tell the right person all about it. That—that is my story.

"Of course, it being wintertime, down in that cold place, he must be frozen. I did not mean for him to hang himself. I thought he would give in and I would be free at last. Now what are you going to do with me? I suppose I am guilty of killing him."

At my request, she told me in detail all about his treatment of her through the years. I never heard of such cruelty in all my life. I saw the sheriff, and, without saying a word to anybody about it, we went together and saw her.

"She's been a good, kind, patient little woman," said the sheriff. "Every one knows that. If it's all right with you, what do you say if we simply report this as a plain case of suicide? That's what it is when you come right down to it. Of course, he was mad with rage—stingy mad, afraid to the last to let loose of a cent. It was coming to him all right. In all the years she has stood for him, he has never been known to do a good, kind thing for her."

What the sheriff proposed was all right with me. Later, the widow sold out and moved away to California where in more pleasant surroundings she could forget. And this particular case went down in local history as suicide—and one that was not regretted by a living soul.



# DEADMAN'S HIGHWAY

By WARREN KIMSEY

*He got more out of the party than he expected to.*

**B**EING an officer don't always keep a fellow from getting stranded in the wrong ship. Yeah, even if you are on business, you can get tangled up in a mess that makes things look bad for you. Well, anyway, in the future I'm going to try to mix a little more business with pleasure and not so much pleasure with business.

But what's a guy going to do when he gets mired down up over the axle in one of these little towns

so far back in the sticks they have to keep bands on the hoot owls' legs so the farmers won't make a mistake and sell them for chickens?

And there's this Doc Fanchet, who is the most sociable guy who ever went over the mountains. He's got him a gold mine and working four leads all at the same time. Only I don't know it when he invites me back in his private office to have a sociable glass of his port wine. But it's safe and all right since the State don't have any prohibition laws of

its own and the Federal officers are so busy in Tennessee that they haven't ever got that far West, as yet.

Well, the town is too little to have a nice hotel and too big to be without one. So what does this Doc Fanchet do but build him a combination hotel-hospital. Yeah, that's what he does. He can feed a guy goose liver in the dining room until he gets the cramps and then shoot him across the hall and cut out his appendix. And when a good-looking dame eases up to me in the dining room, I don't know whether to order beef stew or stick out my tongue so she can take my temperature.

So that's the kind of a hole I'm stuck in. And, of course, I jump at a chance to be sociable when Doc Fanchet throws me a line. But I can't help but wonder about the heavy crop of grass he grows on his face. I'm wondering if maybe it hides a scar of some kind on his chin.

"A young physician my age couldn't get within shooting distance of these married women without the beard," says Doc Fanchet, stroking the foxy hay crop on his chin. "You see it adds fully ten years to my age. So that's why I wear it," he explains. "It's all a matter of business, and it gives me a better standing in the community."

But since he don't bat an eye when I tell him I'm thinking about locating a small sheep ranch in the country, I let it go at that.

There's a young fellow playing around the hotel-hospital who arouses my attention. But as the State engineers and all kinds of other men are tearing up the earth for the new highway, the town has got more than its usual crop of strangers. Doc Fanchet does drop

the information that this boy is a special magazine salesman.

It's only the second morning after I've landed in the town that I come down to breakfast just in time to keep a big fat waiter girl from shutting the dining-room door in my face. But I get in, even if it is five minutes to nine. Then another dame comes over to my table and she's not a bad-looker. And she's got a twinkle in her eyes.

"Well, big boy, you must have had a good bed last night?" she throws at me.

"I did," I say. "Don't know when I have slept any better."

"It's the mountain air," she says. "Makes all the strangers sleep the first few days."

I look her over again at that crack, about me being a stranger.

"Well, why didn't you come up and wake me?" I hand her.

"I would have if there weren't so many rubber necks around this place," she says. "Ain't it strange how two minds will run right along the same track even if the folks haven't ever met?"

That's still another eye-opener.

"Maybe you know the number of my room?" I say, trying to hand her a mean dig.

"Right again," she says. "It is No. 35."

Well, I start ordering some coffee and toast before the dame tells me whether I snore or talk in my sleep.

But this is all side-show stuff compared to the big act that is getting ready to break. It begins on Sunday afternoon when this Doc Fanchet wants to know how I would like to go for a little ride over the country in his auto. It's quiet around the hotel, and I'm dying for some ray of light that will break through the fog.

"Suits me fine," I tell him.

Right at that minute, this young fellow that I have seen around the hotel walks into the office.

"This is Mr. Smallwood, Jimmy Smallwood," introduces Fanchet. "I have invited him to go along with us if you don't mind."

"Not in the least," I come right back since it's all I can do under the circumstances.

But I can't help but wonder why Doc Fanchet wants to include this kid in our party. I'm thinking he'd be more at home in the tennis game that's going on in a vacant lot across the street. But he seems tickled to go with us. So I have to put it all down that Doc Fanchet is trying to help both of us kill time, since we're guests at his hotel.

After we've been driving for fifteen or twenty minutes through the country, Fanchet stops his car.

"Mr. Dillard, here's a place that can be bought reasonable," he says. "And it would make you a fine sheep ranch."

As I turn my head, I notice the boy friend in the back seat giving me the careful up and down at the mention that I might be interested in a sheep ranch.

"Yes, it does look all right," I admit, not knowing any more about sheep than I do about a magpie's grandma. "And I'll have to come out in the near future and look it over. But what is the reason for that funny pile of rocks over there?" I say, grabbing at the first thing that will get his mind off sheep.

"Oh, that was put there by the Indians," says Doc Fanchet as he starts his car and jumps head-first into a story.

As we ease into the outskirts of a little town, Doc Fanchet feels us out like this:

"I've got some special friends liv-

ing here, and, unless I am badly mistaken, there will be a little party on this afternoon. Nothing wild, you know. Just enough home brew to keep things lively and everybody in a good humor. How would you gentlemen like to stop for a while?"

"Suits me," I say, thinking maybe I can pick up something hot.

"Same here," sings out the young man with the rosy cheeks.

Well, it's a party all right, and it gets my immediate attention on account of two things. First, because all five of the gentlemen in the house are about four shades livelier than they've got any right to be on home brew. And, second, because there's a good-looking Mrs. Somebody who is giving the party in her home, but I don't find a name among the five gentlemen to match up with the one she carries.

Right from the jump, she proves that she's one of these resourceful dames who knows how to handle men. The coming of three more don't seem to make any difference to her. She invites us to leap right on in, and, ten minutes later, you'd thought we started with the party.

Of course, I hit the home brew light. And I'm surprised to see the boy with us doing the same. Anyway, if the three of us had've tossed it down by the gallon, we couldn't even have seen the tail lights of the five men in the house, they are so far ahead of us.

Any coyote with his eyes packed full of sand can see that all five men are crazy about the dame. But you couldn't turn a searchlight on her and tell which man she liked, if any. Yeah, I'll say that dame knows how to play her men. Then, right when the party is hitting on twelve cylinders, in walks friend husband. Or, rather, he staggers in.

Well, in the part of the country

where I was raised, that would've been the signal to fight or run. But nothing like this happens. Husband merely wants to know what in the blankety, blank, blank is going on around there. And the wife does seem a little surprised at this sudden interest on his part.

"But, listen, Henry, you must not talk that way before our guests," she coos. "Can't you understand that all of these gentlemen are guests?"

"Well, well, who—who—who invited them here?" Henry wants to know, still unimpressed that a host should be delighted with such an assorted male group.

At this time, the five gentlemen gather around Henry and assure him of their devotion to do anything he wants them to do. And the charming lady rushes over to Doc Fanchet and Smallwood and myself, who have drawn slightly apart and within easy reach of the door.

"Oh, please, don't mind Henry," she says. "He just got a little too much and I'm so ashamed of him. So please don't leave."

Well, it does look like a shame to run out on the party after the pretty lady begs us to stay.

By this time, Henry has decided that he is a real host. So he grabs up a couple of bottles of home brew and ambles all over the room in an effort to find a customer. Failing in this, he drops the bottles and starts for the stairway. Up he goes. That's the last we see of him for a while.

After that, the party gets normal and the guests and our charming hostess scatter all over the house. I've got a clear head on me, but, if I was to be put in jail for the rest of my life, I couldn't tell just how many times that gang runs around over the house. They go in all the

rooms. They go up and down the stairway. But Doc Fanchet and Smallwood and me kept together and never set foot upstairs. The dame makes several trips up and down, and I get a picture in my mind of Henry sprawled out on the bed with her looking in now and then to see how he is coming along.

Then we get a yell from upstairs that dries the blood in our veins. By the time we crowd into the front hallway, the dame has reached the top of the stairway. She pauses here and lets out another yell. She jumps halfway down and gives out another one and points back up the stairs. The three of us catch her at the bottom and she's still yelling. She's gone cuckoo, and we can't get a word out of her.

Doc Fanchet takes charge of her while Smallwood and me dash up the stairway. And there on a bed in the first room we hit is a man all smashed up. Yeah, he's a wreck. And we don't have to look any farther than the broken chair on the floor to see how it was done. I feel of him, and he's already getting cold. He's one of the five men that were in the house when we came on the scene.

Somebody has murdered him.

Smallwood and I dash through the other three rooms and find them empty. We search the closets and look under the beds, but nobody is up there. The dame is the last one to come down. I can't help but wonder about Henry and what has become of him.

"It looks bad for somebody," I say as Smallwood and I start back down the stairs.

"It sure does," he agrees.

Then we pause on our way down. Henry ambles in from the dining room and stops at the foot of the stairs.

"Listen, I'm not going to stand for it!" he yells. "I saw you with him, Effie., And I'm going to fix you and him both. You thought I was too drunk to know. But I fooled you. I fooled you that time."

Then he starts looking around for his wife. But she's laid out on a couch, groaning and taking on. Yeah, she's too wild to pay any attention to a drunk husband.

"Oh, and to think it could happen in my house," she wails. "I can't stand it. I can't stand the disgrace. What will my poor mother say? Oh, what will she say? And she always tried to raise me right. Oh-o-o-o-o!" She lets out a scream that would've melted the wax in a brass monkey's ears.

And it's a mess, any way you look at it. For once in my life, I'm wondering where I'm going to get off.

By this time, there's a move on the part of the guests to sneak out. But I know that won't do. Some one in that gang is a murderer, and we've got to stand together for protection.

"No, you don't," I say and catch a guest by the seat of the pants and turn him around as he is heading for the front door. "Everybody stays put until the sheriff gets here. And I'm taking charge to see that you do stay. So don't any of you birds try to sneak out and leave the rest of us holding the sack."

"And I'm right with you," sings out this Jimmy Smallwood. "You watch the front door and I'll guard the back door. Nobody goes out that way while I'm on the job."

I take a quick glance at this smooth-faced boy who looks like he's played hookey from high school and think his name ought to be Oaktree instead of Smallwood, because of the way he jumps in to help me. Yeah, there's something about him that

warns the rest of the bunch that he won't stand for any fooling whatsoever.

"And now, Doc Fanchet, you call the sheriff and tell him to bring two of his biggest wagons," I tell Fanchet. "He'll need them to haul this bunch to the jail."

But he don't stampede for the telephone. He pulls me over to one side.

"Don't you think the three of us had better slip away quietly?" he asks. "We're not any of us to blame and we might escape a lot of undesirable publicity by not being here when the officers arrive. After all, this was not our party."

"No, it wasn't our party at first," I tell him. "But it sure does belong to us now, and how! Everybody in this house is under suspicion for murder. And we've got to stick together. So we stick. And get that! Now get on the telephone and get the sheriff."

He looks at me to see if I am stalling.

"I don't mean to be caught here," he says.

His hand starts toward a hip pocket. But I'm too quick for him and squeeze the pistol out of his fingers.

"You'll pay for this," he snarls.

I jam the pistol in his ribs and turn him around.

"Now get over there to the telephone and call the sheriff, or I'll use the gat on you," I tell him.

I stand close enough to hear the voice at the other end, and I know the sheriff is on his way.

He dashes in on us a little later with four deputies, and we turn things over to him. When he learns that Smallwood and myself have held the gang together, he tries to give us a break, but, of course, we're under suspicion. I get a chance to

give him a word on the quiet and slip him this:

"Put one of your best men in charge of that room upstairs and don't let anybody go in there until you can have a chance to give it a careful examination. That broken chair is important."

The sheriff does this, but his biggest concern is to get all of us safely locked up. I think maybe I can clear myself with him, but I don't want to try it right then with him so excited. And then I can't get away from the fact that I'm in the house when the murder is committed. So I go right on to jail like a lamb with the rest of the bunch. And I've got a reason for wanting to go to jail with that bunch and get locked up with them.

They throw all eight of us men in the big room together.

There's Henry, still too drunk to know what he's saying or doing. He keeps right on talking and accusing his wife of something and wanting to get even with somebody. That makes it bad for him. Jimmy Smallwood don't act like he is worried. But Doc Fanchet is scared. Anybody can see that. I catch Smallwood watching him.

The dame has been locked up in another room. And the four fellows who were at the house when we first blew in are still pretty well stewed. But one of them is coming out of it too fast. Either he can take a lot of it, or he wasn't as far gone as he let on like he was at the party. I give him some special attention.

Finally, I let Sheriff Dawson know that I'm ready to talk, and he takes me to his office. He tells me that the murdered man is Sol Snelling, superintendent of the Bushnell Construction Company. This information gives me a jolt, and I'm

hotter than ever to grab the murderer. Snelling is in charge of all the work going on out on the new State highway.

"First of all, we've got to get hold of that chair," I told the sheriff.

"What for?" he wants to know.

"Finger prints. It ought to be covered with them, the way the person who used it beat up Snelling."

The sheriff shakes his head.

"We don't know anything about finger prints out here in the country," he says. "That's city stuff."

Then I start explaining myself and what I'm doing in the community and he believes it.

"And I'll go you a new hat that I've already spotted the murderer," I tell him.

"You're on," he tells me.

Well, we chase over and get the chair. And, like I said, it's smeared all over with finger prints. Then I yank my man out of the crowd at the jail and make the comparisons. He claims he's an oil man and sails under the name of Jeff Rawlings. The finger prints prove he's the man who used the chair on Snelling.

"What made you so sure of the man?" Sheriff Dawson wants to know, tickled pink because he is clearing up such a nasty mess in record time.

"The fact that he sobered so quickly," I say. "He wasn't half as drunk as he let on like he was. He gave this away a little while after you locked us up. The other three men were too far gone for a job like that. And Henry couldn't have hit a stewed pumpkin with a barn door, let alone a man with a chair. And the dame wasn't strong enough to deliver such blows. Doc Fanchet and Smallwood and myself never did leave the lower floor. That puts us in the clear. So who do we have left? This Jeff Rawlings, of course.

Why, man, we could convict him on that kind of evidence without the finger prints. And then, unless I'm badly mistaken, we're going to find a real motive back of this murder."

And we do.

But, first, Henry has to weep on my neck and tell me what a fine fellow I am and for me to come to another party at his house. He says he's going to hold one in my honor in a few days. And the wife, well, she walks right up and busts me open with a kiss before I can dodge—she's that glad.

The three other birds sneak off like they had some wives at home to settle with, maybe. Jimmy Smallwood don't do any more than stand there and grin like he never was very much scared. Yeah, he's a cool one for a magazine salesman. And Doc Fanchet? Well, he apologizes for the way he acted and thanks me for keeping him from making a fool of himself when he wanted to run away from the party.

And that's about all, except that, when I make my report by wire, Fred Bushnell of the Bushnell Construction Company comes tearing over from Denver in an airplane the next day. Yeah, he tells me that I've caught the bird that has been making them all the trouble like blowing up a steam shovel, and maybe being responsible for two other mysterious deaths. It's been so bad that the company can't hardly keep men on the job so as to get the work done in time to keep from losing out on another big job. And this murdering his superintendent, Snelling. Well, Bushnell thinks he's going to pin something on a rival company that has been causing him trouble. So my goose is hanging high. I'm due a big slice of pie for clearing up the mystery of Deadman's Highway.

And there's still just one other little thing. I meet this Jimmy Smallwood on the hotel steps with a guy who is carrying a little satchel.

"We've got a patient to shave," Jimmy explains. "How would you like to come along?"

"I've got something more important," I tell him.

"Better come along," he urges me. "It's going to be better than you think."

This mystery gets me, and we push on into Doc Fanchet's private office.

First there's Sheriff Dawson and two of his deputies. And then, on his own operating table over by the window, sits Doc Fanchet.

"I tell you, it's an outrage," blusters Fanchet.

"You see, he needs a shave," says Smallwood with a twinkle in his baby-blue eyes.

They pin him to the table and the barber goes after that crop of hay on Doc Fanchet's face.

When it's all over and Doc Fanchet is nicely powdered, Jimmy pulls out a picture and passes it over to me. It's Doc Fanchet without the grass on his face.

"He's about as smooth as they make them," says Jimmy. "You see, he builds himself a combination hotel-hospital out here and cuts two ways on that. Folks can come here either as hotel guests or patients and get all the dope they want. Then he got the contract as attending physician for the Bushnell Construction Company. But he double-crosses them by doing a big business selling dope to their workmen. I've been on his trail a good while. His plant here is one of the biggest clearing houses for narcotics in the country."

Well, that's feeding it to me a little too fast. When we get out of

the office and I can draw some more wind into my startled lungs, I wade right into this Jimmy for information.

"You mean to tell me you're a detective, too?" I yelp.

"I have that honor," he says.

"Why, why, you're the last man in the world I'd pick for a detective," I tell him.

"That's my best disguise, and

thanks for the compliment," he says. "You see, I'm one of the new type the department is using. Young men. We can go any place and never be suspected."

Well, I've got to hand it to Jimmy Smallwood. And before I go to bed that night, I turn back the covers and look good to see if maybe a baby detective is hiding in my sheets.

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### A SLEEP AFTER FOURTEEN YEARS

**F**OR fourteen years a resident of Nashville, Tennessee, ran away from his conscience. When a person has a conscience—that is, a troubled one—they say it robs him of his night's sleep. It was in 1917 that the Nashville man forged three checks and was sentenced to serve from three to fifteen years in prison. About six weeks later, he escaped, and that was when his conscience began to grow uneasy. He didn't mind at all being taken back to prison, but he did not quite have the courage to take himself back.

So he enlisted in the army, believing that his finger prints would be spotted. As it happened, no one recognized his finger prints. He went to War, was wounded twenty-two times and decorated for bravery. After that, he joined the San Francisco police force. Still his conscience kept nagging at him. So he resigned and became a guard at San Quentin prison. He married, but was later divorced. Even these trials and tribulations did not bring balm and peace to his soul. Finally, he gave himself up in Cincinnati, and now his conscience is at rest. He told authorities that his act had brought him the first peaceful sleep he had had in fourteen years.

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### CHEERFUL MOURNERS

**I**N Hammond, Indiana, it is reported that a policeman noticed a funeral procession passing through the street from East Chicago to Indiana Harbor. The officer realized suddenly that he himself was wearing a far more dolorous expression than the mourners who followed the hearse. As a matter of fact, the mourners looked unusually pleasant. Then the policeman remembered that this was not the first funeral procession which had passed along his beat that day. He recalled that these other mourners, too, had been wearing contented looks. Then it dawned on the policeman that there was no cemetery in Indiana Harbor. Following up this inspiration, he ran after the hearse and wrenched open the door. Inside were cases of liquor. The policeman decided that this was enough to make any funeral procession look pleasant.



*Colonel Goddard takes up other countries in Europe and tells about their crime laboratories and how crime is solved.*

# Crime Detection in Europe

PART TWO

By CHARLES E. CHAPEL

LIEUTENANT, U. S. MARINE CORPS

**C**OLONEL GODDARD, in commenting upon the Scientific Police Laboratory of Lausanne, Switzerland, said: "Here we find the scientific police school in its highest state of efficiency; noteworthy, scientific spirit; great driving force, excellent and ample equipment." Coming from the director of the foremost American scientific crime detection laboratory, that is, indeed, high

praise. The course at Lausanne lasts for three years, and embraces such subjects as anatomy, chemistry, photography, and toxicology. Students come here from all over the world to study under Director Bischoff, who maintains his own private laboratory on the top floor of one of the University of Lausanne buildings. Included in the equipment of this office are a library, a collection of twelve thousand photo-

graphs, which illustrate every conceivable crime, a museum of fire-arms and ammunition, a collection of burglar tools, and examples of every type of counterfeit money.

In spite of the large attendance at Bischoff's school, few of its students ever receive degrees. In order to complete its course of study, they must exhibit a capacity for independent research in virgin fields; few possess either the ability or the patience. To eliminate duplicated effort, the university undertakes routine studies in pathology, biology, toxicology, and chemistry, but, during vacations, Director Bischoff jumps into the traces and runs through every imaginable test, providing, of course, it is absolutely essential to the solution of crime mysteries.

The university and Bischoff serve all Switzerland; the city of Lausanne is, itself, covered by the activities of its local finger-print and photographic laboratory. The usual finger-print records are kept here, and the prisoners fall victim to the routine "mugging," but the outstanding accomplishment is the photography of crime scenes. Where an American police force would possibly send a surveyor to map the crime locale—as they do in Los Angeles—the Swiss make floor plans entirely by photography, supplementing the pictures with notes that explain anything the camera fails to register. The advantage of photographs over maps is still a matter of argument among leading scientific detectives, but the European tendency is to overdo, if anything, this one subject.

In the United States, we form our impression of a country largely from the emigrants it sends to our shores. Unfortunately, we have witnessed a

preponderance of shootings, bombings, and knifings on the part of those who come from the land of the Black Shirts. It may come as a surprise, then, to learn that the Italian police countenance no monkey-shines, that life there to-day is free from racketeers. Deportation of our Italian criminals would be equivalent to a death sentence to many who would be "sprung" from an American jail in five minutes, with the aid of a shifty shyster and a crooked bail bondsman.

In Rome, Italy, there is a school of criminology that trains magistrates, lawyers, and others who handle criminals, but who are not police. This institution is housed in the University of Rome, and possesses a small museum of objects taken from famous trials, a classroom, and a projection lantern which is used to throw pictures of criminals upon a screen. There is also a group of posters which depict features of criminal faces according to the now obsolete school of Lombroso. Although the instruction here lasts but a year, it is a requisite for advancement in the judiciary.

The influence of Lombroso extends into the scientific police school of Rome. Every item of information about a suspect's family and personal history is carefully gone over to find a clew. Everything noted is recorded in bulky files which line the walls from floor to ceiling. An examination of a case includes the history of the prisoner, the photographic and verbal record of the crime scene, and a thorough study of the material evidence.

In taking one's history, photographs and finger prints are but the introduction; the police inquire into race, religion, politics, education, physical condition, associates, choice

of literature, and expression of ideas.

With the photographs are filed comprehensive descriptions of every object found where a crime has happened. Colonel Goddard gives this as an example: "The distance from the tip of the murdered man's nose to the (burned) end of the burned match—which lay pointing in an easternly direction at an angle of five and one half degrees with a line drawn from the right edge of the door jamb to the rear leg of the fern stand—was just seven and one half centimeters."

The visitor also observed: "Just what is the value of their elaborate verbal description of crime, localities, I fail to see. Of course, a photographic record cannot give the depth of the dent in the wall made by the flatiron which Mrs. O'Leary threw at her husband's head, and in such instances verbal record may be useful. At all other times, copious photography is quicker and better."

The Italian police have plenty of modern equipment for the scientific study of clues and exhibits; their school of instruction is housed on three floors of a large building; there is a national finger-print file of nearly three thousand cards; a laboratory for instruction in the taking and photographing of finger impressions is kept busy; and a museum offers the usual exhibits of the means taken by famous offenders to enter prison. The thing which caught Colonel Goddard's eye here was a "Traut Minima," a portable carbon arc lamp which can be plugged into wall sockets at crime scenes, for the better illumination of dark hovels during the first inspection by the police; its use has enabled the officials to find minute objects that led to the final solutions.

The Medico-legal Institute of

Bucharest, Roumania, gave the observer an impression of completeness; the buildings are large and numerous; the equipment is modern and complete. Doctor Minovici, its director, has accomplished astounding researches in the photography of the dead, and the identification of bodies.

This establishment occupies two ample buildings, especially designed for the purpose, with a mortuary chapel in the center of a beautiful courtyard. Its rooms are large; its museum contains a carefully indexed and clearly labeled collection of body organs pierced by bullets and knives, or corroded by poisons; a group of skulls perforated with bullets, with the fatal bullets and the firearms that fired the shots; and specimens of bullet-shattered glass with examples of every kind of cartridge used in Roumania.

In the special schoolroom for Roumanian police students, Colonel Goddard found a series of large posters illustrating criminal types according to facial characteristics. This he attributed to the influence of Lombroso; it contrasted strangely with the other practices of the progressive Roumanian police.

One of the interesting accomplishments of Doctor Minovici, the director of the Medico-legal Institute of Bucharest, is the identification of partially decomposed bodies by restoring them as near as possible to their original appearance. This is done by cleaning and sewing disfiguring wounds, incising swollen tissues, supplying artificial eyes, placing the bodies in lifelike positions, painting the face and hands with cosmetics to restore the bloom of life, and holding the eyelids open by pinning them back.

At first thought, this might appear horrifying, but the observant

colonel reports that it was far less repulsive than visiting the usual morgue with its' ashen-gray corpses. As a matter of fact, he nearly shook hands with one body which had been placed upright with its arms outstretched. So thoroughly is this work performed that the five hundred law and medical students who are required to take a course in the institute before receiving degrees become artistic embalmers before graduation.

The Roumanian Scientific Police Laboratory was found to excel in its collection of propaganda records and in the study of bombs. This is practically the only establishment of its kind in Europe which provides a special room for the study of bombs and infernal machines, but its walls lack reënforcement, with a resultant danger to every one in the building if an explosion took place. Colonel Goddard expressed the opinion that the ideal method of bomb study should include a preliminary inspection by radiography which would ordinarily reveal the nature of the metallic contents, the location of the firing mechanism, and the arrangement of clockwork in timed bombs. Unfortunately, the Roumania police have not yet taken this precaution; a slight motion there might send their whole police headquarters into the air.

The Budapest, Hungary, Medico-legal Institute specializes in pathological cases, leaving toxicological and strictly police investigations to outside experts. Under Doctor Kenyeres, its director, the institute has attempted to accumulate information about firearms, and has started a collection of models of fungi, mushrooms, and molds; aside

from these two side lines, it has been unable to devote much time to research. This state of affairs is due to the fact that Doctor Kenyeres has little opportunity to do anything except serve in court as an expert witness, or teach the three hundred students from the law and medical colleges who are required to embrace this subject in their schedule.

The institute is housed in a large building, with a morgue some distance in the rear; obviously, the architect realized the foolishness of expecting scientists to do their best work with the stench of embalming fluid in their nostrils. The laboratories are on the first floor, together with a large amphitheater and the quarters of the director. On the second floor is a museum divided into rooms where special collections are exhibited. One of the most interesting of these is that of photographs of wounds of the hand self-inflicted by draft dodgers.

Another worth-while section is the one devoted to models of fungus and mushroom in their natural colors and size; this is one of the few places where it is possible to clear up a case of accidental or deliberate poisoning by toadstools or similar growths. The only other exhibit of value is a room full of arms, cartridges, bullets, and charts of the rifling specifications of different arms makers. This collection is consulted as cases arise; actual experiments are conducted on a short rifle range in the basement of the building. On the whole, the Hungarians are doing as well as they can with their present limited staff and scarcity of equipment; at least, they recognize the value of science, whether or not they have succeeded in talking politicians into appropriations.

In next week's issue of Detective Story Magazine, there will be the last of the series of "Crime Detection in Europe."



*It was a skin game where you  
either paid or died.*

# SPUD AND THE TAXI RACKET

By CHARLOTTE DOCKSTADER

**I**T would be nice," Sue, my wife, said the other day, "if we could live some days over again."

"But it's nicer," I came back, "that we don't have to live some of them a second time."

I was referring to a run of days that are still fresh in my mind. So fresh, in fact, that I get squeamish if a passenger appears suddenly out of nowhere or gives me a lonely ad-

dress late at night. I'm speaking of that spell a few months ago when a bunch of racketeers decided to cash in on the Meteor Taxicab Company, and, failing in that, turned their grasping attention to the Meteor taxicab drivers.

As I say, they tried to squeeze the company first. They lay a good groundwork, those fellows, before they begin to tighten the screws. Before they approached Hiram B.

Hill, the president, several of the boys met with rather unfortunate accidents. I was one of them.

I was driving a woman up Sixth Avenue when a truck careened around a pillar of the El, sideswiped my cab, and sent the contents of a barrel of sauerkraut, that was three quarters juice, cascading over on us. My passenger and the inside of my cab received most of it. A cabbage-flaked Niagara gushed through the open window, showering the seat and the woman with a mess that certainly wasn't attar of roses. And, big as it was, the truck slid around a corner and flashed out of sight before I could blink the brine-soaked shreds out of my eyes.

I pulled over to the curb, and the woman lit into me like a fury. She'd been chic and chipper when she hailed my cab, but she certainly was a ruin then. Her black velvet costume resembled the skin of a cat that has been caught in the rain. The plume on her Eugenie hat had as many slivers of cabbage clinging to it as it had fronds of feather. And dripping morsels of pickled vegetable hung from the snuzzle of the wolf scarf that was slung across her heaving shoulders. Her eyes were black lightning.

"You are ze one crazy driver," she berated me, in Frenchy English. "Hitting into trucks and bringing mess like dis all over me."

I tried to explain that the truck hit me, I didn't hit it. But say, negotiating for world peace is a cinch compared to pacifying an angry woman. Her tongue was traveling so fast that she battered the words right back into my mouth, and she ended up by demanding that I either take her to a police station or to the head of the Meteor Taxicab Co. Well, naturally, I preferred facing Hiram B. Hill.

He was sitting at his desk going over some reports with Oscar Heineman, his secretary, when the sauerkraut twins breezed in. Heineman was a dapper little shrimp, with patent-leather hair and three black eyebrows on his face—the extra tuft of hair tickling the skin between his nose and prim upper lip. Oscar never thought much of mere taxicab drivers and less of me in particular. I was a fresh redhead riding for a fall, according to compliments relayed from him. With a sniff of disgust, he jerked out a lily-white handkerchief that he held up to his nose while he jumped to yank up a window.

Old Hiram B. never batted an eyelash. Patiently, he listened to the woman. Neither of us had a ghost of a chance of wedging in a word. When her breath finally gave out, he reached for his check book and pen.

"How much damage do you figure was done to your dignity and clothes?" he asked quietly.

"Five t'ousand dollars," she responded promptly.

The pen fell from Hiram B.'s hand. "That's a rank holdup!" he exclaimed. "I thought you were honest when you came in and now I see it's only another skin game."

"Skin game?" She pondered over the expression for a second. Then her eyes spit fire and she sprang to her feet. "You are saying that I am dishonest, yes? That I, Contess Marie de Charmaine, have hired a tub of cabbage to dump over on me so I can collect money? Well, now you will learn that it does not pay to call names. Many times that price I set will not take care of the bill."

Like a cyclone, she whirled out of the office. Heineman threw me a distainful glance. Soberly, Hiram B. studied me.

"Maybe I talked too much that time," he reflected. "You're usually careful, Spud. How did it happen?"

I opened my mouth and, at the same instant, somebody opened the door. Airily, a well-dressed little Italian blew in. He inhaled a deep breath of the cabbage-laden atmosphere, grinned at me, winked at Oscar, and walked over to Hiram B.'s desk.

"I represent the Taxicab Safety Co.," this chap boldly announced. "News travels fast. I just heard that one of your men met with a rather unpleasant accident. That's too bad. But I wonder if you are aware that for five dollars per cab per week we insure you against trouble like that."

Searchingly, Hiram B. eyed him. "You mean you settle the damage suits that arise?"

The Italian shook his dark, curly head. "Not exactly. We guarantee that such accidents won't happen. In other words, we protect you against deliberate persecution."

"I see." Hiram B. Hill's eyes were ice under the frost of his bushy gray brows. "Plainly put, if I don't pay you five dollars every week for every cab I run, numbering at present six hundred cabs, your dirty company will see that I have a lot of accidents as unfortunate as this one. That's the threat behind the proposition, isn't it?"

The Italian shrugged. "I wouldn't exactly put it like that," he snapped with a nasty smirk.

"Oh, you wouldn't! Well, I'll put my answer like this." Hiram B. Hill's fist struck the desk. "If you wrecked every cab I have on the streets and I had to call all my men in, I wouldn't knuckle down to cold-blooded thievery such as this. I'd blow the rotten gang of you to bits

before I'd come across with a single cent. You'll go over to the station house with me, you crook, and we'll lay your generous offer before the police."

"Says you!"

There were just those two words, a mocking laugh, a slamming door, and the man was gone before we could budge an inch. He wasn't in the corridor when I dashed out, and the elevator boys all swore that not one of them had taken him down, holding their noses while they talked to me. Disappointed and boiling, I returned to the office. Heineman was raising more windows and Hiram B. was apoplectic with rage.

"It's preposterous," he snorted, reaching for the telephone.

"It's outrageous," Heineman also agreed, frowning and tapping his pencil on the desk. "But why not think it over, chief? Noble as it is to be game, what does gameness amount to if your business is shot to pieces as a result?"

His brows beetling with amazement, Hiram B. gaped at dapper Oscar. "You mean you are advising me to pay a gang of hoodlums and crooks for the privilege of operating my cabs on the streets I am taxed to keep up?"

Coolly, Oscar nodded. "Isn't it better than spending all your profit for repairs and lawsuits and maybe having the hoodlums you refer to buying the company at a receiver's sale in the end. Safety is worth something, and, besides, perhaps that fellow had nothing to do with the accident."

That got a laugh out of me. "Yeah?" I snapped. "Perhaps these are geranium petals sticking to me."

"Or moss," Oscar came back. "You're dumb enough to have almost anything sticking to you."

"But not dumb enough to kowtow

to a mob of crooks," I retorted. "I'd fight until there wasn't a spoke left in a wheel of a cab."

"Sure," he agreed, his voice honey sweet with sarcasm: "And you'd lead the cops right to where the head of the mob was polishing his Sunday diamonds, get your picture in the papers, and rescue the company from the strangling clutches of racketeers."

"Why not?" I countered, my voice as sugary as his, though I was hot enough to melt the sugar to sirup. "I might do just that if it was up to me."

"It is up to you, Spud," Hiram B. cut in. "It's up to every driver of a Meteor cab to protect his passenger, himself, and his car; to do his level best to help us trace the men behind this contemptible holdup. I'll have a reception committee here from headquarters to welcome any one of them who ever sets foot inside this door again. Not one cent will any mob ever get from me. I'll call every cab in off the street first."

"Which won't be very profitable for you or your drivers," Oscar reminded. "But why worry? Maybe this first attempt to squeeze you will be the last. Anyway, you've got 'Hawkshaw McGee' on the trail—after he takes a bath."

He said it with a whimsical grin that might have fooled the old man, but it didn't fool me. I knew he was being nasty, not humorous, and hotter than ever I took me and my smell out of the room. There was plenty of time to square accounts with him, I consoled myself, after the daily horizon was cleared of the cloud that threatened my bread and butter.

For a few days, things were calm after that, except for the hectic time I had cleaning my cab and airing myself, and except for the court pa-

pers that unfortunately, an honest-to-goodness countess served on poor Hiram B.

"That gang will let the Meteor bunch alone now they've found out that the chief won't come across," "Chunky" Schmidt, my pal, predicted.

As it happened, it was the very day after he voiced his hopeful remark that the storm broke. Failing with the big boss, they decided to land on the necks of us little fellows who couldn't afford a bold comeback. There wasn't a one of the six hundred of us who, within a forty-eight hour stretch, didn't receive warning that he better pay up or the rattler would strike. We all got the message the same way, on a small white card in a small white envelope.

I spied mine on the seat of my cab after a passenger I had hardly noticed got out. At first, I thought it was something that had dropped from a pocket or a bag and I lunged in to salvage it in case it might be important. I had a hunch it was bad news the instant I lamped my name typed on the envelope. I wasn't surprised when I yanked out the card and read:

From now on, during the first fifteen days of every month, the Taxicab Safety Co. will collect twenty dollars as a monthly operating fee from the driver of this cab. Have two folded ten-dollar bills in your pocket. When a passenger says, "Is safety worth the price?" hand the money over without resistance if you want to live to drive your cab unmolested through the streets of New York.

You can imagine the excitement and panic those cards let loose. Some of the boys rushed straight to Hiram B. Hill with them, and he promptly rang in the police.

"Don't any of you boys pay over as much as a dollar!" Hiram B. ordered.

"The first one of you to be accosted, just turn your collector over to the nearest policeman and we'll soon have those birds rounded up," the captain of the precinct Hiram B. reported to, promised.

"We'd have a fat lot left if we did fork it over," Chunky grumbled, "when only a topnotch driver makes more than thirty a week. It doesn't matter so much to me, at that. But with married men, like yourself, Spud, and like Jimmie Miller, it's another matter entirely. Twenty dollars a month out of his earnings would mean no butter on the bread of Jimmie's little brood."

"Why, it's like the dark ages, Spud," Sue, my wife, declared when I told her, "when there was no organized law to prevent one man hitting another over the head and taking what he wanted away." There was the spark of battle in her brown eyes, but a frightened twist to her lips. "It—it would be yellow to give in."

I nodded. "Nary a copper will they scare out of me," I most firmly insisted.

All that week, as the first of the month drew near, whenever you saw a group of taxicab drivers clustered together, it was a safe bet what was the subject under discussion. And I'll bet there wasn't a one of us, who showed up for work on the first day of the month that was to begin our Waterloo, who drove with a normal heart.

Serenely, John and Mary Public rode in Meteor cabs during that spell, knowing nothing about what was on the driver's mind besides the roads and traffic lights ahead. It is odd, when you think of it, how close the passenger in a cab is to the driver and yet how far apart they are in more ways than the rungs of the social ladder.

DS-9F

By noon of the first day the collectors were due on the job, Hiram B. Hill's office was in an uproar from the accounts that were pouring in. About thirty of the boys were held up in the early hours, and by evening the number had swelled to fifty. From some mysterious source the new Taxicab Safety Co. seemed to be able to check up on the Meteor cabs and drivers. It knew where all the stands were, the addresses and names of the chauffeurs, and the license and hack numbers of the cabs. No driver was bothered twice and those approached paid without a quibble. Tersely, the ones I met summed up the situation.

"Life is sweet," Ole Fursner said. "I was up on Sugar Hill, in Harlem, without a cop in sight when I was told to fork over. I can't even describe the guy. All I'm sure of was that his hand was in his pocket and the pocket bulged. So I forked. A big sedan that was following us picked him up. No, I didn't follow. Guys like that are too apt to be good shots."

"I was down at the docks, alone with my passenger and the river, when a fellow demanded the dough," "Shorty" Peters reported. "I can't swim, so I paid. He stuck a strip of adhesive tape over my eyes, and all I recall of his departure was the backfiring of a car."

"I helped a fare carry a heavy suitcase into a dark hall on Tenth Avenue," Sam Taylor informed. "The hall smelled like a tomb, and, when the man asked for the twenty, I didn't argue."

Sort of tense, Jimmie Miller smiled and his hands tightened on his wheel. "They haven't reached me yet," he said, "and somebody's sure going to be out of luck when they do. I've only got two bucks to my name. I don't suppose you

fellows want to chip in the other eighteen to save a buddy's life?"

He was joshing, of course. Nevertheless, there was a scared shadow in his gray eyes as he sat there staring through the windshield of his cab. I put my hand in my pocket and touched my roll. I had forty-eight dollars in all, money I was saving for a new overcoat, and I debated whether or not I ought to stake Jimmie to the needed eighteen. I drew out my hand—empty. We all do something we regret to our dying days.

Why should I give it to him?—I reflected. For one thing, he was only joking. For another, it wasn't right to hand over our hard-earned cash to a bunch of crooks. They were only bluffing. Any man who had backbone enough to stand up against them was bound to win. I didn't intend to come across myself, though all the fellows shook skeptical heads when I told them so.

Somehow, the picture of Jimmie staring out through the windshield of his cab as if he was looking at ghosts stuck in my mind. With a shiver, I watched him drive off to answer a call from Riverside Drive. All the way home, I thought about him, wondering how he'd come out if he found himself up against it. I had my answer before long. Chunky rang up while Sue and I were at supper. The tone of his voice braced me for a blow.

"It's about Jimmie Miller, Spud," he blurted. "A cop discovered him half an hour ago, slumped at the wheel of his cab, in a yacht-club yard along the Hudson River. He put up a scrap and got a bullet for his pluck. There was a card in his hand with their rotten threat printed on it as a lesson to the rest of the crowd. 'Is safety worth the price?'"

I swallowed, but it didn't ease the

weight on my heart. "What hospital is he at?" I asked, hoping against hope.

Chunky drew a deep breath. "The one known as the morgue," he answered. "I guess it's up to us to pay if we have a yen to go on living. Emptying our pockets is better than filling our graves."

"I won't give in," I insisted. "No regiment of crooks is going to put anything over on me."

Big talk, wasn't it, from a little red-headed, freckle-faced guy? I'll admit my words had a rather hollow echo as I hung up the receiver and turned to Sue. She made me drink a cup of hot coffee before she let me talk.

"Jimmie Miller," she faltered then. "It's terrible, Spud. He should have remembered his babies and not risked his life."

"He couldn't help himself. He had only two bucks and I knew it," I owned up, pulling the wad from my pocket and flinging it on the table. "I was tempted to give him the balance but I wasn't quite generous enough to make the grade."

Tears glistened on Sue's lashes. "I understand," she said.

"We'll buy him some flowers with a little of my roll," I raved on, "and the rest can go to his wife. I'm a fool, I suppose, but I couldn't wear a coat that money bought now. Every time I put it on, I'd feel Jimmie's cold body crawling into it with me."

"It isn't your fault, Spud," Sue comforted. "You are no more to blame than the chief of police or Hiram B. Hill. But I know how you feel." Thoughtfully, she fingered the bills and her brown eyes lifted to my blue ones. "How about money for yourself? The twenty you may need at a moment's notice."

Steadily, I looked at her. "I

thought we decided I wasn't to knuckle down to their thieving demands," I reminded her.

"But this is different," she said. "They've proved themselves killers, Spud."

"It is different," I agreed. "Before I had the right to make my own choice. I haven't any more. I owe it to Jimmie's memory to put up as game a fight as he did."

Sue shook her pretty head. "It's worse than foolhardy, Spud. You can't win single-handed."

"Why not?" I replied, with confidence gaining ground as I chattered. "A crook's a crook, and somewhere about him he's bound to show his yellow badge. I'll keep my eyes open, and those birds won't get the draw on me. I'll spot my man first, and the rest will be entirely up to the cops."

Sue's fingers locked together on the white tablecloth. "And my prayers will be following you, Spud," she said bravely, "every foot of the way."

It was her gameness, along with the thought of Jimmie, that bolstered me up during the next few days. Not a man or a woman got into my cab that I didn't give them the third degree with my canny Irish eyes. Not a call to a lonely neighborhood came for me that I didn't set out wondering if I'd ever see Sue again. And driver after driver was tapped on the blue shoulder and relieved of a twenty-dollar bill, but nary a tap came to watchful, waiting me.

The papers raised a great hullabaloo over Jimmie's murder, and jail accommodations were at premium owing to the regiments of gangsters and petty crooks the police net hauled in. Big shots and the little shots were kept hopping on a griddle hot enough to set fire to the matches

in their pockets. But not a ray of light was shed on the whereabouts of the Taxicab Safety Co. or its rotten mob.

I went to Jimmie's funeral with Sue. Hiram B. was there, his genial face lined and gray. Hovering close to him was dapper Oscar Heineman, subdued for once. He was beside me when they carried Jimmie's coffin past, and beads of perspiration were out on his brow like dew.

"He was a fool to resist," he remarked. "It's his own fault that he's dead, but I'd hate to see any more murder done. I hope the other boys profit by his example."

That was a lot coming from Oscar, who didn't think an army of taxicab drivers worth a hair out of any one of his three eyebrows.

"Yeah?" I said. "Well, there'll be another fight when they tackle me, with the odds all on the Irish. I can smell a crook a mile away, and it's going to be just too bad when I spot one of that breed."

More big talk, you'll say. Sure it was, but it helped. For, you see, I was speaking more to myself than to anybody else, trying to convince me that I really was "Spot-your-man McGee."

In a sweet, peaceful fall dusk, the day Jimmie was buried, I was spinning up Sedgwick Avenue, taking a short cut home and turning over in my mind how I'd meet the enemy on the morrow. The number of drivers still left to pay was getting low, you know, and I figured that by another day the hawk's talons would sure be reaching for me.

It's lonely on that part of Sedgwick, with the Harlem River a few feet off to the left, a park sloping up the hill at the right, and the last lap of a series of bridges touching *terra firma* overhead. Usually, I take that route because it cuts off traffic and

shortens the minutes that separate me from Sue.

I was rolling along the poorly lighted street, with nothing in sight but a speck of a man in the distance, when a black sedan whizzed out of the dark behind me, slowed up, and came to a stop a scant block ahead. I stiffened in my seat, and my heart was churning as fast as my engine as my little old bus spun nearer to the spot.

My time had come, I told myself, and it was up to me to make good my boast. Say, I collapsed like a pricked balloon when I came closer and saw that the man was alone, studying a road map by the light of his dash. He never gave me a glance as I flashed by. I was still chuckling over my scare when a whistle hailed me from the sidewalk a few blocks on.

A dubby old fellow, who walked with a limp and a cane, was beckoning to me from the sidewalk. I'm never averse to clicking some extra shekels into my meter even on the way home, so I pulled up and flipped open my door. He climbed in and sank back on the seat and I trundled off with a grin. It was my passenger, leaning forward in my cab, who wiped that grin completely off my face.

"What's up, buddy?" he said. "Who's your trailing friend?"

My trailing friend! My eyes leaped to my mirror and I saw the big sedan rushing on. There's something about a pursuing car that always telegraphs warning to the car ahead. I had no doubt it was after me from the second I saw it coming. But it wasn't my battle now. I had a passenger I had to protect. Not half a dozen blocks away, the lights of a busy cross street were shining. There'd be a traffic cop there. If I could make that——

"It's a devil who's trying to get me," I shouted back. "Sit tight and don't worry. We'll give him the slip."

My foot plunged down on the gas, and the cab leaped forward with the lunge of a horse that's been whipped. My passenger toppled back on the seat, but I was too busy getting him out of danger to fret about inflicting a few bumps. Wildly, I tore along, swerving into ruts and out again, my wheels barely meeting the pavement.

In the mirror, I could watch the black car gaining. The cross street was still blocks away when the sedan roared abreast of me and the driver craned his head out of the window. Like a mask of leering evil his face loomed in the faint light. Like the crack of a pistol, his first word rang into my ears.

"Is——"

I mouthed a prayer and pressed on the button that controlled the gas until the metal cut into my shoe. And the black car kept pace with me.

"Slow up, buddy," I heard the driver call. "Do you want to catch up with death? Is——"

Suddenly, his whole body seemed to go rigid. One hand left the wheel and flew toward his pocket and I knew in a flash that death *was* catching up to me. I realized that, if he shot, I couldn't save either myself or my passenger. We'd be hurled into wreckage and he'd probably go sailing merrily on. I had to strike first, and I did it in the only way I could. In a last mad effort, I sent my car ahead and quickly jerked the wheel to swing it directly across the path of the oncoming monster.

They used to call me "Lightning" when I went to school. But something swifter than lightning mowed

into my car and plowed me down. The wheel whirled out of my hand and a wall of splintering wood, crashing glass, and darkness, rolled over on me.

I smelled flowers when I opened my eyes and thought I was still at Jimmie Miller's funeral. I lay quiet for a moment and, in a shaft of sunlight, Sue floated between me, a hospital wall, and a vase of red roses. She dropped to her knees and caught hold of my hand.

"Spud, honey," she whispered. "You were so long coming to."

I tried to wink and discovered my humor was smothered in a bandage.

"Not so long," I replied, "for a guy who has jumped from the front seat of a cab into a hospital bed." I paused for a moment, wet my lips, and went on. "Tell me, Sue, what happened to that devil?"

"He thought he was dying and asked for an officer, and confessed. He didn't kill Jimmie, but they've already rounded up the ones who did. And, Spud, darling, that Oscar Heineman from the office is mixed up in it. He furnished information for a split of the money. You said you could smell a crook a mile off.

Did you smell him?" she teased, with a twinkle in her eyes.

"I couldn't, Sue," I said. "He used too much violet hair oil to smell anything else." I sobered to ask a second question. "And the man in my cab? What happened to him?"

"I've told you about him. You mean the man in the black sedan; don't you? He's only scratched up. He thought you were drunk when he raced you to ask you if that was the way to get to the Kingsbridge Road Armory. He didn't notice that your passenger had a gun at your shoulder until then, and he reached for a police whistle that he carried to summon help."

"Oh," I said, signing off for the time being.

It was a week before I admitted to Sue that I hadn't been aware of the gun either. I never owned up to the boys. They have enough to guy me about as it is.

I wonder how Oscar reacted when he saw my picture in the papers. And I wonder if it's ever dawned on him and his mob that it was the same fear of death they worked on us that landed them all where they belonged.

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### DREAM COPS

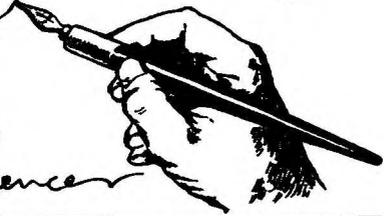
**T**HE justice of the peace at Winnetka, Illinois, was surprised when a man walked into court recently and pleaded guilty to speeding. He said that an officer had arrested him and given him a ticket, but that he had lost the ticket. The justice could find no record of an arrest having been made, and the motorist could not remember who it was who had arrested him or where it had occurred. He only had a memory of having been stopped by a traffic officer. He said perhaps it was merely a dream. The justice fined him three dollars and said he wished there were more dream cops on the force, because money was very welcome there.

# What Handwriting Reveals

Conducted

By

Shirley Spencer



If you are an employer and desire to place your employees in the positions in your office or factory for which they are best fitted; or if you are just about to step out into the world to earn your own living; or if crimes involving handwriting have been committed in your community; or if you want to know the characters of your friends as revealed in their chirography—send specimens of the handwriting of the persons concerned to Shirley Spencer, Street & Smith's Detective Story Magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y., and inclose a stamped, addressed envelope. Shirley Spencer will analyze the samples submitted to her and will give you her expert opinion of them, free of charge.

Also, coupon—at end of this department—must accompany each specimen of handwriting which you wish read. If possible, write with black ink.

All communications will be held in strict confidence. When permission is granted, cases will be discussed in this department, with or without the illustrations. Of course, under no circumstances will the identity of the persons concerned be revealed.

Every care will be taken to return specimens of handwriting, but it is to be understood that Miss Spencer cannot be responsible for them.

A. V. W., Jr.: There are a number of readers, like yourself, who are more interested in graphology now that I have explained that there is nothing occult about it. Some people maintain that they are able to tell you all manner of things from your handwriting. No matter how true they may seem to hit the mark, their work must be discounted as Graphology because they are not judging from the written formations. They may say they get a psychic impression from holding the paper in their hands after it has been in the hands of the writer. It might just as well be a handkerchief or necktie.

Your writing reveals a trained mind and suggests a background of

experience. You have very good business ability, but mentally are fitted for one of the professions. I suggest law. Executive ability is shown in your small, compact script with the rhythmic flowing writing.

*greatly interested in the  
you gave some of  
ideas, especially the one  
you assured the writer  
nothing occult or  
in your method of  
I abhor superstition*

You ought to make a good student. I know why you hate super-

stitutions. You have good reasoning power and, only logic appeals to you. That is why you are suited for the law.

Your difficulty in not meeting an issue is due partly to sensitiveness and partly due to selfishness, and partly to lack of driving force. You are sensitive enough to want to be in the right, no matter how you decide, and you are selfish in wanting to make the best decision with regard to gain for yourself. You hate to make a bad bargain, and are always afraid you might lose out. You aren't very generous, either with your money or your time and effort. Then your habit of weighing everything in the balance causes delay in reaching a decision. You are a slow thinker really, in spite of your background of training and experience. Be more willing to take a chance and make a mistake and abide by it. If you lose a little prestige or money in the doing of it—remember that practice makes perfect. Keep on making mistakes—but do something, rather than stay on the side lines.

A. B. MacN, Venezuela: Well, I should say that the magazine had quite a trip to reach you at the foothills of the Venezuelan Andes!

*Very interesting Magazine  
and very odd covers  
Yes Here I am  
at Palera, state  
of, at foothills of  
Venezuelan Andes—written  
from here you can  
see it on road to*

I have had a number of readers write in from tropical countries who have shown in their writing the effects of the climate on their vitality.

Your writing shows that you are using up your reserve of strength, and that your nerves are not in the best of shape. Your writing runs downhill—another indication of lack of vitality.

Those combative t-bars show that you have a fighting spirit and are well able to take care of yourself. Also those upward curling terminals indicate a hopeful, cheerful disposition.

S. J., Indiana: Yes, your writing does reveal talent for writing. Those graceful and artistic letters, printed with simple strokes are an indication of more than one talent in the arts. You have a sense of design, are dramatic, and constructive.

*Shirley Spencer  
New York City*

*Dear Madam =*

*I would like my  
name typed and I  
have some worth in*

Those broken words show you are highly intuitive. Great sympathy and understanding of people are reflected in your lovely script.

Those flying t-bars show an adventurous spirit and enthusiasm. You are imaginative, highly creative, and have great appreciation of beauty. In order to be happy, you must have a congenial and artistic atmosphere. Beauty means so much to you that you are very impractical sometimes in sacrificing gain for the satisfaction of your spirit.

I really don't think you are

suitable for the law. You are more intuitive than logical.

You are friendly but aloof and exclusive, with great pride and a supersensitive nature.

L. W. L., Minnesota: Yes, I'm still here! So you were a reader when I first joined the staff of the magazine. I'm sorry that your trip to the East Indies and eye trouble have kept you from being a steady reader lately.

*written to the  
of the O. S. M.  
take this occasion  
say I am really  
"old timer" - since  
July 4, 1918 Issue*

I know you will probably laugh at my suggestion, but I really think you should seriously contemplate marriage. When a young man, who loves children as much as you do, begins to get restless and bored with life, he needs to find a wife, and settle down to some serious living. You have traveled around so much that you are "fed up" with everything. It isn't surprising that you aren't interested in women, as you have never been long enough in one place really to get acquainted with the right kind of girl that could make you happy.

Yes, I wouldn't envy the girl that had to take you in hand. You are stubborn—not just ordinarily stubborn, but to the degree of those thick down strokes. You have a

temper, and have strong materialistic appetites.

However, these are points that could be cleared up. Your large, flowing writing tells me you are generous to a fault—even extravagant and wasteful. I can see why you are always leaving one job and seeking something different; you can't and won't concentrate. If you had responsibilities, it would be a case of having to make a go of the job in hand. If you had children of your own, your ambitions would amount, and you would be so anxious for happiness that your bad habits and irresponsibility would just naturally be thrown off.

You won't like me for it, but I'm going to say it nevertheless—you are lazy. Not that you haven't all the vitality in the world and are fond of physical activity, but, deep down in your nature, there is a lazy streak which has never been routed out. When you find a job boring, hard, or routine, you drop it.

Now we are still good friends, I hope. I would like to hear from you again sometime, when you have found the girl and decided life is worth living after all.

M. E. McQ., Wash.: You don't need to shrink back from the business world. Your writing shows that you have will power and can hold your own successfully. The first few attempts may distress you because you have been protected from the hard-boiled attitude while you have been an invalid. Once you take things into your own hands, your courage will return quickly.

Yes, you have executive ability which could be cultivated, and I

think that interior decorating would be suitable. Don't count too much

*ope you will be very  
am quite used to  
and virtutes pointed  
i to hear the truth  
ice person*

on salesmanship, however, as you are too reserved to be the true selling type. See how every letter of yours is closed up tight? Also there is lack of generous spacing, which means that you are the conservative, thrifty type, inclined to be conventional and even narrow. You may change this when you branch out. A little expansion will be good for you.

Don't worry about your faults. You will pass with the majority with a better average than most for virtues.

J. D. W., Indianapolis: Those dashing *i*-dots tell me that you have a very quick mind, as well as a sense of humor. The varying slant and pressure indicates a changeable and inconsistent nature. There is temper and stubbornness plainly indicated in your thick strokes that

taper off and the heavy pressure on your down strokes.

*to understand  
but nevertheless  
your opinion.  
able to read this  
but am writing  
generally do not*

You're an excitable, quick-tempered person with a rather thoughtless attitude, but make friends quickly and are magnetic and vivacious.

It is necessary to send a stamped, self-addressed envelope and stamp with your request for an analysis of handwriting. Canadians may send coin in the return envelope to cover postage. Those in other foreign countries just send return envelope without stamps.

<p><b>Handwriting Coupon</b></p> <p>This coupon must accompany each specimen of handwriting which you wish read.</p> <p>Name .....</p> <p>Address .....</p>
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**WORK FOR THE LANDLORD**

**A** LANDLORD who owns more than two hundred houses in Detroit, Michigan, has conceived a plan whereby his tenants who have lost their jobs may help him and still retain their living quarters. Many of them, because of unemployment, are unable to pay their rents, even though they are low. By the new plan, the tenants work for their landlord at fifty cents an hour, fifty hours a week, painting and making repairs in the various apartments. At the end of the week, they receive five dollars in cash and get twenty dollars credit on their rent.

# UNDER THE LAMP

By GERARD HOLMES

This department is conducted by Gerard Holmes, for those of you who like puzzles. If there is any particular kind of puzzle that you prefer, please tell us, and Gerard Holmes will do his best to give it to you. Also, won't you work on a puzzle of your own, send it in, and let the other readers wrestle with it?

Answers to this week's problems will be printed in next week's issue of Street & Smith's Detective Story Magazine.

All letters relative to this department should be addressed to Gerard Holmes, care of Street & Smith's Detective Story Magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

**W**ELL, if here doesn't come our friend "Primrose"! If you're not familiar with that name, he's John Q. Boyer, 2034 North Fulton Avenue, Baltimore, Maryland. As he has headed our Honor Roll ever since we began one and has been with us ever since our first crypt was published, he should know what a hard crypt is.

1. LFQP - LNFI WOBM -  
TQFV MFQRX CMX -  
HMFNT HFKZ NFSV  
TORKZMT. TOFQXL  
PXS WZTW NFM DT  
T W X M V Z C X P O ,  
N B P O N V T W Z M V  
R S Q Z Z Q.

Sherlock Holmes II has an address but insists on being mysterious. Why shouldn't he run true to form? Let's see what he has to say.

2. U N D U L D X Z K X N Z

U N D U L J A L B E Z J M -  
M J K D X U N D U L Q X -  
J N D N C B Q K U L X Z -  
K A L M . N C C L Z B U N -  
D U M P B J A L L A J F L -  
D U L N C A L Z K U J X G  
N C U N D U N U X J N D .

Another man of mystery, Boob McNut, thinks his crypt is a little difficult, but not too much so.

3. B C F C H I K T C J C B C -  
B M E K T L J S M C J D  
S T A T E D N C L E D I  
O C S N K L J T O L K M .  
O C E E D I J O M B D X K -  
S E K T L J , F D E J F C L ,  
J B M C F N E D I J S M L -  
K L D O M I M C X D I J .

J. M. Kohn, Box 16, Billings, Montana, contributes a long-division problem. The answer is a ten-letter word. Use the 1234567890 letter arrangement.

#### 4. PMT) AICTON (MMEA

TRM

TAT

TRM

MOON

MMNM

ITT

#### *Answers to Last Week's Puzzles.*

D. C. Walker, Elkhorn, Montana, who is famous for hard ones, composed this three-letter-word crypt.

1. One adz may cut off his toe. Any axe can hew elm and oak but the awl has its own use.

If Barbara Leonard, of Hollywood, California, who sent us this crypt, is as good a movie actress as she is a crypt composer, we'll take off our hat to her.

2. Puzzled zebra, missing African veldt, paces zoo cage while prize ox chews cud with bovine placidity.

Was it hard to solve? Edward A. Martin, 224 Rockland Avenue, Syracuse, New York, tried to make it a sticker.

3. Unknown rajah visiting Niagara claims Africa holds many cata-racts with much more beauty.

During the month of October we published nineteen puzzles. Twelve fans had a perfect record. We are holding our own, as twelve fans made the grade last month also.

#### One-hundred-per-cent Fans

SOLVED 19: \*John Q. Boyer, 2034 North Fulton Avenue, Baltimore, Maryland. Claude Spencer, 807 Golden Gate Avenue, San Francisco, California. Frank E. Murphy, 1623 West Sixty-ninth Street, Los Angeles, California. L. M. Todd, John Marshall Hotel, Richmond, Virginia. R. P. Woodman, 1051 Old South Building, Boston, Massachusetts. Mrs. J. B. Wells, 362 Summit Avenue, Steubenville, Ohio. Josephine H. Kelly, 15 Ninth East, Salt Lake City, Utah. Fred E. Miles, 1525 LaSalle Avenue, Minneapolis, Minnesota. Mrs. Anna M. Page, 73 Shelbourne Falls, Massachusetts. Monroe C. Sylvester, Cropseyville, New York. Robert Hardesty, 21 East Fourteenth Street, Cincinnati, Ohio. Bill Duval, 326 Ontario Street, Cohoes, New York.

\*A 100% record for 1930.

SOLVED 18: P. H. Larrabee, 30 Jefferson Street, Bangor, Maine. Isabel Mae Murdock, 6233 Newell Avenue, Chicago, Illinois. Leonard P. Bossard, 54 Partition Street, Renessalear, New York.

SOLVED 17: George LeFevre, 703 Maryland Place, Columbia, Missouri.

SOLVED 16: Mrs. M. Witt, 237 Dowling Avenue, Littleton, Colorado.

SOLVED 15: Otto Hoffman, 130 West Sixty-sixth Street, New York, New York.

SOLVED 14: Plantagenet, Paterson, New Jersey.

SOLVED 13: Ray McGill, 72-36 Sixty-seventh Street, Glendale, Long Island. August Kehr, Jr., St. Louis, Missouri.

SOLVED 12: C. R. Beegle, 219 Thomas Avenue, Riverton, New Jersey.

SOLVED 11: Irene Laun, Washington, D. C.

SOLVED 10: Earl Karstens, 110 East Ninth Street, Lockport, Illinois.

SOLVED 9: James G. Zachary, 2712

Tarlton Street, Knoxville, Tennessee. Charles L. Rohde, 40 Franklin Avenue, Saranac Lake, New York.

SOLVED 8: Jayel, Canton, Ohio. Pearl Knowler, Wendling, Oregon.

SOLVED 6: The Old Ancient Demosthenes, Pittsburg, California. Mrs. George Schreder, 36 Rumsey Street, Seneca Falls, New York. Edward O'Connor, 24 East Street, Chicopee Falls, Massachusetts.

SOLVED 4: R. G. Stark, 2810 West Eighth Street, Cincinnati, Ohio. Mary Hlavaty, 525 East Seventy-second Street, New York, New York. G. Fulton, 3510 Carnegie Street, Cleveland, Ohio. Henrietta Hough, 410 North Taylor Avenue, Kirkwood, Missouri. G. M. Howe, Allston,

Massachusetts. Walter Trawczynski, 5015 McDougall Avenue, Detroit, Michigan.

SOLVED 2: John Martin, 42 Welles Street, Woon, Rhode Island.

SOLVED 1: William Chapman, 1231 Neal Street, N. E., Washington, D. C. J. C. St. Clair, Butte, Montana. Doctor A. F. Kleykamp, St. Louis, Missouri. Jack D. Rodgers, Jr., Farmerville, Louisiana. A. D. Risteen, Travelers Rest Home, West Suffield, Connecticut.

#### PUZZLE FANS' HONOR ROLL

Send in your answers to each week's puzzles, ye fans, and watch for your name on our monthly Honor Roll.

#### COUPON

How to Solve Cryptograms and Long-division Problems.

If you would like to have the above information, please fill in coupon and mail it to Gerard Holmes, care of Street & Smith's Detective Story Magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, New York, and full instructions will be sent to you free of charge.

Name ..... Address .....

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

#### A THIEF TO CATCH A THIEF

**W**HO knows better how to catch a thief than one who is a thief himself? He knows the workings of a thief's mind. And, also, who knows better how to make a lock pick-proof than the lock picker himself? In San Quentin prison, there is a convict who not long ago invented an unpickable lock. He sold the invention to a lock firm for one hundred thousand dollars. The convict, who is serving a sentence on a robbery charge, will be a rich man when he gets his freedom. He declares that he is going into business for himself at the end of his stretch.

# Headquarters Chat

**F**OLLOWING a custom of many years, we asked you several times in the December issues if you would not like to give Street & Smith's Detective Story Magazine to some friend or relative for Christmas. We suggested, too, that you also might like to subscribe yourself. You responded nobly. Last December was the best subscription month that you've ever joined in giving us. That was your answer to the hard times we hear so much about; that was your appreciation for our efforts during 1931, the expression of your confidence in our ability to continue to give you the kind of magazine you want.

We thank you very much, and sincerely. We think that you'll find Street & Smith's Detective Story Magazine even better during 1932 than it has ever been before. And now we hope that 1932 will be your best year, readers of Street & Smith's Detective Story Magazine. Happy New Year to you all!

Next week's issue looks very interesting to us. We're pretty case-hardened, but we found extra fine entertainment in every line of it.

First comes the novelette, "Jungle Clutch." But perhaps you'll not read this first, for there is the exciting second part of the thrilling three-installment story, "The Silenced Four," by Marion Scott, for which you've been eagerly waiting. Yes, we guess that story will first demand your attention.

Among others who contribute to

next week's issue, is John Foland, with "Faith and a Thief." M. I. H. Rogers has written a story called, "Three Buttons and a Toothpick." Other short stories and articles will assure you that we are going to make the magazine far more interesting than ever this year.

Y. G. Suen, Box 692, Dermoth, Arkansas, thinks Apple let's his imagination run a little wild in the *Chang* stories.

"DEAR EDITOR: There is not any doubt in my mind that Mr. Apple is a great writer. But his imagination is too broad and without facts. The things he describes in his hop-joint story are not true, because no such things exist in this country.

"Why does Mr. Apple always place a Chinese in a villain rôle, with a desire to trap an American girl? Such stories have a tendency to create a bad impression of the Chinese people. His *Rafferty* stories are clean and great.

"Your other authors are grand. Tell them to keep up the good work. Hope you will forward a copy of this letter to Mr. Apple, and also print it in the chat. I am,

"A CHINESE WHO KNOWS."

We sent Mr. Suen's letter to Apple after we'd acknowledged it. Here is a copy of the letter Apple sent Mr. Suen.

"MY DEAR MR. SUEN: A long illness put me behind in answering letters. I hope you will pardon the delay in getting to yours.

"The point that you make, about *Mr. Chang* being such a black villain, is one that has given me much thought and worry. For I know many Chinese, and I am sincere when I tell you that I believe them to be the most honest of all races. There is, in *Mr. Chang*, no intent to reflect on your race. In an endeavor to remove any such inference, I have had, in many of the *Chang* stories, *Doctor Ling*, the Chinese detective, after *Mr. Chang*.

"You may have read some of those stories—*Doctor Ling* being employed by the honest Chinese merchants, to eliminate *Mr. Chang* as a blot on their race. After all, it is fiction. The celebrated criminals of the world of fact, are not Orientals; they are whites. So, too, in the Chinatowns of the *Chang* stories; they are unreal, imaginary. The *Chang* stories formed a series about a villain; he happened to be Chinese; no matter what other race he might have been, there would have been objections from that race. Thank you, very much, for writing. With best regards, and hoping to hear from you again,

"Sincerely,

"A. E. APPLE."

Mrs. Anna M. Page, 73 Ashfield Street, Shelbourne Falls, Massachusetts, likes us so well that she keeps us, and has us, almost complete since May, 1925. How many of you can beat Mrs. Page's record?

"DEAR EDITOR: Many times I have thought I would write and express my appreciation of Detective Story Magazine. When I tell you that I have all the numbers except three of the magazine, neatly piled on my attic floor, since May, 1925, you will realize this is true. I was first attracted by the cover illustrat-

ing Apple's story of 'The Glittering Lady.'

"I dive first for the cryptograms. If they're hard, I sandwich in stories between sessions, and often find the right word in the story I am reading.

"As for favorites, I have many: Charlotte Dockstader; John Jay Chichester; Doctor Poate, and Herman Landon. Shirley Spencer also conducts an interesting department.

"Long live Detective Story Magazine, and here's hoping my purse contains the necessary fifteen cents each week, with which to purchase it."

Miss Helen Melhorne, Miss Martha Gilliwat, "Shorty" Overton, and "Buster" Taylor don't say much, though it took four of them to say it. But what they do say is plenty:

"DEAR EDITOR: We have read your Detective Story Magazine for some time now. We think it is the best Detective Story Magazine published. 'His Devoted Squealer,' by Edgar Wallace, was a fine piece of work. Hope you have more stories like it. We also like all the short stories."

Authors, you're all of the "first water," says S. R. Rhode, 11 Charlotte Street, Charleston, South Carolina:

"DEAR EDITOR: I am a reader of your very excellent magazine and, should I write ten pages, they would all be complimentary. I grab each new issue, hoping to find stories or news of my favorite characters. They are *Chang*, *Rafferty*, the *Picaroen*, *Maxwell Sanderson*, *Thubway Tham*, and the *Crimson Clown*.

"The authors are all of the first water. I wish you and the Detective Story Magazine all good things from the South."

# MISSING

This department, conducted in duplicate in Street & Smith's Detective Story Magazine and Western Story Magazine, thus giving readers double service, is offered free of charge to our readers. Its purpose is to aid them in getting in touch with persons of whom they have lost track.

While it will be better to use your name in the notice, we will print your request "blind" if you prefer. In sending "blind" notices, you must, of course, give us your right name and address, so that we can forward promptly any letters that may come for you. We reserve the right to reject any notice that seems to us unsuitable. Because "copy" for a magazine must go to the printer long in advance of publication, don't expect to see your notice till a considerable time after you send it.

If it can be avoided, please do not send a "General Delivery" post-office address, for experience has proved that these persons who are not specific as to address often have mail that we send them returned to us marked "not found." It would be well, also, to notify us of any change in your address.

New readers, help these whose friends or relatives are missing, as you would like to be helped if you were in a similar position.

**WARNING.**—Do not forward money to any one who sends you a letter or telegram, asking for money "to get home," et cetera, until you are absolutely certain that the author of such telegram or letter is the person you are seeking.

Address all your communications to Missing Department, Street & Smith's Detective Story Magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

**K. D. A. B.**—Come home at once. Have moved South. Go to brother's, at 1520 1-2 Eighty-third Street, and he will tell you where I am. Mother.

**CHRISTENSON, RUBY.**—If any one knows the whereabouts of this girl, please write to Vera See, 1938 Elmsere Avenue, Detroit, Michigan.

**HILL, JOHN W.**—Last heard from in McNary, Arizona, where he was working for a lumber company. Information appreciated by Mrs. Viola Farquhar, Beaumont, Texas.

**VERGUS, ARCHIE; GAFFNEY, WILLIAM; TOOLEY** (first name unknown).—Formerly worked for the Florida East Coast Railroad. Will any one knowing their addresses kindly send them to Ida M. Smith, care of Mrs. Jones, Route 2, Box 227, Palatka, Florida.

**ARCHER, BILL.**—Mother is well, and doing fine. So are we. Write to Mae H., care of this magazine.

**HEAD, CHARLES, JR.**—Of Arizona. I have some news for you. Please write to R. Eschenburg, 8 Franklin Street, Mount Clemens, Michigan.

**MENDENSA.**—Will the brothers of Ethel Mendensa (Thayer) or any one knowing their location, please communicate with Mrs. Ethel Thayer, Granite City, Illinois.

**BROCK, HARRY ALEXANDER.**—Was gun captain on the U. S. S. "Texas" in 1914. Any information regarding him or his whereabouts will be greatly appreciated by his old pal, Jimmie, care of this magazine.

**REEVES, ALICE (PEGGY).**—Blonde. At one time known as "the Kodak girl." Last known address was at Ninety-first Street and West End Avenue, New York City. Present address would be appreciated by L. W., care of this magazine.

**NOTICE.**—Would like to get in touch with some one (Protestant) who is acquainted with the town of Millan, Illinois. Kindly address William Alhere, care of this magazine.

**STEPHENS, O. L.**—I am back home, and would like to hear from you. Remember the old songs we sang in Rochester, Minnesota? Write to H. H., 1521 Washington Avenue, Knoxville, Tennessee.

**MOTLEY, RUTH.**—Formerly lived in Canton, Illinois. Last heard from in 1913. Will any of her relatives or friends kindly write to Iretta Hurlocker, 250 Ann Street, Concord, North Carolina.

**MY DEAR.**—You said you would write more, if you knew I received your letters. I have received three or four. We are all usually well. Please send me your address. Mother, 1016 North Van Ness, Santa Ana, California.

**LUND, SELMA.**—Last heard from in 1907, when her address was 1336 Amsterdam Avenue, New York City. Any word as to her present whereabouts will be welcomed by Erik Holmquist, R. F. D., Box 71, Ironwood, Michigan.

**WEBBER, BILL.**—Please write and let us know how and where you are. You need not come back, unless you care to. Everything is forgiven by all. Write to the old home address, or to Flo and Midge, care of this magazine.

**FITZGERALD, MAURICE.**—Formerly of Calgary, Alberta, Canada, where his father was employed by the Dominion Express. Believed to be running a confectionery store in Portland, Oregon. Definite information as to his whereabouts would be gratefully received by Jim McDougall, 716 Crescent Road, Calgary, Alberta, Canada.

**DON.**—Please forgive me. I can't give you up. Gerald has check for you. Write to Curly, 74 Third Street, San Francisco, California.

**SOLEY, WILLIAM.**—My father, last seen in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1918. His wife's name was Grace, and he had two brothers, Henry and Jim, and a sister, Annie. Word of any kind regarding my father will be appreciated by Coby Lee Soley, 3449 Neosho Street, St. Louis, Missouri.

**THOMPSON, JAMES ALBERT.**—A bachelor, about seventy years of age, who is blind in one eye. When last heard of, about fifteen years ago, he was in southern California. Any one knowing his whereabouts, please write to his niece, Miss Guelia Thompson, 233 East Sixteenth Street, York, Nebraska.

**VIRTIS, dear son.**—Received your box of candy three years ago. Am in poor health, and am anxious to hear from you. Please write to your mother, Mrs. Margaret Brown, State Sanatorium, North Carolina.

**COOK, JOHN L.**—Follows the sea, as ellor. Last heard from in April, 1930. He is thirty-five years old, nearly six feet tall, has reddish-brown hair and blue eyes. Any information regarding him will be gratefully received by his mother. Kindly address mother, care of this magazine.

**SMITH, GLADYS ONA.**—Lived in Canandaigua, New York, in 1928. Word as to her present whereabouts will be appreciated by C. J. G., care of this magazine.

**MARTINEAU, WILLIAM.**—Last seen in Warsaw, New York, in 1928. Information regarding him will be gratefully received by C. J. G., care of this magazine.

**RITA.**—Please let your sister hear from you. Have news of interest. Address Mrs. F. E. Mitchell, Route 6, Box 100 Dallas, Texas.

**BARTKOWSKI, WALTER.**—Disappeared from Wausau, Wisconsin, where he was employed, in 1924. He is twenty-six years old, about five feet six inches tall, weighed one hundred and fifty pounds when last seen, has gray eyes, and is adventurous and carefree type. His mother is in poor health, and constantly worries about him. News regarding him will be thankfully received by his brother, Dave Bartkowski, 1921 Vernon Street, Rockford, Illinois.

**POWELL.**—Would like to hear from the brothers of my father, B. F. Powell, or from their descendants. They went to California about forty years ago, and have not been heard from since. My father came from Parkville, Missouri, where he had married my mother, Mathilda Emmeline Cross, or Waddell. Kindly address my information to Mrs. Ruth Powell Welch, General Delivery, Porterville, California.

**TIPPING, FRANK.**—Last known address was 1145 West Harrison Street, Chicago, Illinois. Moved, and left no forwarding address. His daughter begs for information concerning his present whereabouts. Please notify Mrs. Adolf Kunkel, 6011 Peoria Street, Chicago, Illinois.

**DURKEE or CURTIS, CORA.**—My mother. Last heard from in Buffalo, New York, in 1909. She had a sister, Eva Maynard, wife of John Maynard, who also lived in Buffalo, together with their two sons, Arthur and Elmer. Word of any kind regarding my mother or her relatives will be welcomed by Violet Euthuria Curtis, 1 Barlow Street, Canastota, New York.

**LUDVIK.**—It is very important that the children or relatives of Joseph and Mary Ludvik, nee Fix, be located. The family lived in May Street, Chicago, Illinois, about thirty-four years ago. There were four or five children. One of the daughters may now reside in Detroit, Michigan. Any help in finding these people will be appreciated by Mrs. Fay Anderson, 3142 Jackson Boulevard, Chicago, Illinois.

**PAWLIK.**—Of Asbury Park, New Jersey. Believed to be in Newark, New Jersey, at present. He is fourteen years old, about five feet five inches tall, has green eyes and red hair. His sister will be grateful for any news of him. Address Joan Pawlik, 205 Edgart Street, Schenectady, New York.

**BUSHNELL, KID FRANKLIN.**—Would be about sixty years old, if living. Was in Wyoming, Idaho, and Montana around 1897. Word of any kind regarding him, past or present, will be welcomed by Elva, care of this magazine.

**HILL, MR. and MRS. JAMES.**—Mrs. Hill was Laura Francis before her marriage. Mr. Hill was a native of Georgia. They were last heard from in Victor, Colorado, in 1905. Information wanted by Elva, care of this magazine.

**KLADALINE.**—Will any persons of this name, or those who know people of this name, kindly get in touch with J. E. Stearns, 2256 Filbert Street, San Francisco, California.

**STREET, CHARLES RUSSELL.**—Native of Oregon. About forty-five years old. Five feet seven inches tall. Weighed approximately one hundred and sixty pounds. Reddish-brown hair and ruddy complexion. Served in the United States navy during World War. A shipmate, who was in the brig with you at Puget Sound, would like to hear from you. Please write to Oregon, care of this magazine.

**RAY.**—Of "Ray's Place," Ashfork, Arizona, would like to get in touch with him or any one knowing his whereabouts. He is twenty-three years old, tall, dark, and blue-eyed. Any information should be sent to Lou, care of this magazine.

**BIDDINGTON, M. C., or BIDWELL, C. M.**—Of English descent. About forty-eight years old. Did railroad-construction work. Biddy. I am in the S. P. Hospital in San Francisco with John. Sarah and Buster would love to hear from you. Please write to us. Or will any one knowing this man's whereabouts kindly communicate with Mrs. J. M. Miller, 838 East Twenty-eighth Street, Portland, Oregon.

**NOTICE.**—I was an orphan at the Foundling Home in New York City until I was about four years old. I was then sent West with a number of other orphans, and was adopted by some farmers named McPoland. I am now forty-six years old. Information of any kind regarding my relatives will be very much appreciated by Fabian Beckett, Union Trust and Savings Bank Building, Dubuque, Iowa.

**GOGERTY, JOHN and JAMES.**—Left New York City about thirty years ago for the Philippine Islands, and has not been heard from since. His sister, Julia, married Otto Schaefer. Both died some years ago, leaving a daughter, who is anxious to locate her uncle, as he is now the only close relative she has. Any assistance will be gratefully received by Mrs. Helen Wilson, 1937 Seward Avenue, Detroit, Michigan.

**A. W. S.**—Last seen at the S. P. Station in Alameda, California. Your mother is anxious to get in touch with you. Please send your address to the Missing Department. We have a letter for you.

**COHN, ORVILLE LEROY.**—Eighteen years old. Five feet nine inches tall. Black hair and eyes. Part Cherokee Indian. Last heard of in Hobbs, New Mexico, October 25, 1930. Will any one knowing his present address please write to Odessa Sackett, 627 Southwest Sixth Street, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

**KENNEDY, GORDON KENNETH.**—Of Irish descent. Twenty years old. Six feet one inch tall. Black hair and gray eyes. Last heard of in Kilgore, Texas. His present address will be appreciated by Odessa Sackett, 627 Southwest Sixth Street, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

**SIMPSON, BONNIE.**—Last heard from in Pampa, Texas. She is sixteen years old, five feet three inches tall, and has black hair and dark eyes. Information welcomed by Odessa Sackett, 627 Southwest Sixth Street, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

**SAMUELS, VERNIE.**—My brother, whose name was formerly Arthur Vernon Young. He was born in Vernon, Indiana, in 1883. A family named Samuels, living in Oklahoma, brought him up, and he was also taken care of by a man named Craven. Later he went to California. Any information about him will be very much appreciated by his sister, Mrs. Mabel Young Strohm, R. R. 9, Box 580, Dayton, Ohio.

**RODGERS, JUANITA (JENNY).**—Of Spanish-Mexican descent. Last heard of in San Diego, California, in June, 1928, when she lived in Market Street, near Sixteenth. May have gone to San Francisco with her sister. Any word as to her present whereabouts will be gratefully received by Private Chester E. Anderson, N. P. D., U. S. Marine Corps, Mare Island, California.

**WILSON or BARRY, OTIS.**—Last heard from in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, in 1916. Please write to your mother, Mrs. Jennie Gipson, 42 South Peru Street, Plattsburg, New York.

**SATCHELER, WILLIAM.**—Formerly of East Norwalk, Connecticut. Last heard of in Seattle, Washington, about ten years ago. He is forty-six years old, about six feet two inches tall, with dark, very curly hair, which is probably graying. His present address will be welcomed by an old friend. Will any one having information about him kindly drop a line to Louis, 200 Maplewood Avenue, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

**CHILES, WALTER FLOYD.**—Was in Fort Clark, Texas, about twenty years ago. Please write to your mother, Mrs. M. A. Chiles, 369 Holderness Street, Atlanta, Georgia.

**NORTON P., or HICK.**—Left Galt, Ontario, Canada, in January, 1931. Last heard from in Idaho. My letter came back from Missoula, Montana. Have important news. Would like to hear from you. Write to your friend Vannie, Fifth Avenue, Galt, Ontario, Canada.

**BYFORD, CLARENCE (SLIM).**—Native of Oklahoma. Was in Manteca, California, in 1925. Will be, or any one knowing him, kindly write to his old friend Tex, care of this magazine.

**HALL.**—I was born in Seattle, Washington, December 10, 1909, and am the daughter of Fred and Gladys Hall. My parents separated, and my mother married a second time. I was placed in an orphanage, and was later adopted by a family from California. I believe I had some brothers, and would appreciate hearing from any one who can give me information about them or other relatives. Address all communications to A. M. T., care of this magazine.

**CROWELL, HERRERT BRICE.**—Last heard from in 1919 at Toledo, Ohio. Any word regarding him, past or present, will be thankfully received by his brother, Olin W. Crowell, care of B. B. Tombs, R. F. D. 3, Ashtabula, Ohio.

**LaFETRA, RUTH.**—Was in Walnut, California, in 1928. Her address would be appreciated by Olin W. Crowell, care of B. B. Tombs, R. F. D. 3, Ashtabula, Ohio.

**WILKINS, GUY CASEY.**—Oil driller, who was in Spokane, Washington, in 1908. Will any one knowing him or his address kindly write to C. Rhodes, R. D. 1, Epsyville, Crawford County, Pennsylvania.

**SULLIVAN, MICHAEL.**—About fifty-five years old. Last heard of in Chicago, Illinois, about thirty-seven years ago. He was then a plumber. Any information regarding him will be appreciated by his sister, Mrs. Della Sullivan Flaherty, 1821 Irving Avenue, Oakland, California.

**DEVANTIER, CHARLES.**—Lived at 460 Fourth Avenue South, Galveston, Texas, in 1919. Has two sisters, Ruby and Pearl, and two brothers, George and Willie. If any one knows his present address, please send it to Beulah Dornay, 107 1-2 Houston Street, Dallas, Texas.

**ED C.**—Please come home at once. I need you so badly. I still love you, and am not mad at you. Write to your wife, J. C., care of this magazine.

**HAYS, ROBERT.**—Last heard of in 1929, when he attended Western Military Academy in Alton, Illinois. His home was in Webster Grove, Missouri. If any one can give me his correct address I shall appreciate it very much. Please address Alma Engelhardt, care of Mrs. Kate Harris, Orchard Park, Cannon City, Colorado.

**CULLEY.**—Please write to me. No one will know. Won't you help me for Donald's sake? Diddy, care of this magazine.

**GIBSON or GIPSON, JOHN RICHARD.**—Was taken from his father, and placed in an orphanage at Enid, Oklahoma, together with his sister and three brothers. Believed to have been adopted by a family in Fort Worth, Texas. He is seventeen years old, and has dark hair and eyes. Any news of him will be welcomed by Mrs. Lora Gibson, Route 1, Kingwood, Oklahoma.

**HANK, MRS. NELLIE, nee THORNTON.**—Completely tattooed, and known professionally as Lady Artura. She mysteriously disappeared from the Barker Show at Mountain Grove, Missouri, October 1, 1931. She is of Irish-Indian descent, and has dark-brown hair and eyes. Coat of arms is tattooed on chest, and girl in sunburst on back; names Frank and Nellie appear on upper arms, and mother over left wrist; snakes around ankles and elephant heads on knees. Information regarding her will be thankfully received by Frank E. Hank, Company 6, National Military Home, Leavenworth County, Kansas.

**RACKLEY.**—Would appreciate any information regarding my five brothers, Charles, William, Andy, Claudie, and Jos Rackley, and my mother, Amanda Paterson Rackley, who were last seen in Oklahoma. They knew me as Rhoda. Please address Mrs. Elsie Lawrence, P. O. Box 532, Tonopah, Nevada.

**PATRICK, EDGAR.**—Was placed in the Boys' Military Home in Topeka, Kansas, by his grandfather, Hiram Edgar Patrick. His mother has not seen him since 1912 and would welcome any word regarding him. Please write to Mrs. Nannie Edwards, Illinois Street, Lawrence, Kansas.

**McGILL, ESSIE.**—Last heard of in 1928, when she was in Nashville, Tennessee. McGill was her maiden name. She has been married twice. Have important news for her. Will any one knowing her whereabouts kindly ask her to write to her old pal, Mrs. Inez Hollis, Route 1, Box 26, Estancia, New Mexico.

**WINDSOR, LORAIN.**—Formerly lived in Iowa or Illinois. His address will be gratefully appreciated by K. Branden, 101 Park Avenue, Portland, Oregon.

**NOTICE.**—I was born in Hoboken, New Jersey, and was taken from my mother by a Mr. Otto Obermuller when I was about thirteen months old. Through New Jersey newspapers I was advertised for adoption, but was never adopted. This happened in 1913 or 1914, while my father was in Germany. I had two older brothers. Information regarding them or my parents will be gratefully received by Theodora Herman Lenz, 819 Pier Avenue, Hermosa Beach, California.

**T. J. W.**—I have gathered up what tools, bedding, and clothes I could find at Breck, and am keeping them for you. We all hope you are well. Please get in touch with E. K., care of this magazine.

**NOTICE.**—My father, Christopher C. Stream (Strom) was born in Oslo, Norway, in 1845, and died in Marshfield, Oregon, August 19, 1927. His father and mother were Jewish, born in Bergen, Norway, and died in Sacramento, California, in 1906, aged ninety and ninety-five, respectively. They had a daughter, Alice, two years younger than my father, who lived in San Francisco, California. Her husband's first name was George, and he was supposed to be in the jewelry business. She had two sons, whom I am very anxious to locate. Any information will be gratefully received. F. A. B., care of this magazine.

“I’ll see it through  
if you will!”



“**T**HEY tell me there’s five or six million of us—out of jobs.

“I know that’s not your fault, any more than it is mine.

“But that doesn’t change the fact that some of us right now are in a pretty tough spot—with families to worry about—and a workless winter ahead.

“Understand, we’re not begging. We’d rather have a job than anything else you can give us.

“We’re not scared, either. If you think the good old U. S. A. is in a bad way more than temporarily, just try to figure out some other place you’d rather be.

“But, until times do loosen up, we’ve got to have a little help.

“So I’m asking *you* to give us a lift, just as I would give one to you if I stood in your shoes and you in mine.

“Now don’t send me any money—that isn’t the idea. Don’t even send any to the Committee which signs this appeal.

“The best way to help us is to give as generously as you can to your local welfare and charity organizations, your community chest or your emergency relief committee if you have one.

“That’s my story, the rest is up to you.

“I’ll see it through—if *you* will!”

—*Unemployed, 1931*

**THE PRESIDENT’S ORGANIZATION ON UNEMPLOYMENT RELIEF**

*Walter S. Gifford*

*Director*

**COMMITTEE ON MOBILIZATION OF RELIEF RESOURCES**

*Owen D. Young*

*Chairman*

*The President’s Organization on Unemployment Relief is non-political and non-sectarian. Its purpose is to aid local welfare and relief agencies everywhere to provide for local needs. All facilities for the nation-wide program, including this advertisement, have been furnished to the Committee without cost.*



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# CAMELS

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