

STREET & SMITH'S

DETECTIVE

10¢ STORY MAGAZINE

FEB. 1939

Street & Smith's

DETECTIVE STORY

10¢

FEB.



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SOMBREROS

WILLIAM
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TOGERS



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STREET & SMITH'S

DETECTIVE STORY

Title Reg. U. S. Pat. Office

MAGAZINE
Vol. CLVII No. 4

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NEXT ISSUE ON SALE JANUARY 27th — 24th YEAR OF PUBLICATION
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STREET & SMITH PUBLICATIONS, INC.,

79 7th AVE., NEW YORK, N. Y.

HEADQUARTERS CHAT



ANSWERING our recent coupon questionnaire, readers voted 697 for three novelettes in each issue; 542 wished a long novel and one novelette; and exactly 5 desired a serial and two novelettes.

So, we will have no serials, at least for the present.

In popularity ratio, the stories of the September Detective Story, ranked as follows: "Danger—Women At Work," by Russell Bender (2.87); "The Tough Typhoon," by B. B. Fowler (2.53); "The Sinister Chest," by Carl Clausen (2.48); "Not Clever Enough," by John Hawkins (.85); "Horror on a Pedestal," by Eugene P. Lyle, Jr. (.79); "Pinks Don't Like Swing," by Phil Richards (.44); and "Nimble Fingers," by John D. Swain (.31). The last four of these were short stories.

Next month three of the most talented mystery authors in the world today, offer the short novel and two heart-stirring novelettes. First, the inimitable Lester Leith appears in a diver's suit, and then in a gas mask, escorting the lovely sweetheart of a very jealous pugilist, in

THE FOURTH MUSKETEER, by Erle Stanley Gardner

Then, a young author (remember his "Day Never Came"?) who has skyrocketed to the top in the past two years, presents one of his strangest and most gripping emotional mystery novelettes:

MELODY AT MIDNIGHT, by Steve Fisher

The third novelette is by all odds the most dramatic, and probably also the funniest, of the Contacts, Inc., series, featuring Petra Ericson and Clark Dale:

PETE VIEWS THE ETCHINGS, by Carl Clausen

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THE EDITOR.

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The Witness Stand

This first Lester Leith fan just makes this issue. We suspect there may be an avalanche of such letters later.

Dear Editor:

Three long and lusty ones! Lester Leith has come back! Gosh, how I have missed him. A swell story too. Seeing as you promise more of him, I'm sending one buck for a sub. I hope Leith is in every darned issue!

Thanks you, sir!

Yours joyously,
Dongan Hills, Thomas McMahon,
Staten Island, New York.

And some well-deserved bouquets for Carl Clausen.

Gentlemen:

Enjoyed Carl Clausen's story in current issue very much—"Rubber Check Raspberries." Have read many of his stories in *Colliers*, *Liberty*, and the *Saturday Evening Post* and am glad that you have obtained a writer of his ability and style for your magazine.

I for one will look forward to many more Contacts, Inc. stories and anything else Carl Clausen writes. Let's have a lot more of them.

Respectfully, Harry Platt,
356 Seventy-eighth Street,
Brooklyn, New York.

Dear Sir:

I wish to state that both myself and my wife enjoyed Carl Clausen's story in your current edition, "Rubber Check Raspberries," and we like the personalities of his characters. Hope that you will have more Contacts, Inc. stories.

Yours truly,
(Mr. & Mrs.) Frank Lindgren,
121 East Thirty-fourth Street,
New York, N. Y.

Dear Editor:

When I received a year's subscription to your magazine in the contest held last June, I knew it was the most interesting consolation prize I ever won. What I didn't realize was the amount of fun as well as excitement a good many of your stories contain.

I find that Carl Clausen's stories in particular are always good for several chuckles.

Thanking you and all your writers,
I am
Yours truly,
Ella Bertha Hardy,
167 Pettengill Street,
Lewiston, Maine.

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

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

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

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J. E. SMITH, President, Dept. 8ND
National Radio Institute, Washington, D. C.

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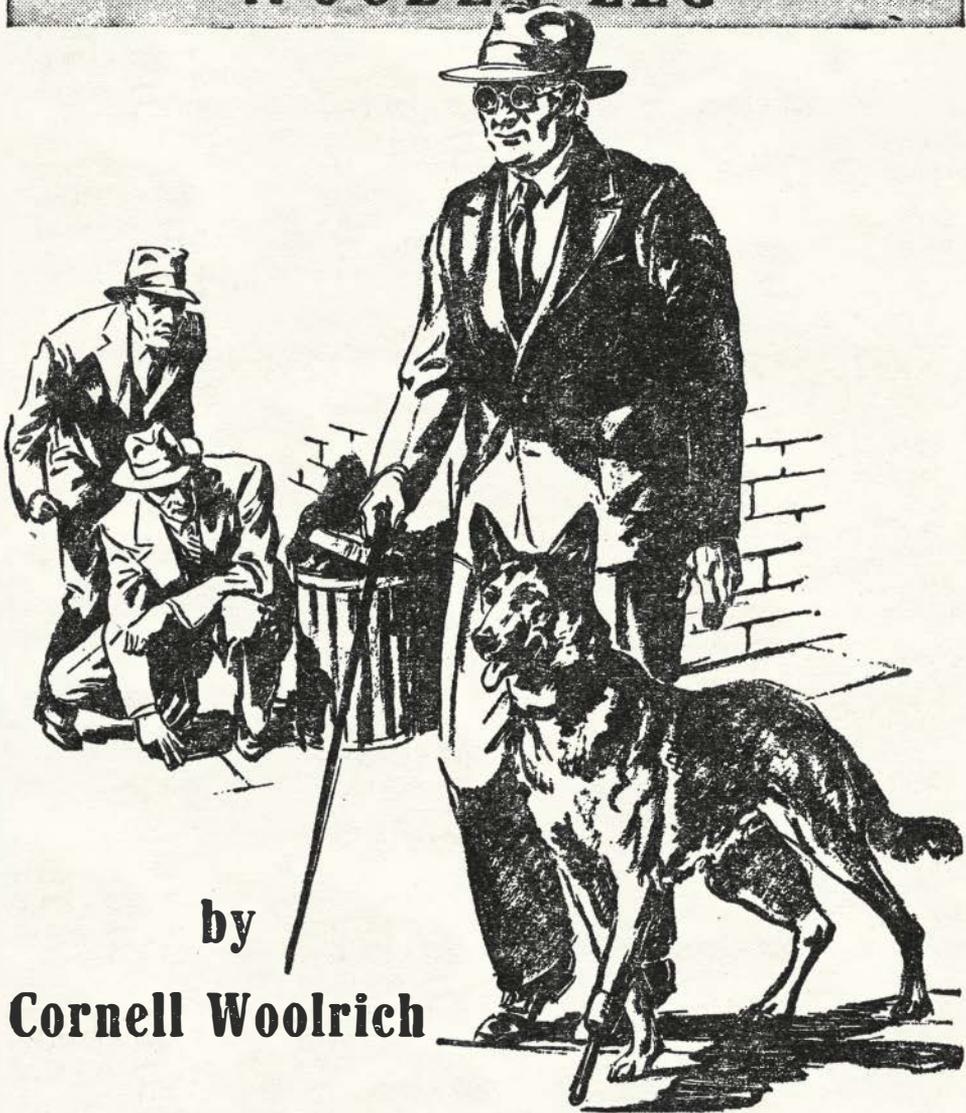
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THE DOG WITH THE WOODEN LEG



by

Cornell Woolrich

CHAPTER I. BLIND MAN'S SCHEME.

THE dog lay stretched out on the dingy tenement floor, muzzle between paws, ears sensitively erect, watching the girl move about. Its fine intelligent eyes followed each turn she

made with mute devotion. One paw, the left front one, seemed to be tucked under its body; it was hidden from the joint down.

Celia Campbell spoke to it as she busied herself about the cramped, stuffy little room, moving back and forth between the gas range and the table. She was about twenty

years old, golden-haired and blue-eyed, neatly but poorly dressed.

"Hungry, Dick? Go in and fetch gramp; breakfast is ready."

The dog, a fine specimen of German shepherd, immediately got up, but with a slight awkwardness in gaining its balance that was noticeable in so fine an animal. It was only when it was clear of the floor that the reason for it could be seen. The left front paw ended at the joint, evidently amputated just like a human being's. Attached to the stump was a leather cup and below this there was a miniature wooden leg.

The dog turned and went into the adjoining room at her command, the light tap-tap of the little artificial limb mingling oddly with the soft patter of the three normal paws. It had no difficulty moving about, had evidently grown used to the appliance long since. It came back in a moment guiding a man of about sixty with its muzzle, nudging him in the calf of the leg as they advanced to help him in avoiding obstacles.

Marty Campbell was blind. His eyes, blue like his granddaughter's, betrayed their sightlessness only by the fixity of their stare. His face had the serene, expressionless look of the unseeing.

The dog nudged him to a chair at the table, then crouched down beside him on the floor once more. The girl brought food to the table, set a pan down on the floor for the third member of the little group. The three of them began to eat.

"It's a beautiful day out," Celia said, turning to glance through the window at the sunlight creeping down the dingy air shaft. "Why don't you let Dick take you to the park?"

"I can feel it." Marty smiled. "I

can feel the balmy sunshine even in here."

She glanced at the cheap alarm clock on the shelf. "I'll have to hurry or I'll be late at the factory and spoil my record." She jumped up, put on a shabby hat, thrust a worn pocketbook under her arm. Then she stopped short, looked wistfully over at old Marty, impulsively opened her purse and took out a quarter. "Here," she said, pressing his hand tight around it, "buy yourself a chocolate bar and an orangeade." It meant she would have to do without her own lunch, but she didn't mind that.

She carefully tried the gas-jet cocks on the stove to make sure they were tightly closed, bent over and kissed Marty lightly on the part of his silvery hair. He was very proud of that part; he got it straight every day, unaided, just by the wonderful sensitivity of his fingertips alone.

"Don't stay out past dark, now. Ask some stranger the time when you feel it getting late." She knew he could sense that too, could *feel* it when the sun went down and darkness set in. He wasn't so handicapped as people would have believed. And then with a parting pat for the dog, she admonished:

"Be good boys, the two of you. Don't get into any trouble,"

What trouble could a harmless, blind old man, watched over by a loyal dog, get into? And yet stranger things have happened.

Marty Campbell heard the door close after his granddaughter and listened to her quick tread go hurrying down the rickety tenement stairs outside. He shook his head and sighed to his canine pal.

"So young and pretty to be slavin' in a garment sweatshop just to support us. She oughter be out in the



THE GIRL SET A PAN DOWN ON THE FLOOR.

sunshine herself, gallivantin' with some nice young feller. I'm a millstone round her neck, Dick. But pretty soon now I'll be able to do something for her instead; I'll have a surprise for her."

He stood up from the table. Dick instantly got up also, eyes watchfully on his master's face.

Marty felt his way over to the cupboard, opened it, felt along the top shelf until he had located a battered pewter humidor. He brought it back with him, sat down, took the lid off. It was one receptacle Celia was sure of never looking into; she knew it had his tobacco in it. And he was always careful to have enough additional by him in a little sack, when she was in the flat, in order not to have to open it before her. Once or twice when he'd been

caught short, he'd manfully done without his beloved pipe rather than have her fetch him the container. The reason soon became apparent. It was three quarters filled with cheap smoking tobacco, but his fingers dug under this and brought forth a packet of bills, fastened by a rubber band. He told their corners off between his thumb and forefinger. There were ten of them, ten twenties—two hundred dollars.

"Don't you tell her, now," he warned the dog, cocking a finger at it, "where we been getting this from. She'd lace it into me sure enough. She told me once she'd walk out and leave me if she ever caught me doin' that."

Dick showed his teeth in what could easily have passed for a canine grin of conspiracy.

Marty reburied the money under the tobacco mound, put the humidior back where he had found it.

"The more it mounts up," he admitted, "the harder it gets to think up an explanation of how I come by it so's she'll believe it. I could tell her a rich banker in his car come near running me down on the drive way in the park, and felt sorry for me and gave it to me. Think she'll believe that?" He didn't seem to himself, shook his head dissatisfiedly. "I'll think of something by and by," he temporized.

It wasn't, he would have insisted, as though he actually solicited alms, went around panhandling with a sign on his chest: "I am blind." He just sat there on the park bench minding his business, and if people felt like dropping coins as they went by, was that his fault? They had no business jumping at conclusions. That tin cup that he always kept next to him was to give Dick a drink of water out of, and for no other purpose. How could he give all that money he always found in it back, when he couldn't even see the people who had dropped it in?

He always took care to change the coins into a bill before he returned home; they would have jangled too much and given him away. The clerk at a certain cigar store was an unwitting accomplice of Marty's in this, without being at all aware of the source of the change he brought in nearly every day. Then when he had ten single bills accumulated, he would change them into a ten-spot. In the latter case he always checked on the clerk's honesty immediately after the transaction; he had to, because he couldn't tell by his fingertips as he could with the dimes and nickels. He would show the bill to the first person he

met outside the store and ask, "Is this a tenner?" From which it will be seen that old Marty Campbell was shrewd in spite of his innocent, childlike face.

"Get me my hat, Dick," he ordered.

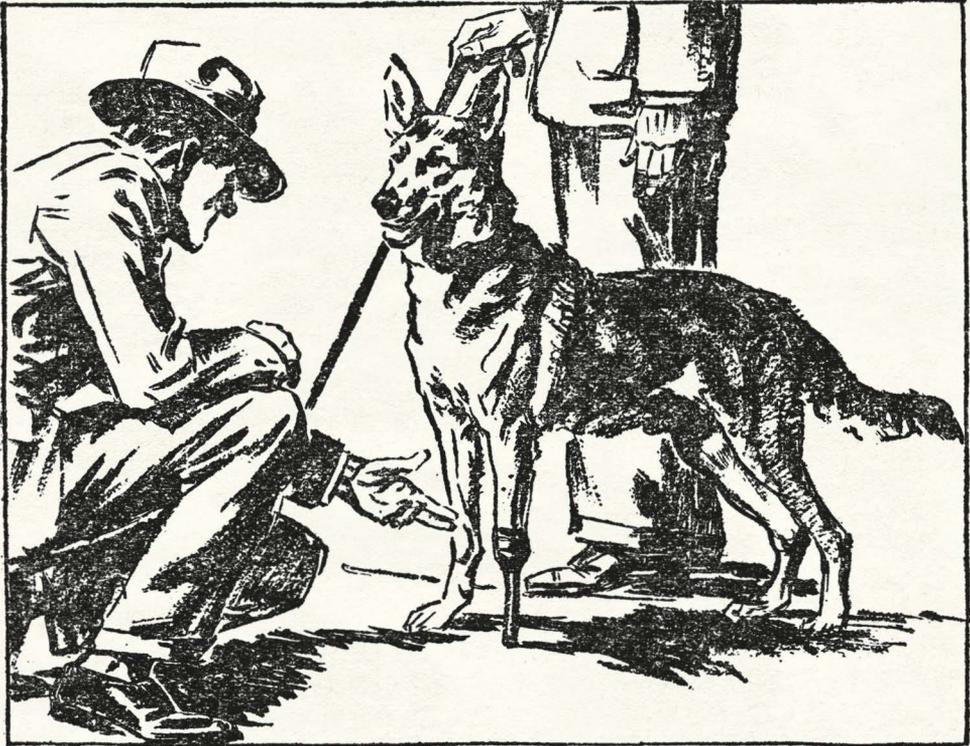
The dog instantly trotted into the other room, came back with a battered old felt hat gripped in its teeth, presented it to Marty by rearing two front paws up against him, so that he wouldn't have to stoop down and feel for it.

Marty stuffed the tin cup—whose magic earning power his granddaughter never dreamed or she would have promptly thrown it out—into his pocket, put on a pair of dark glasses. These were strictly legitimate; he had her permission to wear them when he was out on the streets. They helped by warning people of his handicap, made Dick's task easier. The dog was competent to guide him through the thickest traffic or most crowded sidewalks, but motorists and pedestrians would understand more quickly at sight of the glasses, be less likely to graze or jostle him. He also took a stick with him.

He carefully stowed the quarter his granddaughter had given him into his pocket, took along a small sack of tobacco and his pipe, locked up the flat, and started down the stairs with his companion. At every turn Dick carefully closed in, nudged him around in the direction they were to follow, although he had the banister rail to guide him. But once they were out on the open street, he was totally dependent on the dog.

He felt for each of the three steps going down to sidewalk level, and a friendly feminine voice beside him said:

"Good morning, Mr. Campbell. Off to the park?"



THE MAN WAS SQUATTING DOWN TO PAT DICK AND LIFT THE WOODEN LEG UP TO INSPECT IT AT CLOSER RANGE.

"Good morning, Mrs. Schultz." He smiled, recognized it as the jaintriss' voice without trouble.

They advanced over cement sidewalk for about thirty or forty yards. Then Dick halted him by pressing his muzzle like a brake before Marty's kneecap. The traffic was louder just ahead of them, and his stick went down lower than his feet when he tested it, so he knew they'd come to the brink of a crossing.

A traffic whistle blew shrilly, and Dick nudged him on again. He stepped down and they started over. Brakes screamed, coming around at them on a right turn, and the dog quickly prodded him diagonally out of the way, but he had such confidence in it he wasn't even frightened. It was really safer than walk-

ing with your eyes open, because by not seeing the vehicles all around him, there was no chance for him to lose his presence of mind and step the wrong way, which is a cause of most mishaps.

The dog thrust its shoulder before him again like a brake, so he knew they had reached the opposite curb line, and stepped up. They repeated this three or four times. But meanwhile, as they left their own immediate neighborhood, where both were a familiar sight, and entered a more congested business district, the dog's wooden leg began to attract more and more attention. Marty could hear a hum of voices all around him. "Look at that! D'je ever see anything like it before?" He could tell by the scuffle of feet that everyone

was stopping a moment to stand and stare as he and Dick went by. He was used to that by now; it happened nearly every time he went out.

He was used to people asking him about it, too; stooping to examine it and pet the dog. So was Dick; he bore it with an air of patient indifference. Someone did right now, as usual. A voice edged up beside him.

"Does he bite if you touch him?"

"No, he won't bite you," Marty answered gently, as he had many times before.

The voice dropped down lower; the man was evidently squatting down to pat Dick and—Marty could tell by the slight hitch in their progress—lift the wooden leg up to inspect it at closer range. He would have answered the next question before it was asked, so sure was he what it would be.

"What happened to him, mister? Is it a real amputation or is the paw just folded over double inside that leather pouch?"

"It's real," Marty answered patiently. "He was run over by a truck when he was just a little pup, before he'd been trained." And then as a gentle hint that they'd been delayed long enough. "Go ahead, Dick."

"Well, I'll be darned!" the voice gasped.

Dick went on again, so Marty knew the interference had ended, for this time at least.

Marty could smell trees and grass before him after the next crossing, so he knew they were at the park entrance. The traffic noises subsided behind them, and the twittering of birds took their place.

"Our usual bench, Dick," he told the dog.

Their progress was now curved

and serpentine instead of being in a straight line, as they followed the winding park pathway. An occasional perambulator guided by a nursemaid was the only danger they had to run now. Somebody's Pekingese out for an airing yapped uncivilly at Dick, but the latter just ignored it disdainfully. He was trained not to fight with other dogs while he had someone in his charge, no matter what the provocation.

Once there was a whiff of water to one side of them as they skirted a little lake. The dog edged him to one side of the path finally, and they'd reached their familiar bench. Marty sat down, patted Dick's head, and let the pleasant warmth of the sun soak into him. He didn't neglect, however, to put the "drinking cup" on the bench beside him. There was a soft thud as Dick sank to rest on the pathway before him.

It was the most peaceful spot imaginable. He smiled when the thought of Celia's parting admonition: "Don't get into any trouble." Wasn't that just like a woman, to fret when there was no reason? He filled his pipe, lighted it, and began peacefully puffing away. Dick yawned comfortably. Marty could tell by the almost human sound his expanding jaws made.

A half hour went by. Steps came along the path toward them, stopped short at sight of the dog's wooden leg. Marty had known they would. He waited for the inevitable question to come. The man took a minute or two to get up courage to address him. Or maybe he was staring at the leg; unable to believe his eyes. Marty smiled a little toward the place where the steps had stopped, simply to get the thing over with as quickly as possible. That brought it on.

"What happened to him, dad?"

"He was run over when he was a pup."

"I'll be hanged. What'll they think of next?"

It was all right so long as he didn't plank himself down on the bench next to Marty and make a pest of himself. Dick was company enough for Marty's liking. The man didn't. He stared his fill, and then his steps went on again.

"Fold it under you so they won't pester us so much, Dick," Marty said in a low voice. He reached down, felt for the leg, and patted it to help the dog understand. Dick got his meaning; the little wooden pivot scraped the cement as he bedded it under him.

Presently more footsteps came, from the same direction as the last. They, too, stopped short, so some of the leg must have been showing after all, in spite of their precaution. Marty sighed, then smiled again encouragingly, to get it over with. Otherwise it was liable to drag on ten minutes or more.

"What's he got there, gramp, a wooden leg?"

"Yep. Run over by a truck when he was a pup."

This was one of the *real* nosey kind, the from-Missouri kind. They averaged about one to ten of the others. "Is it all right if I look at it? Will he bite?"

"He won't bite so long as you don't try to touch *me*."

There was the soft thump of Dick's coat being patted propitiatingly. Then the man coaxed: "Let's see it, old boy. Tha-at's it." Dick must have submitted resignedly. The next sound was of the man slapping his own thigh in amazement. "Can you beat it! I thought I'd seen everything, but this is a new one on me."

The footsteps went on their way again. They seemed to go at a little quicker gait than they had approached, but then maybe the man had some place to go and wanted to make up for the time he had lost by stopping and rubbernecking. Or else maybe it was just Marty's imagination that his pace was faster now, and it really wasn't. It was such a little thing after all.

CHAPTER II.

CRIME IN THE PARK.

AND you," Burkhardt's lieutenant said to him when he had detailed all the others in the squad, "take the park."

Burkhardt looked disgruntled. Respect for his superior was all that tempered his expostulation. "What's this, a new way of disciplining me? I thought I was water front and bulkheads, lieutenant."

"Well, you're park from now on. You're a fresh-air fiend, a nature lover, or else just a lazy bum out of work, I don't care which. Only you do that park twenty-four hours a day until further orders; keep circulating and keep using your eyes." His fist came down on his desk with a sound like a backfire. "I'm gonna bust this thing or bust a blood vessel, one of the two! We've fine-combed the whole city, we've cleaned it up, and they're still operating. Which proves what? We've driven it under cover by the rampage we've been on all winter, and that's about all; it's still active. Now I'm tired of you men bringing me in the small fry, I want the higher-ups; that's the only way to scotch it. When you're dealing with a poisonous snake, it don't do any good to snip off pieces of its tail, you gotta stamp



"WHERE'VE YOU GOT IT?" THE DETECTIVE DEMANDED REMORSELESSLY.

on its head. This is a poisonous snake if there ever was one, and we're the venom milkers; that's our job.

"I've turned loose three of those little guys we've been holding as bait. They couldn't tell us anything because they didn't know any more than we did ourselves, but they can lead us where we want to get. My information is that they've developed a sudden craving for fresh air and sunshine; each one of the three has been seen coming out of the park at least once since they were released. That's not natural for birds like that. You get in there, Burkhardt, and just laze around. When you see a familiar face, you know what to do. It's some place in there, unless I miss my guess."

A man with a turned-down hat brim which shadowed his unnaturally bright eyes, hurried along the park path with a furtive air about him which wasn't at all in keeping with such a sunny, peaceful place. He kept giving quick little looks from side to side, and more than once he glanced back over his shoulder. But there was nothing to see that could have caused anyone alarm, so this wariness must have been just a nervous habit with him.

He looked ill, his face was pasty and his cheeks hollow, and yet his gait was just a little too fast to be that of a man who was strolling in the park for his health, to benefit from the open air and sunshine. He almost gave the impression of being in a hurry to get *out* of the park

and return to wherever it was he had come from.

As the distant building line began to climb up over the treetops ahead of him, his face took on a relieved look, as though it spelled safety for him. He'd had apprehensive eyes for every tree, every shrub that he passed on the way, and now suddenly this unusual fear of harmless green things, if that was what it was, proved to be justified. There was a large oak a yard or two off the path on his left, and as he came abreast of it, it suddenly spoke.

"Just a minute, Sniffles. What's your hurry?"

He came to an almost galvanic stop. He stared straight ahead, not toward where the sound had come from, as though rigid with terror, unable to turn his head. He couldn't get any whiter than he was because his face had been the color of chalk all along. He just stood there and began to shiver helplessly, like a bird that feels a snake's gaze on it. But the paralysis that gripped him didn't extend to his right hand, the one of the side away from the vocal tree. He made a swift little pass with it, and some little white thing flew into a shrub growing there, almost quicker than the eye could follow. Or most eyes, anyway.

A man detached himself from the cover of the bulky tree trunk and came slowly over.

"Like the park, eh? Why, all of a sudden?"

The rigid figure standing there on the pathway didn't answer.

"What're you shaking all over for?"

"You frightened me," said the white-faced man hoarsely.

"What've you got to be frightened about?" was the deadly retort.

"N-nothing."

Burkhardt began slapping him backhand here and there about the clothing.

"Where've you got it?" he demanded remorselessly.

"I'm not on, I'm off," faltered the quivering one. He managed to get his elbows up to shoulder level. "You can search me."

"That tells me where to look." The detective grinned, but not humorously. "Stand there," he ordered; "don't try to break and run for it, because you're not in shape to outrun me, and if you make me chase you, I'll beat you to a pulp when I overhaul you." He moved a step or two away, in the direction the other man had been coming from. "You were about here when my hail hit you." He turned sharply right, went off the path. "It ought to be in around here some place, unless it had a propeller."

He began spading his hand in and out of the shrub. The last time it went in farther, came out holding a little white oblong about the size of a toothpick jacket. He came back toward the sweating culprit. The detective's free hand landed flat on the fellow's bony shoulder, with such weight that his knees sagged under it. Or else maybe fright did that alone. With his other hand Burkhardt deftly unrolled the little cylinder between thumb and forefinger, like an expert rolling his own cigarette, only in reverse. Then he passed it just once across at the level of his upper lip, with an involuntary grimace of repulsion.

His face hardened menacingly. He said just one word: "Cocaine." Then the man he was holding began dancing back and forth, as his powerful left arm pistoned in and out. "Where'd you get it? Who's doing the passing in here?"

CHAPTER III.

MYSTERIOUS FOOTSTEPS.

I CAN feel the sun going down," Marty remarked to Dick. "It's below treetop level now and sinking lower every minute. I can tell by the coolness setting in; I don't have to ask anyone, like she says." He reached down and knuckled the stone of the path. "Sure, there's been shade on it for the past half hour. Time to go, I guess."

He carefully knocked the ashes out of his pipe, thrust it into his pocket stem-first. He reached for the tin cup, shook it regretfully.

"Didn't have much of a day today, did we? Won't have any changing to do at the cigar store this time. Maybe we better pick another bench tomorrow—"

He broke off short, listening. "Here's someone coming now, 'way off. I'll ask him what time he's got, just to make doubly sure."

The tread he had detected was still so far away that probably a person with normal vision and whose hearing therefore wasn't so acutely developed as Marty's, wouldn't have been able to hear it at all. But the hush of evening had fallen on the air, the breeze was coming from that direction, and the soft scrape of shoe leather carried clearly to Marty's sensitized faculties.

He sat back on the bench waiting for the stranger to reach the spot. The tread came on a little closer, but strangely enough without growing proportionately louder, almost as though it were being purposely muffled. Then suddenly it ceased altogether. A moment or two went by, and it never resumed again where it had broken off.

"That's funny," Marty soliloquized "He didn't turn around and

go back, because I would have heard his steps receding. And he didn't branch off in another direction, because I would have heard that, too, and anyway there are no other paths leading away from this one hereabouts. Must be standing there stock-still in the middle of the path. Either that or he stepped off it a minute onto the grass. Oh, well, he'll step on again in a minute from where he left off. He was coming this way, so he'll have to finish coming this way."

But the soft tread never resumed, was left hanging in midair, as it were. As two, three, four minutes ticked by, the sense of expectancy, of waiting for it to continue from where it had left off, began to get on Marty's nerves. He didn't turn his head that way, because in his case that wouldn't have helped; he had no vision to project. But he did sit with his head slightly bowed, listening with every nerve in his body. "What the devil happened to that fellow, was he snatched bodily up into the air?" he thought.

He reached down finally and lightly explored the side of Dick's head. The dog's ears were stiffly perked, its muzzle was pointing that way. So Dick'd heard it, too. A little uneasiness began to tinge what until now had just been idle curiosity with Marty. Whoever that was he'd heard approaching furtively along the path, that person was still around some place, taking pains not to let himself be heard. Why?

Marty didn't move there on the bench, but he was as alive as a dynamo inside himself, straining his ears to catch every slightest vibration. Suddenly he was rewarded. A slight hiss reached him, not distinct enough even to be a rustle; the sound grass makes when a foot is moved through it. But what was im-



portant was, it was much nearer than where the footfalls had last sounded from, and it was no longer anywhere near the path, it was around well in back of them now.

So somebody was stalking him, lurking back there in the lengthening shadows of the park. Again why? What did he want from a helpless old blind man sitting on a bench? Uneasiness became fear, as a twig snapped, still nearer than the first warning rustle of grass had been. The skulker was doing his best not to be heard, and he was being pretty successful at it, only two little revelatory sounds in all that distance that he'd covered since leaving the open path, and even those two an ordinary person would have missed entirely.

Marty was breathing a little quicker now, but he still hadn't moved a muscle. He knew it was hopeless to try to get up and run for it. What chance had he against even the slowest pursuer? To cry out for help would be equally futile; the twilight must be deepening every moment, the governesses and the children had all gone long ago, he could tell by the utter, complete

silence there was no longer a living soul around this part of the park, Dick, of course, would be able to give a good account of himself if it came to the worst, but a knife or weighted club might enter into it, and he didn't want harm to come to his faithful companion.

The best strategy was the old, old one of pretending unawareness and tap-tapping away in slow retreat, if he was allowed to. To show that he was on guard would only bring on whatever threatened all the quicker. He thrust the decoy cup a little farther from him along the bench. "If he's figuring on holding me up, let him see I haven't taken in a cent since I've been sitting here." But somehow he had a feeling that the shadowy presence back there behind him wasn't a mere footpad; he wouldn't have gone to all that trouble. He would simply have snatched up the tin cup and run off.

Dick gave a sudden, single resentful bark. Marty understood it perfectly.

"So he's hiding behind a tree or something, and you caught him looking out at us, huh?" he breathed. Then in an unnaturally loud voice, to cover up the warning signal, he exclaimed: "What's the matter, boy, you getting hungry?" He felt for the dog's collar, gave it a restraining tug, whispered: "Sh, Dick, quiet. I know all about it. Come on; let's get out of here."

He got up from the bench with elaborate slowness, pointed his stick to the ground, took a preliminary shuffle or two into mid-path, but he was quivering inside like a compass needle. Dick took up his position against the outside of his master's right leg; he had a job to do now, and the mysterious skulker was forgotten. Besides, his master had ordered him to be silent, and one com-

mand was all Dick ever needed.

They advanced slowly some twenty yards down the path, and nothing happened. Had they left him lurking back there, or was he creeping on after them? It was important to know that, and there was only one way of finding out: reproducing the original utter stillness that had betrayed his presence. Even the slight tap of Dick's leg, the shuffle of his own feet, was enough to mar that. But Marty was as cagy in his way as anyone.

He stopped short, stooped over, pretending to pick up and examine a nonexistent twig lying in the path and which he had felt through the worn sole of his shoe. Actually he was listening as he had never listened before, with not a move from Dick to disturb him. Was that tread coming on after him? Nothing for a long minute. Then—

Shuh-chuh. It was. A grain of grit or two between the furtively oncoming sole and the pathway cement made a microscopic grinding sound that was all that Marty needed. As tiny a noise as the beak of a bird pecking at a grain of corn. So tiny that maybe the very man himself who made it didn't hear it. But then he didn't have Marty's ears; no one else did.

So he was back on the path again, and at about the position of the bench they had just quitted. Would he close in, now that his attempt at creeping up behind them and ambushing them had been frustrated by their getting up and moving away? No, evidently not. Not another sound came, so seeing them halted there ahead of him, he had evidently halted, too, was waiting for their next move. It was a regular cat-and-mouse play. The skin on the back of Marty's neck crawled involuntarily. It wasn't physical fear; as

said before, he had Dick with him. It was the eeriness, the inexplicability of the thing, that had him terrified. It was no footpad, he was sure of that by now, or he would have made his larcenous attack before Marty could get any closer to the perimeter of the park and the safety of lights and passers-by; and he hadn't. Was it some maniac?

Marty pretended to throw the imaginary twig he had been fiddling with away and struck out once more, still slowly, calmly, to all appearance unaware that he was being followed.

"Take it easy, now, boy," he whispered to the dog. "If we can make that exit, I think we'll be all right. He won't come on any farther than that."

Slowly they followed the twisting roundabout course of the pathway, and twice more Marty stopped to listen, once pretending to adjust Dick's collar, another time pretending to retie his own shoelace. Evidently the nemesis had learned his lesson by that single revelatory bark Dick had given back there; he stayed so far behind them that even the dog wasn't aware of his presence any more. But Marty could hear that soft whisper of a tread each time, feeling its way after them, stopping way back there when they stopped, but never quickly enough to avoid one last betraying footfall that sent its message to Marty.

"If I only had your eyes or you only had my voice," he sighed to Dick.

The hum of traffic outside the park, far off at first, slowly drew nearer, louder, finally swirled protectively about them with a roar and a reek of gasoline as they came out the entrance and Dick nudged him to a stop at the curbing. There were pin points of sweat on Marty's face.

"We made it," he murmured.

Where was the stalker now? Was he standing there just inside the entrance behind them, looking frustratedly out after them, beyond his reach? Would he turn around and slink back into the evil shadow that had conjured him up? Or would he keep on after them, right up to their own door, right up to where they lived? "How'll I know?" Marty said to himself, with renewed apprehension at the thought that he might be unwittingly bringing home some danger to Celia. "How'll I be able to tell, with dozens of other footsteps around me, unless I identify his tread first?" And there hadn't been enough of it to go by so far; not two good clear-cut steps in succession.

The traffic roar suddenly died out to a pulsing of waiting motors, there was a sharp click from the automatic light stanchion on the opposite corner, and Dick nudged him over the curb and on. Marty listened all the way over, but nothing followed across the asphalt. He climbed the opposite curb, the light switch clicked back again to green. Then just before the waiting motors raced into motion, and before they grew loud enough to drown it out, there was a quick passage of steps across, hurrying to beat traffic and therefore more unguarded.

About two dozen in succession, as clear as a bell, and Marty drank in every last one of them. A slight tick went with them, so there were metal tips on the soles. The fellow came down a little heavier on one foot than the other, one was a counterpoint to the other. And lastly and most important, Marty had counted three between each two footfalls, so that meant the man had good long legs; that gave Marty his pace. A medium-height man was usually two; a shorty, one. Three

would be easy to keep track of, no matter how many other footsteps cluttered up the sidewalk. Three wasn't often met with, three meant he was a good six feet or over. Marty had got all he needed out of that one incautious passage against the traffic light. He, the shadower, knew he was following a blind man, so he should have known better.

All the way down the first block that *step*, one-two-three, *step*, one-two-three, hung on after them, not so far behind as in the park, but at about ten yards distance now. Sometimes other steps blotted it out, but it always came through again to Marty's keen ears. He stopped, just to make doubly sure, to test it, and it alone of all the others, stopped, too.

He knew that if he went up to a cop and complained someone was following him, the first thing the cop would say was: "But you're blind. How can you tell if someone is or not?" Or if to humor him, the cop escorted him up to his own door, that would be the very thing Marty didn't want, that would reveal where he lived.

"I'm not licked yet," he muttered grimly to the dog. "I'm going to lose him if it takes all night. After all, I'm one up on him; I know that he's tailing me, but he doesn't know that I know. Pop Sabbatino's market has a back entrance on an alley. He'll see us go in there, but he'll never see us come out again."

The third crossing after the park was where he had to turn off the straightaway to get to Sabbatino's; he knew that much. But he had to get the idea across to Dick. Dick was training to lead him home the shortest way; he didn't know anything about detours. And if the watcher in the background noticed



A BOOMING ITALIAN VOICE
HAILED THEM HEARTILY.
"HELLO, MARTY! WHAT'S A
GONNA BE TONIGHT?"

them disputing about it, he'd catch on what was up right away.

Marty turned left. Dick immediately got in front of him and tried to block him, head him back in the way they had been going.

"Cut it out," Marty whispered tensely; "he'll see you. Sabbatino. Sabbatino, Dick. Don't you get it?"

The dog had been there with him,

of course, on errands for Celia. But Dick wasn't used to going there from the park, he was used to going there from the flat. He wouldn't budge, thinking Marty had lost his bearings and it was up to him to set him right. And behind them, eyes were watching every move the two made, as they jockeyed stubbornly for leadership.

Suddenly Marty remembered a phrase Celia usually tacked on at the end of her instructions: "And a piece of liver for Dick." He repeated it now.

The dog understood, gave in. They trudged up the side street toward their new destination.

There was a moment or two of silence in their wake.

"He's watching us from the corner, letting us have our heads," said Marty shrewdly.

Then on it came again, *step*, one-two-three, *step*, one-two-three. The dog nudged Marty aside again, toward a smell of oranges and fresh green vegetables, and the sidewalk underfoot changed to wooden flooring sprinkled with sawdust. A cash register trilled somewhere nearby.

A booming Italian voice hailed them heartily. "Hello, Marty! "What's a it gonna be tonight?"

"Just stopped in to say hello," said Marty noncommittally. No sense taking Sabbatino into his confidence; the latter would probably tell him he was just imagining things. All these people with eyesight were always so sure they knew better than a blind man. He drummed his fingers on the glass counter top for a minute or two, to give the shadower time to look in and reassure himself that he was in there; then he would probably cringe back out of sight again, like a cat watching a mouse hole.

"Anyone looking in from the street?" Marty asked finally.

"Huh? Nomebody."

"Sure? Take another look."

"Issa no one there," insisted the bewildered Sabbatino.

"Then take me over to the back door, Sabbatino; I'll go out that way."

"What's a matt, ycu in troub'?" But the storekeeper did as he asked.

"No," said Marty, "I'm not in trouble, and I aim to stay that way. Just sick of people gaping at me and Dick. Anyone looking in yet?"

"I can't a tell, canno see the street from here, issa counter full of can' goods ina way."

"Good," said Marty. "If anyone steps in the next ten-fifteen minutes and asks you what became of me, you never saw me, you don't even know who I am."

The back door of Sabbatino's closed behind them, and Dick led him down a narrow delivery passage between two buildings to the next street over. They rounded the corner of that and rejoined the street they lived on, but above their house now, and not below it. Marty stood and listened a minute. Silence all around them; they'd finally thrown that *step*, one-two-three, off the track.

"It worked," Marty exulted. "Now hurry up; let's get in out of the open while we have the chance!"

The two of them all but ran the remaining distance to their door, Dick nearly tripping him up when it came time to turn him aside finally toward the right entrance. Marty lurched inside, drew a great breath of relief as he felt the walls of the narrow entrance hall safe around him and knew that he was screened from the street.

"I don't know what that was all about," he panted, "but I sure didn't like it, and I'm staying indoors from now on!"

CHAPTER IV.

A HORRIBLE PREDICAMENT.

E was still out of breath from that last headlong race to sanctuary, when he finally got upstairs to the flat. Celia was already home and worried about him.

"Gramp," she scolded, "what happened to you? You were never this late before! I was scared sick! Don't you ever do that again!"

He decided not to tell her about those mysterious footsteps that had followed him; it would only frighten her, and she had things hard enough without adding to her worries. Besides, he was safe now, he'd outwitted whatever the danger was, so there was no need to alarm her. "I guess we sat there a little too long," he mumbled penitently.

"Well, sit down; supper's been ready for half an hour."

All through the meal he was unusually silent, trying to figure out what that could have been. What reason could anyone have, first, to try to creep up on him in the park, and then to follow him along the streets with the obvious purpose of finding out where he lived? He had no enemies; there was no neighborhood gossip of hoarded wealth attached to his name to arouse any malefactor's cupidity, they all knew Celia worked hard for a pittance every week. Who could it have been, and what could he have wanted?

The harder Marty tried, the less sense he could make out of it. Celia noticed his preoccupation after awhile.

"Gramp, what's troubling you? You're not eating anything."

"Nothing. Just musing, that's all."

Dick, the lucky dog, didn't have his worries, although they'd shared the creepy experience together. He could hear the dog's jaws busily grinding away on a bone on the floor. Then suddenly the crunching stopped.

"What's the matter?" Marty asked the girl. "What'd he stop for?"

"Listening to something outside, I guess," she answered evenly. "Probably hears somebody on the stairs, going to one of the other flats."

Marty reached down and felt the dog's ears, those infallible indicators of danger. They were perked alertly, its head was turned toward the door, bone forgotten; but there wasn't a sound to be heard out there. Not even Marty's keen ears could distinguish anything. The dog must have been conscious of some vibration that the humans in the room were not attuned to.

Marty put down his fork, clenched his hand at his side, out of his granddaughter's sight. This was it again. It had caught up with him anyway, in spite of his strategy. A low preliminary rumbling sound started up from the dog's throat. Marty fingered its muzzle; it was wrinkled back, baring sharp teeth for impending action. It wasn't because of the bone, either; Dick's head was steadfastly facing the door.

"Sh!" Marty silenced the full-bodied bark that was forming by clamping his hand about the dog's jaws. He signaled the girl to come around closer to where he was, so that he could whisper it to her without being overheard. "There's somebody standing out there. Dick hears him."

A faint creak sounded just outside their threshold, in confirmation. Again Marty had to restrain Dick from giving challenge.

"Get over there and push home the bolt, quick!"

"But who?" her frightened whisper came back.

"I don't know. I didn't tell you before, but footsteps followed me all the way home from the park."

They had no telephone in the place, the windows looked out on a

shaft, without even a fire escape leading down from them; they were trapped, sealed in.

"But we have no reason to be afraid of anyone," Celia protested. "I'm going to open the door and see who it is. It may simply be somebody trying to find their way to one of the other flats, who stopped off at the wrong floor."

"Then they'd come up openly like honest people do, not creep up like a spook out of a cemetery!" He half rose from his chair. "If you won't do as I say and lock it, I'm going to, before—"

But it was already too late. Without any further warning the door swung inward, around on its hinges, and struck the wall behind it with a shattering crash. Marty heard his granddaughter's scream of alarm, and he could sense someone standing there in the opening looking in at them, without being able to see him. Marty could feel Dick's powerful shoulder muscles tense under his hand for a spring at the intruder.

Then a man's voice barked authoritatively: "Hold him back, pop! I've got a gun here, and I don't want to have to use it on him!"

"Be careful of Dick, gramp; he has!" the girl corroborated.

Marty gripped Dick restrainingly by the collar, but warned:

"Stay out of here now, or I'll let him at you! What do you want, breaking in here at the point of a gun? I'll get the police—"

"I am the police," was the grim answer.

Marty heard the door swing closed again with a slam, as though given a backward kick, but the voice remained on the inside of it.

"Narcotic squad," it added quietly.

He must have shown the girl some credential or other. Marty heard her say in a dazed voice:

"Burkhardt, narcotic division—"
Then she went on: "But what do you want here? We haven't done anything."

"You haven't," said the voice, coming forward into the room; "I can tell that by what I overheard you say about opening the door when the dog first scented me."

"But gramp hasn't either!" she protested.

"I'm sorry, miss, but he has. He's been peddling cocaine in the park."

Marty just sat there turned to stone, stunned, unable to believe his ears for a minute. It was as though he heard himself being accused of murder. He could hear Celia sobbing:

"Oh, no! No! I'm sure you're mistaken! Not my gramp—"

"I watched him with my own eyes," was the devastating answer.

Marty reared up, brought his fist down on the table so that the crockery sang out. "You're a liar!" he bel-lowed.

The detective's voice was flinty. "We purposely turned one of the hop-heads loose a week ago. I saw him come up to you on that bench this afternoon, take something out of the little leather cup fastened to the stump of your dog's leg. I caught up with him as soon as he left you, and I've got the evidence in my pocket right now!"

Marty slumped down again, ran a despairing hand through the part in his silvery hair he was so proud of. "But . . . but they all stop and fiddle with Dick's wooden leg, look it over. Nearly every time I go out. Just because one of them happened to have that stuff on him, is no proof he got it from me."

"I followed him every step of the way from his room, and he didn't go within arm's length of another human being. It's a cinch he didn't

bring that stuff *out* with him, to carry around on the streets, knowing the risk he ran of being stopped on sight by one of us. No, pop, you can't pass the buck this time. I'm sorry to see an old man like you mixed up in such a filthy business." The detective's voice softened momentarily. "Especially with a sweet granddaughter like you have, doing everything she can to look after you. Another thing, if you weren't guilty, why did you try to shake me off on the way home like you did? You gave me the slip all right, you're smart; but you forgot that you're too well known in the neighborhood on account of your affliction and the dog. All I had to do was ask around and I found out where you lived."

"I was scared," Marty tried to explain forlornly, "that's why I tried to dodge you getting home. I heard somebody tailing me, and I didn't know who it was or what he wanted, that's all. You've got to believe me, you've got to!"

"I wish I could. I saw what happened. What'd you do with the money you've been getting for it? Don't try to tell me you've been giving it away for free samples."

"I never got a penny from doing such a thing. I wouldn't touch that kind of money!"

"Yeah? Well, we're going to take a look around. Sit there now, don't try to get away; one of my teammates is down at the street door."

Celia's voice sounded, with an edge of pride in it. "He's innocent, why should he try to get away? I wouldn't want him to, until this has been cleared up."

The detective's tread went into the next room. Marty heard the mattress of his cot being lifted up bodily over the foot of it, thumped here and there. Drawers were thrown open,

the window casings rapped, the floor boards tested for looseness under the weight of the detective's foot. Marty just sat huddled there, meanwhile, staring sightlessly at the floor, wondering how this horrible predicament could have come about. The next thing he knew, the detective was back in the room with them again, continuing his rummaging, and Celia was saying impatiently:

"You won't find any money; all he's ever had to his name are the few pennies I've spared him each day."

There was a clash of metal on the shelf as something was shifted.

The humidor!

Marty lifted his head in terror, thrust out his hand inadvertently, as if to stop the detective from taking it down. Then he quickly withdrew it again, but they must have both seen the telltale gesture. There was a moment of horrible silence, and he could feel them both looking at him, the detective probably with a grin of satisfaction, the girl in dismay.

Then the sound of Burkhardt uncapping the receptacle, the rustling of the loose tobacco as he dredged it, and then another pause, more awful than the first. He was probably holding up the two hundred dollars. There was an intake of breath from Celia. The detective said, speaking softly, so Marty knew it was to her—people had told him she was pretty:

"Tell me the truth, now, and don't try to cover him up. Did you ever see this before? Did you know it was here in the house with you?"

She was loyal to the bitter end; she didn't answer. But the detective answered his own question.

"Your face tells me you didn't. We'll leave you out of this. Come along. Marty Campbell; there's a few

things we'd like to know, that you can tell us."

A hand descended on his shoulder, but not roughly. Dick bristled a little at the liberty, and it was Marty who silenced him, himself. "He's the only one who could clear me," he thought poignantly, "and he can't talk." He stood up submissively.

"I got that money from panhandling in the park . . . not actively, just by sitting there with a tin cup alongside me," he said. "But I guess it's no use expecting you to believe me any more."

"Two hundred dollars?" was all the detective said pointedly.

"I been doing it for five years past. Dick's wooden leg gets them, is a big attraction."

Then from the open doorway he turned and made one final plea. "You believe me, don't you, Celia? No matter how it looks, you don't believe I'd do anything like that, do you?"

The stifled silence of the room behind him gave him the answer.

CHAPTER V.

BLIND MAN'S LUCK.

THEY started down the tenebrous stairs, Burkhardt incautiously in the lead, to guide Marty, the latter feeling his way down after him, one hand pinned between the detective's arm and his body, more to show him the way down than to hold him fast, the other trailing the banister railing. Dick zigzagged disgruntledly at the rear, trying to force his way past to the front and assume his rightful duties, now taken over by this stranger.

Marty went to his impending disgrace in bitter silence, too proud to plead his innocence any more with

the cards stacked against him the way they were. What hurt most was that even Celia seemed to think that where there was that much smoke, there must be a little fire.

He wouldn't have done what he did—he was in hot water enough already without adding to it—but as they rounded the turn of the landing, he crowded Burkhardt slightly and the latter's gun, bedded in his hip pocket, grazed him. It would be so easy to— The idea leaped into his mind then and there, full-grown, and he acted on it without giving himself time to lose his nerve.

There was a light bulb hanging directly over the landing on a loose cord, he knew—a light that he couldn't see and didn't need, but that Burkhardt did. And the next one was a full floor below. His captor's gun at his own fingertips, his captor's eyesight at the mercy of a fragile filament in a vacuum, and Dick at his heels—the combination was too favorable to pass by, and Marty had to have freedom of action to square himself with Celia.

He lifted his right hand from the rail as they rounded the turn, crossed it under the pinioned one, closed it around that wedge-shaped butt protruding from Burkhardt's hip—whisk! and up it came, described an arc over the rail, and went dropping down four floors to the bottom of the stair well. He couldn't risk retaining it himself; it would have been too easy for Burkhardt to get it back again.

Before the detective had even had time to whirl completely around at the feel of it gone, that same hand had flapped upward in a violent flyswatting motion. Luck was with him, blind luck for a blind man. His fingertips grazed the tip of the bulb; an eighth of an inch lower and they would have only fanned

it. It danced violently away at the end of its cord, hit the ceiling, and pop!—no more light.

Even while the glass capsule was still in the act of flying apart all around its luminous core, he'd shrilled the command, "Get him, Dick! Hold him down!" He bent over double as though he were playing leapfrog, something long and heavy swept over him, there was a thump of two colliding bodies, and Burkhardt went down on the landing with a crash that shook the whole stair structure.

Dick knew just how to do it, and

B u r k h a r d t seemed to know enough about this kind of dog not to resist: that would have cost his life. There wasn't a move out of him as he lay pinned there flat on his back, just the sound of his tense, heavy

breathing. The dog's fangs must have been bared right over his jugular.

"Lie still or he'll tear your throat!" Marty warned. "Don't call out!" He hobbled quickly up to his own floor again. Celia had thrown open the apartment door at the sound of the fall, was standing out there, unable to see in the dark. He caught her by the edge of the dress, tugged at it.

"Hurry up! Dick's got him! Bring that clothesline from the fire escape. You've got to help me bring him back up here!"

"Gramp! Isn't it bad enough already, without—"

"I've got to have a chance to square myself, and this is the only

way I'll get it. They'll send me away, Celia, for something I never did!"

"But, gramp, they'll only get you in the end, and then it'll be worse."

"All I ask is a chance to clear my name. Celia, won't you see that I get it?"

Burkhardt, who must have overheard them, spoke softly from where he lay helpless in the dark. "You're making her an accomplice if you talk her into laying a hand on me—" Dick's warning snarl cut him short.

The veiled threat in it seemed to

decide her, womanlike, to do the opposite. "I have no one but you, gramp," she said impulsively. "Whether you did or didn't, you're going to have your chance!"

She turned and ran back into the flat, came out

again with the clothesline. Between them they trussed up the seething detective, under the compulsion of Dick's menacing teeth, thrust a handkerchief loosely into his mouth, got him up into the flat again somehow. They sat him down in a chair, with Dick still the chief restraining influence.

"His gun's down there at the bottom of the stairs; go down and get it before someone sees it," Marty ordered.

When she returned with it, they closed the door on the captor who had now become captive.

"He said he had another man waiting outside the house," she reminded Marty anxiously.

"I don't believe it; that was just



to make me go along quietly. Why should it take two of them?"

"But they'll miss him at his headquarters, won't they?"

"Maybe, but they won't find him right away; he came here on his own."

"But, gramp, we can't keep him here forever!"

"That's up to him. Take the gag out of his mouth, Celia. If he tries to yell, put it back in again." To the detective he said: "You still won't believe me that I'm not guilty of passing out that stuff?"

"Now less than ever," was the immediate retort.

"Then you're going to stay here until I can square myself."

"And how do you expect to do that?"

Marty felt for a chair, sat down opposite the prisoner's voice. "Listen to me. You know what you know: that an addict received cocaine out of Dick's wooden leg. I know what I know: that I didn't put it there, or know it was there. How'd it get there, then? Even a blind man like me can figure that out. Every day on my way to the park, people stop around me, even go so far as to bend down, fiddle with Dick's leg. *One of them put it in*, I carried it into the park, and it was received at the other end, all without my knowing it. Much safer for them, since you people were on the warpath."

"How about payment?" said the detective noncommittally. "They giving it away free?"

"If they used Dick to make the sale, they used him to bring back the proceeds, too. It's taken out on the way back, maybe by the same fellow—" He broke off short. "Wait a minute! It just come to me now. No one stopped me tonight, because you were coming after me, and I

turned off my usual route, ducked over to Sabbatino's. Celia, look in that leather shield around the upper part of Dick's leg."

Her dress rustled as she squatted down to where the dog crouched watching Burkhardt. She gave a wordless little exclamation. It was the detective who spoke:

"Two tens!"

"See?" Marty cried triumphantly.

The detective wouldn't give in. "Yeah, and I found twenty more of them in that humidor. You're only building up my original case against you. The way you tell it, it's too hit-or-miss a way of collecting for sharks like them to rely on. If the buyer happens to have the money, all well and good. If not, what's to stop him from helping himself and not depositing anything in return?"

"He could try that just once. He knows he'd never get any again when he needs it most. And he knows he'd get caught up with and have the amount outstanding beaten out of his hide sooner or later. I'll admit it's kind of a hit-or-miss system and they wouldn't use it ordinarily, but you've driven 'em underground and they have no choice until the heat goes down. At that, I could only supply one customer at a time for them. But one customer a day they're sure of, with absolutely no risk to themselves, is better than nothing. And I suppose they have others like me all over town they're using right now—flower venders, chewing-gum peddlers, pushcart owners. And now if I turn you loose and give you back your gun, will you give me my chance to square myself?"

"What's that?" asked the detective, with reservations in his voice.

"Why, just go for my regular outing in the park like I've been doing every day, but with you keeping me

in sight. On the way back, whoever stops me to take the money out of Dick's leg, that's your man, that's who you want to follow. I'll know when it happens, and I'll find some way of tipping you off in time. You keep him in sight and he's bound to lead you where you want to go, eventually, to the higher-ups."

Burkhardt must have been nine tenths detective. Or maybe he was just sore at having had one put over on him by a blind man and wouldn't have given in to anything. "Or maybe he'll lead me on a wild-goose chase, and you'll conveniently sprout wings and disappear while my back's turned. I could lie to you, for the sake of getting my hands free, but I wouldn't stoop to that with a man twice my age and blind in the bargain, after you already got the better of me once. I'm giving you fair warning. If you turn me loose and give me back my gun, I'm going to take up right where I left off, finish the job I started out to do: haul you in with me and turn over the evidence I've got against you!"

Marty took a deep breath, more of regret than resentment. "Then I'll have to go it alone," he said.

"Without even being able to see where you're going, you expect to accomplish what our whole squad has been trying to do all winter long, without succeeding so far?" Burkhardt scoffed. "With what?"

"My ears, my dog, and whatever brains God gave me," answered Marty.

CHAPTER VI. TRAILING BY EAR.

HE came out of the house with Dick at his usual time the next day. Again Mrs. Schultz, the janitress, was loitering on the doorstep, said good morning as he went by. Everything

seemed just like other days. Only, Celia hadn't gone to work today. She was upstairs in the flat with a raging, unshaven, tied-up detective on her hands, with orders to see that he stayed where he was until her grandfather had his chance to clear his name.

There would be no danger attached to it so far as he was concerned, Marty had assured her over and over. Naturally he couldn't expect to tackle a gang, bring them in unaided. But he would find some way of singling out whoever it was had been using him for a dope runner, maybe even tracing him back to his base of operations; and the rest was up to the narcotic squad. To which Burkhardt growled contemptuously:

"Sure! You're so inconspicuous, with your smoked glasses and peg-legged dog, no one would ever notice you following them! What d'ye expect to do, tie a cowbell around his neck?"

"When I come back," Marty answered, "I'll be able to tell you where the headquarters of this dope ring is, which is more than you've been able to find out by yourself, with two good eyes!"

They advanced along the street now in their usual fashion. Yesterday's twenty-dollar "take" had been carefully replaced in Dick's leg, since but for the intervention of Burkhardt, Marty would never have known it was there in the first place, and he wasn't supposed to even now.

The usual crowd of rubbernecks started to form as soon as they were out of their own neighborhood, and the usual foolish questions were asked. Then the usual "Missourian" stepped forward, impeded them while he inspected the leg.

Was this his man? Marty didn't make any attempt to find out. It was

daylight all around him, for everyone but him; the odds were still too unequal, like last night before he'd smashed that light bulb. On the way back was the time to try to tag him.

Two crossings away, as they stood waiting for the light, he ordered Dick: "Stand up and take my hat off for me." This was only so that he could get the dog in a position where he could find out if the switch had already been made, without bending over and examining the leg, which would have tipped his hand. Eyes might still be watching him from a distance. The dog reared up against him on its two hind legs, caught the brim of Marty's hat between his teeth, removed it for him. But while Dick was up against him like that, body to body, Marty quickly thrust one exploring finger into the leather shield. The wad of folded money was gone. A cube of paper, folded tightly over something crumbly, was there instead. So that had been his man back there just now.

Loiterers still hanging around watching, applauded the dog's cleverness as it dropped down again to all fours with the hat between its jaws. A coin or two dropped into it in appreciation; that covered up what he had just done beautifully, as far as Marty was concerned. They went on again. That was Step 1. "I'm one up on them now," he thought. "I know what I'm carrying, and they still don't know that I know."

They found their usual bench in the park, sat down on it.

"Step 2 will take place pretty soon. Fold your leg under you," Marty told Dick, and jogged it with the tip of his stick; "that'll give him away to us."

Footsteps sounded in the distance,

drew nearer, came to a halt opposite them.

"What's that, a wooden leg your dog has?"

Marty felt like saying: "How do you know? You can't see it from where you are." But he didn't. He wasn't interested in this poor wretch, anyway. He and others like him had already been picked up long ago by Burkhardt's squad, then turned loose again for come-ons.

"Stretch your paw out a little, doggie, so I can see it."

"And get my bum jolts," added Marty to himself.

He let the steps fade away in the distance, then he bent over and ran his finger under the leather cushion a second time. The little paper cube was gone now; the spongy feel of folded money was back again.

"We're getting there," he told the dog softly. "The preliminary stages are over with now. At dusk, when we go out of here, our job begins."

The wheels of a little cart came creaking along the path about an hour later. Marty knew who it was; they were old friends.

"Hello, Silvestro," he said. "I got a sweet tooth today. What you got that's extra sticky and makes a lotta noise when you chew it?"

"Popcorn dip' in molasses, she'sa make the most noise, she'sa the worst sticky thing I got on a whole cart. You getta on your fingers, you never getta off again, issa worse than fly pape'."

"Gimme a dime's worth of it."

But the sweet tooth must have gone sour on him; after the little cart had trundled on, he put it all in his pocket, still wrapped up; didn't even taste it.

When he felt the pavement under him getting cool and knew the shadows had lain over it for a long time, he got up and they started slowly

back. Dick didn't know that they weren't going home just like any other night, Dick couldn't tell they were up against the toughest job of both their lives. But if he had, he'd have still been there beside him, probably.

Near the park entrance Marty stopped a laborer they passed and asked him, not the exact time, but just how dark it was.

"It's as dark as it'll ever get tonight," was the answer.

Marty nodded his thanks and went on. That was the way he wanted it to be. The street lights would still give his intended adversary a big advantage at that; this was as even as the odds could be made, and they were still pretty heavy against him.

Back into the built-up streets they crossed, and his heart was pounding while he trudged so serenely along beside Dick. Along here some place it would be, somewhere along the next three blocks.

It was nightfall now and people were hurrying home from their offices and jobs; they didn't have leisure to collect around him and gape like they did earlier in the day. A glance in passing was the most they gave him. Not more than one person, as a rule, stepped up and asked him foolish questions on his way back at nights. He knew now what that meant, who that one person was, but he hadn't until now.

They slowly coursed the first block after the park and nothing happened. The way Dick's coat kept contact with the shank of his leg, no one could have impeded the dog for a moment without Marty's knowing it immediately.

They crossed the intersection and began covering the second block. Marty couldn't tell whether it was a darker stretch than the one before,

and therefore more favorable to undercover purposes, or not. It sounded a little quieter, however, and therefore must have been less brightly lighted. Along they toiled, tap-tap, tap-tap, tap-tap, with the patter of Dick's three normal paws and the tick of his little wooden peg for an accompaniment. Then suddenly just as they were nearing the far corner, and Marty had already checked the block off as not being the one, a single stealthy footfall fell directly beside them, as though someone had stepped out of the shelter of a doorway or nook in the building line.

A voice asked softly, "What's that, a wooden leg he's got, pop?"

"Yeah," said Marty benevolently, and took a deep breath.

He brought the popcorn out of his pocket, well crumbled by now in its wrapping, started to put a little in his mouth, fumbled the package, and it spilled all over the sidewalk around him, like rice at a wedding, but much stickier than rice could ever be.

There was a crunching, gritty sound, as it was ground underfoot, became embedded in shoe leather. As the man who had been crouching down beside Dick moved inadvertently backward in straightening up, he apparently didn't even notice that he was getting his soles full of it.

"Some contraption!" he murmured appreciatively.

His steps receded. But they couldn't be very furtive any more. Scrunch, scrunch, scrunch, it was almost like someone walking on gravel. Marty's ears could pick it up as easily as a microphone in a recording room.

The retreating man became conscious of it himself after a few steps. There was a scraping sound as he

tried to free the soles of his shoes. But the stuff was as hard to get off entirely as chewing gum. The crunching had diminished considerably when the tread resumed, but there was still plenty of it left to be a distinguishing mark for Marty; it was a lot easier to identify than Burkhardt's one-two-three had been last night.

Meanwhile he and Dick were advancing again in their original direction, with the gritty walk receding far ahead of them now and drawing farther away at every step. Suddenly it was blotted out entirely, and Marty knew what that meant: the man had rounded the corner.

"Hurry up before we lose him!" he whispered, and started out at a lumbering headlong run, stick folded under his arm to avoid tripping over it.

Dick loped along beside him, then swerved in and braked him abruptly, so he knew they were out at the curb line. That was too far out; all the man had to do was look back over his shoulder and he'd see them there. Marty quickly tacked back for what he judged to be a sufficient distance to be sheltered by the building line; then he shifted over closer to it and listened for all he was worth. All this of course was confusing to Dick, but he followed suit.

Yes, there it was, he could still make it out going far down the side street. Gra-ak, grick, gra-ak, grick. Very faint, though, now. "Have to close in a little or we're going to lose it," he said, and that was a dangerous thing to do in a straight line. He took off his glasses and pocketed them as he rounded the corner, but he knew the precaution was worse than useless; while Dick remained with him, he could be spotted a mile off. And what good was he without Dick?

For the first time the thought of failure entered his mind. Burkhardt was right, he'd never make it. Too late, Marty saw now what his mistake was. He should have brought someone else along with him, someone with eyesight. He could have accomplished what he had so far, then they could have taken it up from here on, tracked his man down, come back, and reported where he had holed up. But who could he have used? Celia? That would have subjected her to danger; and then probably Burkhardt would have freed himself in her absence, raised an alarm, and he would be in a detention cell by now. Marty cast the thought of defeat resolutely from him. The footsteps were still in range, weren't they? Why give up yet?

Twice they faded out, and he thought he'd lost them, but each time they came back again. Still, he didn't like the sound of that. What did it mean, that he'd stopped and looked back? Meanwhile, Marty was hustling along at a pace he'd never attempted before, and taxing Dick's ingenuity to the utmost. Dick wasn't used to guiding him at the double-quick like this, but the dog made a good job of it.

The steps ahead were growing a little clearer again, which meant that he was closing in on them, when suddenly what he had been dreading most all along happened. They stopped dead about three quarters of a block ahead, there was the sound of a latch being opened, and then a car door slammed closed with sickening finality.

It was over; he'd lost him. He might as well quit now. Even memorizing the license plate wouldn't have been much good, but he couldn't even do that. An engine started to turn with a fine silky

whir, wheels slithered into motion. He might have known this would happen. Birds like that didn't travel afoot any farther than they could avoid it; too much danger of being picked up.

There was only one slim chance left, and he tried for it. He swerved out to the gutter and started to flourish his stick wildly and bawl, "Taxi! Taxi!" This was one thing Dick couldn't do for him, but he added his barks to the din. The departure of their quarry was drowned out in the racket.

He was luckier than many a full-sighted person has been in such an emergency. One must have been passing on the opposite side of the street just then. He heard the squeal of a U turn, and Dick nudged him back out of the way just in time to avoid having his shins barked by a running board that came coasting up.

"Yes, sir," a cheery voice said. "Where to?" And a door was swung open for him.

He tumbled in, Dick after him with an ungainly heave.

"Did you notice a car just pulling away from the curb, on this side, on your way up just now?"

"Yeah, I can still see it from here. There's a light holding him up two blocks down."

Gratification almost made Marty stammer. "Keep him in sight for me, stay with him, don't lose him!"

CHAPTER VII.

WALKING ON AIR.

THEY lurched off with a suddenness that threw Dick against him, off balance. Marty didn't bother seeking the rear seat, stayed crouched on his knees directly behind the driver's shoulder.

"Can you still see them?" he kept asking at intervals. "Can you still see them?"

"Plain as day," the driver assured him each time.

The strain was much worse than it had been while he was still afoot; then he'd had his own senses to depend on, now he had to get it secondhand through someone else's.

"How many in it, can you make out?"

"Just one guy, at the wheel."

"Has he looked around? D'you think he's caught on? Try not to let him if you can help it."

"He hasn't turned around once, but then I'm no mind reader; he has a rear-view mirror." Then presently, "He's stepping it up now. And before Marty could make the suggestion, the cab began to increase speed itself.

"That's it; don't let him get away from you."

"Gee, you sure must want him bad, whoever he is," the driver remarked curiously.

"Can you still see him?"

"Like he was on the seat next to me."

Dick rocked there on the floor of the cab, with the difficulty any animal always has traveling in a fast vehicle, but he didn't let out a whimper. Marty fumbled with the dog's leg once, as if to see that it was properly adjusted.

"What're you slowing for?" he asked abruptly.

"'Cause he is, too. Looks like he's got where he's going."

"Where is it? What's it like? I've got to know!"

"You'll know in a minute," promised the driver. He braked the car, got out, came around and opened the rear door. His voice turned raspy like a file. "Get out, stoolie," he said. "This is as far as we go."



"GET OUT, STOOLIE. THIS IS AS FAR AS WE GO!" SOMETHING COLD AND ROUND, WITH A HOLE BORED THROUGH IT, DUG INTO MARTY'S SIDE.

Something cold and round, with a hole bored through it, dug into Marty's side.

The man holding it gave a whistle, a door opened, and footsteps came hurrying over.

"Who you got there?" a new voice asked.

"A police spotter," answered the erstwhile cab driver. "This guy I been using to make deliveries in the park turns out to be an undercover cop or something. But get this: I noticed him coming after me, on my way back to the car. So I get in and pretend to start off. Then I kill my engine, coast around the other way, and come back to him from

where I was, and he takes me for a taxi! He hops in and tells me to follow myself!"

"Bring him in and let's hear what Angie has to say about it."

"Watch that dog."

Dick was already growling at the sight of the gun impinging on Marty's ribs. He wouldn't have a chance against a bullet at such close quarters, Marty knew, and they were probably both armed.

"Quiet, Dick!" he said hastily, and put a restraining hand on the dog's collar.

One order from Marty was always enough for Dick. He subsided.

"Be a shame to have to shoot him.



DICK SPRANG FOR THE WINDOW.

I'd like to show that leg to Angie. Maybe we could use him some more in our business, with one of our own guys, after we get rid of this mug. Get out, you!"

Marty fumbled his way through the door, was gripped roughly by the arm, swung forward.

"Look out," he warned. "I'm not resisting, but I can't control the dog if he sees you handle me."

"Well, we can," was the savage answer.

He was flung violently across some kind of open space, too broad to be just a sidewalk. The cement ended abruptly and it turned to sod or turf underfoot. He was swinging back and forth like a weather vane at the end of the brawny arm that held him, but Dick's simmering resentment never had a chance to explode into the retribution it

craved. Marty quelled it each time with a "Quiet, Dick!" for the dog's own sake.

Marty was hustled in some kind of building entrance. Dick's muzzle pressed anxiously at his calf as he followed close behind, and the tap-tap of his leg sounded as the flooring changed to concrete. There was a downward slope to it, too, like a ramp, so it was some kind of garage or warehouse. Marty was led onto a platform elevator and it started to go up under the four of them. Then they got off again and knocked at a door. It opened, he was shoved through, and could sense he was in the presence of three or four people. But only one voice spoke, an authoritative one. It was highly nasal.

"Company? Well, well."

"He backfired on us, Angie," said

the one who had acted the part of cab driver.

Someone else said in surprised discovery, "He's blind!"

"He can see stars, though," said the nasal voice.

A swivel chair scraped back, someone stepped up close, and there was the shattering impact of a fist against Marty's jaw. But even as he staggered from the blow, he had presence of mind enough to cry out hoarsely, "Down, Dick!" His dog's safety was all that concerned him.

There was a skitter of suddenly arrested claws as Dick held back from launching himself into midair.

"I don't care what happens to me," Marty panted, still dizzy from the blow, "but I don't want him to get hurt."

"We could use him, Angie," the phony cab driver pointed out. "One of our own guys could get behind the blinkers and go around passing it out."

Marty spoke up as though anxious to impress his dog's good points on them, even if it meant having him drafted for criminal activities. "He's almost human," he said; "he understands pretty near everything you say. Watch. I'll show you what he can do."

He wet the point of his finger, held it up like a becalmed mariner trying to find out if there was any wind. Then he advanced unerringly holding it before him.

"Watch out for that window," he heard someone whisper warningly.

"It's barred," Angie answered. "What good'll it do him?"

Marty turned to face them as though he hadn't overheard. There was an iron bar against his shoulder blade, and its mate was about ten inches over.

"I just want to show you what he can do," he said disarmingly. "I won't even raise my voice, just talk like I would to you."

There was an interested silence all around him.

"Get my hat, Dick," he said quietly.

The dog reared up before him on its hind paws. Marty suddenly snatched it off his head himself, out of the dog's jaws, shied it through the opening between the two bars. Dick dropped down for a second, sprang, there was the sound of his heavy breathing as he squirmed between the bars to the outside.

"Hey!" a voice cried out alarmingly.

There was a rush of footsteps from all over the room—too late. The barred window was empty.

"He made it, wooden leg and all!" someone gasped incredulously. "See him down there. He's wagging his tail, he's got the hat in his teeth!"

Marty turned his sightless face toward the opening, yelled as he had never yelled before. "Take it home, Dick; take it to Celia!"

Again a fist crashed into his jaw, but not quickly enough to silence the order. He went down smiling.

"Stop that dog!" Angie was raging. "Get him!"

A shot boomed out, a second one followed. Marty, a thread of blood trickling from the corner of his mouth, was still smiling.

Angie was swearing like a maniac. "Gimme that gun, you cockeyed—You couldn't hit the side of a barn!"

A third shot jolted, and this time there was a thin yelp from outside in the open somewhere.

"You got him, Angie! He's down! I can see him floundering over there!"

"Well, go down there and finish him off! Give him one close to the ear!"

Marty wasn't smiling any more. His head slowly drooped forward until it hung down over his chest. Dimly, through his grief, he was aware of footsteps returning to the room sometime afterward, a winded voice reporting:

"Hunted high and low for him and couldn't find him, he must've crawled off into a hole somewhere to die!"

Angie had cooled off now. "Well, what's the difference? He couldn't have showed them where we are anyway; he was brought all the way out here in a car. Now let's find out just how much this blind rat knows and then we'll send him after his pooch. They loved each other so much, be a shame to separate 'em!"

Marty lost all track of time. His indifference, now that Dick was gone, was like a blanket wrapped around him, kept him from feeling their cuffs, hearing their questions, or caring what went on around him. Presently—but whether it was hours later or just a little while later, he didn't know—he seemed to be out in the open air again. But his captors were still all around him and his hands were tied behind him now.

"D'jever hear of guys walking the plank?" Angie's voice was saying. "That's what the old pirates made 'em do. Well, I got a treat for you boys; that's why I had you bring him up here on the roof. Now some of the slabs on this coping that runs all around it are loose and will topple off if any weight is put on 'em. I know how you guys like to bet, and here's a chance for a little money to change hands while we're getting rid of him. Number the defective ones off in chalk; that's

it, one, two, three, like that. We're going to hoist him up there and see how far he gets. A lighted cigarette, fastened on the end of this cane of his and held close to the back of his neck will guarantee he keeps moving and don't stall on us. All right, keep your hands on him now till all bets are in. Here's a hundred berries says he gets all the way to the third loose slab. I know these blind guys; they've got eyes in their big toes."

"I'll take you up on that. Here's two hundred that the first one throws him."

"All right, take your hands off him. Start walking. You're on the air, dim headlights!"

"The floor is six stories away on the outside," somebody jeered.

The heat of a cigarette started to singe the fuzz on the back of Marty's neck. The ledge was only wide enough for one foot at a time. He felt his way forward with one foot like a tightrope walker, brought the other one up, around, and in front of the first, kept slowly repeating the process. They didn't know it, but he wasn't really scared. He was dead calm, cold about the whole thing. Now that Dick was gone, he didn't care how soon he dropped. It was a fairly painless way to die anyway.

Something wobbled treacherously underfoot, and he quickly shifted weight, put his foremost foot down two paces ahead instead of one, while one of the slabs in between slithered off into space.

"He made it!" a jubilant voice shouted. "I'm in two hundred bucks. See me, baby!"

Far down below on the outside there was the tiny sound of something striking the ground.

And then, as if in answer, a dog began to bark excitedly. Dick! That was Dick's bark, he recognized it! Dick wasn't dead after all, he was alive down there! And all at once Marty was alive again himself, fear of falling entered his mind for the first time, and just because he was afraid of falling, he was about to. He started to teeter back and forth, and sway, and struggle to free his arms."

A shot rang out, down below, not up on the roof, and something fiery creased his shoulder and flung him off the perilous ledge—to the inside. The fall stunned him for a minute, though it was only a distance of a foot or two, for he hadn't been able to use his arms to cushion it, and while he lay there, there were a lot more shots, both from the roof and from down below. Then the ones below passed into the building, and came on up. Someone fell near him and groaned in Angie's nasal voice. Someone else screamed, and there was the sound of loose slabs being torn off the ledge.

Then there was a rush of wind and Dick was licking his master's face all over and whimpering. Somebody lifted Marty up and freed his hands, and Burkhardt's voice asked:

"Did I get you very bad? It was either that or see you fall to your death before our eyes."

But Marty had no time to bother about himself. "Dick, did they hurt him bad?"

"Does he act it? Just clipped him one."

"How did you know where to come?"

"Someone passing in a car picked Dick up close by here. His name and address are engraved on his collar plate, of course. They found

your note in Dick's leg, 'Bring help; Dick will show you where,' and saw that he was hurt. They took him to the police, and the police came and got me at your place. Then the people that had found Dick brought us back to the place where they'd first picked him up. He'd lost a little blood, and that led toward here."

"Have I cleared myself?" Marty asked, while they were dressing his shoulder down below. "Do you believe me now that I wasn't working with them?"

"The ones that are still alive are in handcuffs and you're not; there's your answer."

"And you're not sore about the way we kept you tied up in our place all that time?"

"Not so sore as you'd think. It gave me a chance to get pretty well acquainted with Celia. You'll be seeing a good deal of me around your flat from now on. But tell me one thing. How is it you had time to write that note and stick it in Dick's leg?"

"I didn't write that here. I had it all written out before I even got here. I caught on I wasn't in a cab almost as soon as I got in; the distance between the front and rear seats was too great, and I couldn't hear any meter ticking off. Also I recognized the guy's voice as being that of the same man who stopped me on the street only a few minutes before. So I wrote it out then, while I still had the chance. The only way to get rid of Dick was trick him into jumping out of the window after my hat. His job is to look after me, and he wouldn't have left me otherwise, no matter how obedient he is."

All Burkhardt said was, "What a dog!"



KANE AND LAIDLAW STARED AT CARR'S GUN CLATTERING TO THE FLOOR; STARED AT BLOOD COVERING CARR'S HAND.

THE IMPOSSIBLE MURDER

BY MEL WATT

IT will always be one of the crime classics of police history. Most murders are commonplace, as far as detection goes; a good many of them even stupid. But the District 5 riddle was neither.

Surprisingly enough, it seemed the answer to Kirby Kane's prayer; or, rather, his jest. Some two months earlier, after trapping another very run-of-the-mill killer, he had shown every sign of boredom.

It was then he had said to his friend Inspector Laidlaw, with a rather weary humor: "What a depressingly stupid crime! Oh, for an intelligent murder! One with imagination—ingenuity—'lift'! In a word, inspector, give me a murderer with a flair for his work!"

Perhaps the Dark Fates heard the jest.

For it was but two months later that a completely stumped inspector threw the District 5 mystery into



Kane's lap. Kane had handled tough cases before; although they were few and far between. But of all the cases he had ever handled, this was to prove the most baffling of them all.

In his private case book he titled it: "The Murder That Couldn't Be Done."

District 5 was one of those city areas that remind one of a person who has seen better days, but who is now making a living by any means that comes to hand.

Most districts have a definite stamp upon them: there is the wealthy district; the suburban home district; the tenement district. Dis-

trict 5 was a conglomeration. You could find any type you wanted, with the exception of the wealthy. Brave, weak, crooked, patient, mean, cruel, kind, absurd, pathetic humans; with the cards stacked against them from the beginning. Most of them, anyway.

And the little tin god of District 5 was Con Tierney. Quite naturally, it would have to have a Con Tierney. The district big shot. A big frog in a small puddle.

Con was rather a handsome fellow. He was still youngish, in his middle thirties. He had a corkscrew mind; a constant grin with just the hint of a sneer back of it; and he considered himself no worse and maybe a great deal better than other "honest grafters." His philosophy, if it could be called that, about his fellow men was: "They're a lotta saps." And about his fellow women: "Love 'em and leave 'em."

He had had things pretty much his own way in District 5. Unfortunately, it had made him arrogant, careless, and contemptuous. In a word, Mr. Tierney was building up to an awful letdown. But you couldn't make him see that. With a smug grin and mental blinders, he continued on his way toward the chasm.

That black Wednesday that really set the scene for the climax was pretty much like any other day in Con's life, only perhaps a trifle more so. Repetitious. Nothing to get alarmed about. Just like the crowd collecting again around the Bastille, and a smug French king had said: "Another rabble. A touch of grape-shot will scatter them."

The first annoyance occurred in the forenoon, in Con's gloomy old office. He had kept that old room because it made him feel picturesque; it pleased him to think that

so much power centered in this old dump. Big stuff.

The annoyance appeared in the person of one Henry Dodd, who ran a grocery store in the district. Dodd, a man of fifty, looked old before his time. At the moment, the deep furrows of worry were overlaid by the look of a sick dog. He gazed at Con as if he were dumbly pleading.

"I just been told I got to get out," he said thickly. "Listen, Con. I sunk all my money in that store and now I can't sell out for more'n a third of what it's worth! I'm getting old. It'll—break me! Couldn't you give—"

Con, smiling his friendliest, interrupted: "Look, Dodd. You're a businessman and so am I, see? I've got a good offer from a guy that'll pay more rent. Of course, if you can—"

"I can't, Con! I just can't!" There was desperation in Dodd's sick voice. "I barely make ends meet now! If you could only let me stay a while longer—"

"Sorry. We're all after the money, you know. I guess you'll have to go, Dodd."

Dodd's look changed. Desperate pleading turned to desperate hate. For the moment he seemed another man. A figure of menace.

"I ought to have knowed it'd be a waste of time! But don't think you're fooling me, Tierney! I wouldn't join this Business Men's Organization of yours, so you took this way of cracking down on me. Ruining me! All right, Tierney! You're the big shot and I'm just a little guy—but don't forget I'm a little guy fighting for the food that goes into the mouths of his wife and kids!"

Con spat the tip of a cigar out onto the floor, turned away, and

threw disgustedly over his shoulder: "Aw, beat it!"

A few minutes after the silent departure of Dodd, Con descended to the street to attend to some other matters in his bailiwick.

A drawling voice said: "The dictator himself, in person."

Con turned. At the edge of the curb, leaning against a lamp-post lighting a pipe, stood the owner of the voice. He finished carefully lighting his pipe before he sauntered over to Con. He was a curious little fellow, not much over five feet and scrawny into the bargain. His thin mouth turned down sharply at the corners in a sourish humorous expression. He had been christened Richard Carr, but he was known only as Peewee Carr.

His shrewd little ferret's eyes glittered with malicious amusement as he stared at Con Tierney. His tone, as always toward Con, was one of mocking contempt.

"So the great man steps on another worm, eh, Con?" he drawled. "I just saw the crushed worm wiggling away. Henry Dodd got in your craw, eh, Con?"

Con said pleasantly: "Just like you like to think you get in my hair, runt. You know, I believe one of these days I'll spank you, just for a laugh. If you was a man, I'd sock you—just for a laugh too."

"Uh-huh," Peewee drawled on. "Ain't afraid of nothing, are you? Just a big brave guy."

Peewee Carr was the only man in the district who could get away with this, simply because he was the only man in the district over whom Con Tierney had no control. Peewee was a sleuth, of sorts. He had been too small ever to get on the metropolitan force, and it rankled in him not a little, for he rather fancied himself as quite a detective.

He called himself a "confidential agent." He hired out mostly to lawyers who wanted divorce evidence. A scurvy job; but Peewee had a picture of himself that even his mean job could not blot out.

As tawdry as his livelihood was, he always seemed to be in ample funds. Spending these was his chief amusement. His second amusement was playing gadfly to sting Con Tierney. Cheap souled though Peewee himself might be, he had a burning contempt for the ruthless bullying of Con Tierney.

"A big brave guy," he repeated, with something more than contempt in his tone now. "It must take guts to crack down on poor guys like Henry Dodd, who can't help themselves."

Con Tierney turned a dull red and the smug grin for a moment became a dangerous scowl.

"Get the hell out," he threatened. "before I hang you up on that lamp-post."

Peewee flipped an insulting salute. "O. K. Just passing the time of day, your highness. I was just thinking, though, wouldn't it be a scream if some day some of these worms turned on you and began burrowing in? I'd like to see you squirm, Con—just for the laugh. Well, so long, big stuff."

He sauntered off, with a back-cast grin of derision.

Con shrugged and the smug smirk returned. But his eyes weren't smiling; they looked like smooth black poison. Con Tierney's motto was: "Rule or ruin."

He put in several busy hours and in the late afternoon dropped in at a bar for a drink. He nodded shortly to the over-effusive greetings of several of his "subjects" and made it plain that he didn't want to be bothered at the moment. But

that didn't stop one man there from strolling up and casually tapping him on the arm. Con's heart gave a sudden lurch when he saw who it was. But he managed to hold his voice to an easy drawl:

"Oh, hello, Mark. How's things?"

Mark Caswell never stopped smiling. He replied, as if he were remarking about the weather: "Not so good. I want you to stay away from my sister."

No one in District 5 knew what Mark Caswell's business was. He lived in the district, with his pretty sister, but he did not operate there. He was not a hoodlum; but vague rumor had it that he skirted pretty close to the line of the law. He was debonair and smooth; he never showed anger; yet you had the notion that behind his pleasant smile and amused eyes lay something quite deadly.

Con Tierney was on dangerous ground here; but Con Tierney was too much of an egotist to admit it. You may fool with the Henry Dodds and the Peewee Carrs, but it is not wise to fool with the Mark Caswells.

However off-color Mark Caswell's own life may or may not have been, there was one thing about him that would have got him the approving nod of the angels: he loved his sister.

He flicked an imaginary speck of dust off Con's sleeve and said in a pleasant tone: "I'm not asking you; I'm telling you."

Con tried diplomacy: "Wait a minute, Mark. Nora's a good kid that likes some fun. If I can show her some, what's wrong with that picture?"

"You're what's wrong with it," Caswell said quietly. "You're bad medicine for a girl like Nora. And I don't like it."

Con dropped the oil and sneered openly. "You don't like it! Who

the hell do you think you are? Nora likes it and it's her business."

"I've made it my business." Caswell did not raise his voice and the smile never left him. "And you can save the tough talk. You may be big stuff down here, but to me you're just something that may have to be slapped around."

He gave Con's arm a squeeze that looked almost friendly. "Catch on?" he said softly. He strolled off to the other end of the bar.

Con got out of there, trying to appear indifferent, but cursing inwardly. He'd had about enough of two-bit punks for one day! Who'd they think they were talking to, anyway? Wasn't he Con Tierney? Who were they, to be ordering him around?

Egotism rose in him, vindictive, scornful, cruel. He grinned; a ruthless grin. There was one sure way of telling Caswell just what he thought of his threats. Yes, sir! One sure way. He stopped in at a telephone booth, and called Nora Caswell. Pretty, little, trusting Nora, who mistook infatuation for love.

There was to be yet one more incident, to make Con's day full of overflowing. It came in the evening, when he was in his stuffy office.

He unlocked the door and slid back the bolt, to let a man in. Long ago, Con had decided it would be smart to lock himself in when he was working in his office at night, especially when he had money there. He knew his visitor; a smooth little weasel named "Beau" Broderick, dressed like a tailor's dummy. Beau wasted no words.

"The boss wants his dough," he said.

Events of that day had brought Con to a high state of irritation. He was in no mood to bandy words.

"You can tell him to go on wanting it," he snarled. "Those dice were crooked."

"Ain't you kind of late with excuses?" the little man said. "You didn't kick during the game, did you?"

"I'm kicking now!" Con snapped. "You can tell him I don't pay no sucker debts!"

The little man shrugged and turned to leave. "I'll tell him," he stated indifferently.

Half an hour later, with an ugly malice which he hid behind his smug smile, Con went to keep his date with Nora Caswell.

Black Wednesday? Well, dark gray, perhaps. For it was not until the following Tuesday that Con's life pattern really ran black.

He was in a high state of elation that Tuesday afternoon. Something pleased him mightily. There was a vindictive glint in his eyes. He looked like an executioner who was about to swing the ax and who was going to enjoy the job.

He left a couple of acquaintances in a bar, to return to his office at eight o'clock that night. He entered the gloomy, ill lighted, old building and walked up the worn stairs to his third floor office. He switched on the light above his desk, then walked over to the door again and turned the key in the lock and shot the bolt.

At nine o'clock, a weary tailor, who had his repair shop on the fourth floor directly above Con Tierney's office, was grumbling to himself while he labored, and bemoaning the fact that his life was a bore and nothing ever happened.

At nine five, life was no longer a bore, and something did happen. Two sharp explosions crashed into the heavy stillness. There was an interval of perhaps six seconds between them. The tailor knew noth-

ing of firearms or he would have recognized them as revolver shots. To the initiated, a revolver shot is not like a backfire. Besides, backfires do not take place in rooms right under you. That much the tailor recognized; the explosions were right under him.

The tailor was glad he hadn't had his phone taken out, after all; even if business was rotten. He could hardly hold the phone and all he could think of to do, was to yell: "Police! Police!"

Three minutes hadn't passed before the scream of a prowler car siren stirred District 5 like a work whistle. Many hurrying feet followed it, like feet hurrying to work, only faster. For this wasn't work; this was a show; a show for their horrified entertainment.

The police car screeched to a stop before the old building and the two cops got out. The shaking tailor was waiting for them at the entrance. The cops almost had to smack him to make him quit stuttering; then they bounded up the stairs ahead of him.

Another police car arrived. This second pair of cops took charge at the entrance and pushed the crowding people back. They pushed the tailor out with the rest. The tailor was beginning to feel his importance now and went about proclaiming:

"It's Con Tierney's office! Yeah, Con Tierney. It's Con Tierney's office!"

Mass sighs and gasps and excited chatter rose from the crowd. In that crowd were Henry Dodd, and Mark Caswell and his sister Nora, and Peewee Carr, and two or three flashily dressed young fellows with blank eyes and sinister mouths. Henry Dodd looked flushed. Mark Caswell was smiling as usual. His

sister Nora had an enigmatic expression on her tense face. Peewee Carr was chewing tobacco and grinning as if he were greatly amused. He remarked, to no one in particular: "So one of the worms turned on him."

A man next to him looked at him hard, then mumbled in a woman's ear: "A screw-ball."

The two or three sinister gentlemen drew lazily on cigarettes, their expressions telling nothing.

Inside the old building, up on the third floor, the two cops were pushing on the door. Finding it locked, one of them got set to crash it; but the other pulled him back.

"Wait a minute, Leahy! It's locked on the inside. That might tell us a lot. Don't smash it."

"Yeah? How we gonna get in?"

The other, named Connors, said: "I've been in Tierney's office before. There's a little window around the side of the building, where the fire escape runway is. Come on!"

They ran down the hall to the big window at the end, went out through this onto the fire escape, and snaked along the iron runway until Connors pulled up at a small square window. Leahy glared at him and snorted.

"How the hell do you expect to get in through this? It's too little. A lot of good this would do Tierney in case of fire!"

"That ain't the idea; it's just for ventilation. Tierney and other tenants near enough to the hall window are supposed to get out through the hall."

All the time he was talking, Connors was inspecting the small window. It was perhaps eighteen inches square; not large enough for a full-grown man to get through. There was a wire screen over it, fastened down. Connors cut this and ripped

it away. He pushed on the window and when it did not give, he smashed the glass with the butt of his service revolver. He chipped all the glass off clean and stuck his head in. The light was still on, but he couldn't see anything of the room, for before the window stood a dark green folding screen, just far enough out of reach for Connors to be unable to knock it down. He growled and mumbled a curse.

"Look, Leahy. We got to get a skinny guy, a little guy, to go through here for us and unfasten the door."

That was obvious to Leahy, for he was already stepping back into the hall before Connors had finished talking. He hastened down to the street and spoke briefly to the other cops assembled there. They began looking around. Then one of them yelled out:

"We need a small man. Step up, some of you little guys! There's nothing to be scared of."

Toward the front of the crowd, some hands began pushing a small man forward. It was Peewee Carr and while he retained his good humor about it, he was reluctant to go forward. But one of the cops had spotted him. He came up and took Peewee's arm, grinning friendly:

"O. K., pal, here's your chance to do your duty as a citizen. You don't mind climbing in through a window for us, do you?"

Whether Peewee minded or not, he went along. Connors knew him and grinned amusedly.

"Hello, Peewee! Fancy meeting you here! Here's your chance to work for the department at last. I'm gonna drop you in through this window. Don't touch nothing. Just slip across to the door and unfasten it for us. And use your

handkerchief, just in case there's any prints."

Peewee made a wry face, but his tone was good-humored. "You'll be telling me how to blow my nose next. Give me credit for knowing the ropes, pal. I'm in this racket too, you know."

Connors picked him up and boosted him through the small window, easing him down to the floor.

"O. K.," Peewee said and disappeared around the green screen.

In the hall, outside the door, Leahy and several other cops heard the scrape of a key and the sound of a bolt as it was yanked back. Then the door flew open and they barged inside. Connors had come into the hall by this time. He patted Peewee, standing by the door, on the shoulder.

"O. K., Peewee. Thanks." His voice was curt.

If Peewee had hoped to stay, Connors's tone changed his mind. Looking a bit sour, the little man went down to the street.

Back in the room, the police found Con Tierney on the floor by his desk. He was dead. He lay on his back, with his left leg twisted unnaturally under him. There was a bullet hole between his eyes and another over his heart.

A metal cash box stood on his desk; it was empty.

One of the cops muttered, "Stick-up, I guess."

The police moved smoothly into routine action. The medical examiner, the print men and photographers were called. Also, a call was put in to Inspector Laidlaw.

It was close to midnight when Kirby Kane's reading was interrupted by the appearance of the inspector. Kane was used to Laidlaw bustling in at all hours, so he merely



sighed, and greeted the inspector with an ironical smile.

Laidlaw shrugged, as if he were intimating right off that the whole thing was beyond him. He spoke sharply and a trifle irascibly:

"Well, you wished for it, and you've got it!"

Kane grinned. "A very dramatic opening statement, inspector. What have I got?"

"Your so-called perfect crime! If I read it in a book, I wouldn't believe it. But, so help me, it's happened!"

Kane sat up, but he still looked skeptical. "Unburden your troubled soul, inspector," he invited.

Laidlaw seated himself, accepted a drink, and launched into the case. He told who Con Tierney was and the circumstances of the crime already related here.

"But here's the riddle," he went on agitatedly. "We found no gun,

so that ruled out suicide. It was murder, all right. But, confound it, there was no possible way for the murderer to get out! There are only two means of ingress or egress to that room: a small window and the door. The window was latched on the inside and the wire screen had not been tampered with, before Officer Connors smashed it in. And the door was locked, and bolted, on the inside! The window is so small that Connors had to drop a little man through it, to run and unfasten the door."

Laidlaw gestured bewilderedly and continued: "We went over every inch of that room for possible secret panels or hidden doors! I know it sounds ridiculous, but we tried to find *some* explanation! We found nothing. Only the door and window, and they were unquestionably locked securely on the inside!"

The inspector shrugged irritably. "There's your perfect puzzle. Tierney was murdered. Yet not even a ghost could have got out of that room! How did it happen? How?"

Kane pondered, his eyes narrowed in the smoke from his cigar.

"Isn't there any way," he asked, "Tierney could have been shot from a distance, outside the room?"

"There isn't," Laidlaw snapped. "Anyhow, that's ruled out. The examiner found powder marks over both wounds, showing that the weapon had been held only a few inches from Tierney."

"Perfect," Kane murmured to himself. His skepticism was gone. He looked cheerful and alive. "Laidlaw," he said, "I think you've got something." He smiled brightly at the scowling inspector.

Kane bent himself enthusiastically to the solution of the riddle early the next morning. Polite, pleasant, he was nevertheless a dynamo of energy

driving relentlessly toward a desired objective. It was always this way when he was working on a case; he drove himself, and those with him, unmercifully.

First, he went over the scene of the crime with the inspector. He inspected the small window, and the lock and bolt on the door. His interest, here, seemed rather casual.

He threw a question at Laidlaw: "And, now, what about Tierney's enemies?"

"He had plenty," the inspector said. "In his kind of racket, they always do." Laidlaw growled. "Maybe we'll get a line on all of them, if we live long enough."

"Yes, yes," Kane said impatiently. "But what have you turned up so far?"

Laidlaw shrugged. "Well, whippers get around. We've got several tipoffs, here and there. But we can't hang it on any of them."

Kane started through the doorway. "Nevertheless, I want to see them."

The next couple of hours were used in what Kane politely termed "interviews." There is no point in giving them in full, because Kane found out nothing of value. Henry Dodd's wife swore he was in the house all evening, up until they heard the police sirens. Mark and Nora Caswell swore by each other—although that, Kane noted to himself, was open to question. They ran across Peewee Carr on the street; and Peewee was the only one who didn't offer an alibi. He scratched his chin and said with his sour humorous expression:

"To tell you the truth, inspector, I can't get anybody to alibi me. I was just bumming around the district. When I heard the sirens, I followed 'em."

Peewee chuckled. "I didn't like the guy any more than the rest of

them did. I'm glad he got caught up with and I don't pretend otherwise: he was a louse." Peewee grinned up at the inspector. "But if you're wondering did I plug him: no, I didn't. I'm probably the only guy around here that had no reason to." His grin widened and his amused little eyes flicked from the inspector to Kane, as he added: "Although that little fact might make me a suspect, to a smart cop."

Kane laughed. "You're a bit of a psychologist, Mr. Carr. I understand you're the man who went in through the window to open the door for the police."

Peewee nodded. "Right," he said with a grin. "Maybe the inspector'll give me a job on the squad. There might be other small windows."

"Did you notice," Kane asked, "if there was anything at all peculiar about the lock or the bolt?"

Peewee shook his head. "No. Not so far as I could see. The key was on the inside and the bolt was on."

Kane thanked him pleasantly.

Peewee looked up at the inspector and said: "I see by the papers that Con's cash box was standing there empty, on his desk. It's being eased around, through the grapevine, that Con owed Honest Joe Quade five grand and refused to pay off."

Laidlaw nodded, alert, and said, "Thanks, Peewee."

Peewee flipped a salute of farewell. "Well, I'll be seeing you around. Keep me in mind, inspector."

Laidlaw was grinning as he and Kane walked on. "That little runt's been angling to get on the force for ten years. I'll admit he's a smart little ferret. If he wasn't just too damned small, I think I could use him."

Kane was murmuring: "Honest Joe Quade. Hm-m-m."

Laidlaw's grin faded. "If that's the angle, we're sunk. It'd be easier to pin it on the Man in the Moon."

"Perhaps." Kane said. "Perhaps not. Too bad you're not a poker player, inspector. Marvelous game for applied psychology. There are ways of forcing the other fellow to show."

That may have been so, but the following two days were conspicuous by their absence of anything or anybody "showing." Laidlaw became more morose. Not only did they get nowhere with possible suspects; but they didn't have the faintest idea how the murder could have been committed. It looked like a murder that simply couldn't have been done. And yet Con Tierney was very dead.

It was on the night of that second day that a swift incident took place which temporarily needled new life into the lagging case.

In the darkness, a man walked rapidly along one of the several bridges over the river that separated District 5 from District 4. About midway between two of the lights, his arm suddenly went out over the parapet and quickly drew back again. But not quickly enough to escape the peering eyes of another man not far behind. The second man put on speed, barely pausing to mark with a piece of chalk the place on the parapet over which the other had thrust his arm. In another dozen seconds he had caught up with the first man.

He put a hand around his arm and they kept on walking. It looked a friendly gesture. But the detective's voice was not friendly.

"All right, Caswell, what did you just throw into the river?"

If Mark Caswell had been startled, his cool voice didn't show it. "Throw over?" he asked, as if he had to stop and think. "Oh, that! An

empty cigarette pack." He smiled down at the chunky detective and said amusedly: "Good grief, does the inspector still have me tailed?"

"Yeah." The detective's tone was hard and unbelieving. "Cigarette pack, huh? Not a rod—the rod that bumped Tierney, huh?"

Caswell's head turned sharply; but he gave a short laugh and spoke in a bored voice: "Look, Sherlock. I know you boys are hard up for a sucker to pin this kill on. But I'm not it. I got business across on the other side and that's where I was going, and I tossed an empty pack away because I'm not collecting them, and that's all. Do you mind? Is there any law against it?"

"Nope," the detective said. "No law again us anklng back to the precinct station, neither. Come on."

"Listen. I'm in a hurry."

"You want an argument?"

They turned around and started walking back across the bridge.

The inspector told Kane about it the next morning. "We're holding him on suspicion," he said. "We're going to drag the river at that point. Caswell had plenty motive. Tierney was fooling around his sister."

Kane seemed rather indifferent. "Just at present," he explained, "I'm much more interested in the 'how' than in the 'who.' You know, Laidlaw, we're running around in circles. The whole thing seems utterly impossible, yet there must be a perfectly simple answer to the riddle. And so, au revoir—I'll see you later."

"Wh-where you going?" Laidlaw stammered, surprised.

Kane grinned. "Into the deep silences, inspector, to think."

It was nightfall when Kane walked into the inspector's office. There was a tension, a suppressed excite-

ment about him that Laidlaw knew well.

"Inspector," he said crisply, "I want your co-operation."

For a half hour they remained closeted in Laidlaw's office. When they came out, the inspector called over to the desk officer:

"I'm going up to Tierney's office."

They got into the inspector's car, which Laidlaw himself drove, and ten minutes later pulled up in front of the gloomy old building. The vicinity round about was deserted. They entered the building and climbed to the third floor. Laidlaw opened the door to the late Tierney's office with the key, which the police had kept. He crossed the room and turned on the light over the desk.

There was a queer tension about both the men now. Kane took a quick walk around, then came back to the door. He jabbed a finger at it and said:

"The small window is ruled out. The explanation centers on this door. There could be no other way."

Laidlaw's tone was sharp and seemingly impatient: "But it was locked and bolted on the inside."

"Yes," Kane said. "And so first we'll try Experiment No. 1."

He slipped a length of strong silk ribbon around the knob of the bolt. Holding on to both ends of the ribbon, he and Laidlaw went out into the hall and pulled the door shut. Kane pulled on the ribbon, but the bolt did not budge. They opened the door and went back into the room again.

Kane shrugged. "You see? The bolt was too stiff to be worked by the old noose trick. And I've already inspected the key to the lock; there are no scratches on it such as would have been made by a pair of thin pliers turning it from the outside." Kane chuckled shortly.

"I hardly expected anything so ancient as the overworked noose-and-pliers trick. Our murderer is much cleverer than that, inspector. Besides, he wouldn't have had time to go through all that rigmarole."

Laidlaw said nothing for several moments. He was so taut he appeared rigid. Finally he said: "And so what?"

Kane walked over to the desk and sat down in the chair. Laidlaw leaned against the desk, trying to appear at ease.

"And so," Kane intoned levelly, "by the unyielding law of logic, there is only one answer left. The bolt was *not* on and the lock was *not* locked from the inside."

Laidlaw's eyes bugged out. He started sputtering. "But . . . but—"

Kane's tension made his words metallic: "Come, man! Don't you see it? The murderer was let in by Tierney, who apparently had no thought of violence. The murderer did his killing, hurried out and locked the door from the *outside*, pocketed the key, and went swiftly down to the street and away. Incidentally, he must have grabbed the money assumed to have been in Tierney's cash box."

Kane stared sardonically at the inspector, as if waiting for Laidlaw's mind to slide into gear. Laidlaw shook his head like a man trying to clear it, and said obstinately:

"But the lock and bolt *were* on, on the inside. Peewee Carr unlocked them."

Then it seemed that a strong light exploded in the inspector's brain and he let out a loud gasp. Kane nodded ironically.

"So Carr said," he drawled. "So Carr said."

Laidlaw slumped against the desk. "Well, I'll be damned!" he rumbled. "Peewee Carr!"

A soft, icy voice came from the half open doorway: "Somebody paging me?"

Laidlaw wheeled around noisily. Kane shot up swiftly but quietly from the chair. They both stared at Peewee Carr, standing there with a revolver in his hand. The sour humorous expression was still on his face, but his little eyes were deadly.

"Keep your mitts out in front of you," he commanded them. His eyes bored into Kane's and there was something vicious in the grin he meant to be amused.

"So you know all the answers, bright boy!" he drawled softly. It was a statement, not a question. It was plain, then, that he had overheard all that had been said.

Kane nodded slowly, but said nothing. Carr seemed to be studying them both for a few moments. His skinny shoulders moved with what might have been silent mirth. But his little eyes were black and ugly. And the amusement in his voice turned to a sneer:

"Too bad you and the inspector won't be able to tell 'em to anybody."

Laidlaw raised a hand a few inches and tried to make his voice stern: "Now, see here, Carr! Don't be an insane fool. You've done enough already! You'll only make it worse for yourself!"

Peewee made a derisive noise with his lips. "Says you, not believing a word you say! It's very simple, inspector. If I let you get away with it, I burn sure. If I bump you and this bright boy, I stand a pretty good chance of living to a ripe old age."

Even Peewee started, when Kane's laugh broke into the tension packed room.

"Didn't I tell you, inspector?" Kane said steadily. "Didn't I tell you our murderer was a clever, logi-

cal person? With a sense of humor? It must have afforded you a good deal of amusement, Peewee, to get yourself picked out to go through the window and unfasten the door. By the way, I was right about that, wasn't I? You simply took the key from your pocket and unlocked the lock, and rattled the bolt to make it sound as if you were pulling it back?"

Peewee looked at him, with a slow tigerish grin. "Like I said before, you know all the answers."

"Not all," said Kane with a sigh. "What was your motive for killing Tierney?"

Peewee glared for a moment, as if the nerve of the man annoyed him. But he flicked a glance at his gun and the tigerish grin returned.

He drawled, somewhat enigmatically: "I don't like a guy that tries to queer my racket."

The inspector turned his head to look, puzzled, at Kane. But Kane's eyes never left Peewee. A quick light of comprehension came into Kane's eyes.

"I think I get it," he said. "Your speciality is divorce evidence, isn't it? Lots of chances for a bit of blackmail, eh, Carr? And Tierney got something on you, is that it? But how did you get in here to him?"

Carr shrugged, said laconically: "He let me in. He ordered me up here—to 'talk things over,' as he said. He was gonna cut himself in—keeping himself in the clear, of course, but making me dance to his tune. Now you got all the answers."

Abruptly, startlingly, the smoothness left Carr. Fury seemed to grip him, as he snarled: "That rat's big mistake was in thinking he could bully me the way he did the others! I hated his insides!"

Carr's laconic pose was gone. They saw him now as he really was:

a thwarted nature driven to maniacal fury by humiliations and failure and frustration. Venting his spleen on the human race; or those of it that got in his twisted way.

That fury blazed from his little eyes at Kane and Laidlaw. His finger began twitching on the trigger.

"And you too!" he snarled, softly now. "Nobody's gonna push me around, especially a couple of lousy dicks! Sure, you got all the answers." he jeered. "Now you can tell 'em in hell!"

There was a sharp explosion. But it did not come from inside the room. It came from the little window. Kane and Laidlaw stared at Carr's gun clattering to the floor; stared at blood covering Carr's hand.

Kane leaped forward and kicked the gun out of reach. There was a loud thudding of footsteps in the hall and two detectives came running into the room. They had each of Carr's arms before Carr quite knew what had happened. He started, then, to struggle, and curse, and shout furiously: "A frame!"

"Exactly, Carr," Kane said calmly. "A frame. We rather thought you'd fill in the portrait, if we worried you and teased you along. These two gentlemen were outside on the fire escape runway a good fifteen

minutes before we arrived here. We knew you were hanging around the precinct station, so the inspector let it be known, rather loudly, that we were heading for here. You walked right into it.

"You see, Carr, you were the only possible explanation. But we wanted to clinch it by hearing it from your own lips."

At a nod from the inspector, the two detectives pulled the cursing little murderer away. One of them pocketed Carr's revolver.

Laidlaw wiped the sweat from his face and turned to grin at Kane.

"Phew! I never prayed so hard in my life that Hartman would shoot straight!"

Kane sighed, but it was a sigh of satisfaction. "A very interesting case, Laidlaw." He shook his head, as if regretfully. "A vicious little egomaniac, under the skin, isn't he? I liked him better when he was posing. How he enjoyed giving the police the runaround! Compensating, of course, for his own frustration and pigmy stature—the Napoleon complex." Kane grinned. "I'm giving you the psychology of it, inspector."

Laidlaw feigned a yawn. "Uh-huh. I'd rather have a drink," he said. "I need that more."



WHAT HAPPENED TO CROSS-PATCH?

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UNDER THE LAMP

BY GERARD HOLMES

If you like puzzles, won't you work on one of your own, send it in, and let the other fans wrestle with it? Answers to problems will always appear in the following issue. Address all letters relative to this department to Gerard Holmes, care of Street & Smith's Detective Story Magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

WARNING: Do not forward money to any one who asks for it.

USEFUL TIPS

A cryptogram is written with a transposed alphabet. Approximate letter frequency: E A O I D H, etc. E is most frequent letter. A and I can stand alone. O seldom ends an English word. O E and Y only vowels that can end common two-letter words. Most words begin with consonants. A consonant is usually followed by a vowel. Middle letter of three-letter word is usually a vowel. Second and third from last are usually vowels. Watch for endings, ION, ING, and S.

Greetings from "The Bunque," otherwise known as Bunny and Quefanon. Says they: "We've done the best we could."

We hope you like 'em. These problems should be good because they are from ex-schoolteachers.

1. Pride of Birth.

CYVW YMRZXMVBQKN MEKXBP MYD JMSK
M XBIJR RC LK FXCZN CO RJKBX
PCZYRXW OCX RJKW PJCDK BR. GK
YMRBSKD DJCZVN LK IXMRKOZV OCX
RJK MPPBNKYR CO CZX LBXRJ.

Hints: CO and OCX; W used only as a final three times; frequency table.

2. Paradox.

PVDJCSIJ XJCOK BRVPGO PGO OKVPEPXK
PXK KPMJ RYPVVKX DJPG MCGGKMDBMSD,
QKD MCGGKMDBMSD BR GKAD DC DJK
RYPVVKRD RDPDK BG DJK SGBCG.

Hints: Three-letter words; two-letter words; and frequency table.

3. Male Terpsichoreans.

VIEWKY AZXUNWHR TSYHIE IXAZGJA,
PHHWY, ZXSHYU PHU APWU ZG EYS
 AZYFJGZEYS TPHHN, "P JPH GXZ WH
TSPHIY LHGVA HYP SKN YPIE UPHIY,
 OXZ EY IPH'Z UPHIY ZEY IPHIPH,
 IPH EY?"

Hints: The third-from-the-last word and the word with an apostrophe should make an easy entering wedge for the solution of the above.

4. Quotation from Alexander Pope. (This is a little harder.)

"FJ YLGTJS FGT LVZYJ XLIS, LIS MFZT
 AJHZI, 'CJ TCPUFT LIS TCPUFGST, ME
 CEZY KFGJD HGNJ JLY, DLCT, DLGYGJT,
 HJIGG, JPNJT, LIS SJOEIT, FJLY! CJ
 QIEX MFJ TUFJYJT LIS NLYGEZT MLTQT
 LTTGHIJS.'" "

Hints: Punctuation and the repeated three-letter word.

5. Missing Number Division (Two solutions).

$$\begin{array}{r} XX)XXX2(4X \\ \underline{XX} \\ XX \end{array}$$

6. The check on the following letter division will be found by arranging the answers in the following order: 074956 2381.

$$\begin{array}{r} HE)ADDOS(GAS \\ \underline{RLC} \\ RDO \\ RCA \\ \underline{DGS} \\ DGS \end{array}$$

Note: Underscored words indicate proper nouns.

*Answers to Puzzles in the
 issue of January, 1939.*

1. Doughty yachtsmen crow triumph, radio news, whilst snarl caught giant squid from sharky ocean depths.
2. Stodgy Nimrod slew wrathful nylgau from blackthorn ambush, also caught swift ostrich, splotchy python, rheumatic agouti.
3. Beautiful triptych intrigues connoisseur, bores dilettante; paroxysmal laughter gags young art student.
4. In the joyous celebration of an occasion one usually forgets the reason for which the day was set aside.

5. COMPUTERS.

THE SEVEN SINISTER SOMBREROS



A Lester Leith Novel

By **ERLE STANLEY GARDNER**

The Seven Sinister Sombreros

CHAPTER I.

THE DRUGGED GUARD.

LESTER LEITH lifted the lid from the humidor of carved ivory which held his cigarettes. Gently tapping the tip of a cigarette on his thumbnail, he snapped a match into flame, sucked in a deep inhalation of fragrant smoke, and started blowing smoke rings.

Men who have lived together in months of intimate association learn to know each other's habits with an almost clairvoyant perception; and Edward Beaver, the police undercover man, who had so long been masquerading as Lester Leith's valet, watched him with glittering eyes. Experience had taught him that if Lester Leith should start tracing the perimeters of those smoke rings with the tip of his extended forefinger, the time would be ripe to trap the man upon whom he spied. That trap had already been set. It remained only for the spy to bait it by interesting Leith in a crime problem which had been carefully selected by Police Sergeant Ackley as the pitfall which would lead the unsuspecting victim to his undoing.

Twice, three times, Lester Leith blew smoke rings, and contented himself with watching their upward progress as they twisted and writhed on themselves, finally to disperse in a blue haze.

"Scuttle," he said.

The undercover man had a particular aversion to this nickname which Leith had given him because of a fancied resemblance to an ancient pirate. Swift irritation

showed on his face, then vanished as Lester Leith's right hand claimed his beady-eyed fascination.

The well-manicured tip of Leith's extended forefinger meditatively traced the perimeter of one of the writhing smoke rings, unmistakable indication that his chain-lightning mind, bored with matters of everyday routine, was groping for some exciting new stimulus.

"Scuttle," Lester Leith said the second time.

"Yes, sir," the spy answered quickly, stepping from the table he had been dusting to be where he could face the slender, well-knit figure that was seated in the big, overstuffed leather chair.

"Scuttle," Lester Leith said, "I've never fully interrogated you concerning your last escapade with Sergeant Ackley. Tell me, Scuttle. Did he really suspect me of hijacking those gems?"

The spy grasped the opportunity. "I'm afraid he did, sir. If I might be pardoned for making the suggestion, sir, Sergeant Ackley is altogether too petty a person to interfere with your plan of life."

"Interfere with *my* plan of life, Scuttle!" Lester Leith exclaimed, half turning in his chair. "What the devil are you talking about? Sergeant Ackley is like an irritating housefly in drowsy weather—an annoyance, to be sure; an obstacle never."

"Yes, sir. But since you have such an extraordinary ability to read the newspaper accounts of crime and spot the criminals from the facts reported, it seems such a shame to give up your hobby just because— Well, pardon me, sir. Perhaps I shouldn't mention it."

Leith nodded slow affirmation. "You're right, Scuttle," he said.

"You mean about letting Sergeant

Ackley interfere with your plan of life?" the spy asked eagerly.

"No," Lester Leith said, blowing another smoke ring. "About the fact that you shouldn't mention it."

The spy's face darkened, but since he had been particularly commissioned by Sergeant Ackley to direct Lester Leith's attention to the strange case of the drugged guard, he dared not let any distraction divert Lester Leith's mind from the channel on which the spy knew it was about to embark.

"Yes, sir," he said. "I beg your pardon. It was presumptuous of me, a resentment against Sergeant Ackley, because there are so many interesting crimes in the papers these days."

Leith glanced up quickly. "Scuttle, you tempt me."

"Pardon me, sir. I had no intention of doing so."

"Damn it," Lester Leith said irritably. "Why can't Sergeant Ackley quit his confounded suspicions? I have repeatedly explained to him that my interest in crime is only academic. Yet he thinks my charitable donations are sustained by funds adroitly hijacked from criminals. I presume Ackley feels criminals should be allowed to retain their ill-gotten loot. I don't. Personally I think this mysterious hijacker is a public benefactor, regardless of



whether the hijacked funds eventually find their way into charitable causes or not. I suppose it's illegal, but, damn it, it's poetic justice."

"Yes, sir. I quite agree with you, sir."

"Hang it, Scuttle," Lester Leith said. "You're catching me a most inopportune moment. Perhaps it's my mood. Perhaps it's the weather. Damn it, Scuttle! To *what* specific crimes are you referring?"

For a moment, the undercover man regarded Lester Leith with the expression of an

angler surveying a choice pool of water in which he knows there lurks a very large and wary trout. Experience had taught him that Lester Leith seldom rose to the first lure which he offered. But, now, there was something in Leith's mood which made the spy feel it might be possible to launch at once into the affair of the drugged guard.

"There have been *several* crimes," he hedged.

"Well, pick the most interesting, Scuttle. I'm not going to permit my mind to dwell on it, but I can at least *hear* about it."

"Yes, sir," the spy said, and his big hand, pushing down into the inside pocket of his coat, dragged out a sheaf of newspaper clippings.

Leith said irritably: "Scuttle, you're still clipping crime news and

carrying the clippings around with you. I told you not to do that any more."

"Yes, sir. If you'll pardon me, sir, these were not clipped for *your* consideration. You've got *me* started, if you don't mind my saying so, sir."

"Got *you* started, Scuttle?"

"Yes, sir. Of course, I realize I can never attain even a fraction of your efficiency, but the crime news has come to exercise a fatal fascination for me. I can't help thinking of how easy it is for you to study the facts in a newspaper, spot the real criminal, and then outline a scheme by which that criminal might be apprehended; a scheme by which unusual objects betray the criminal to his own destruction."

Lester Leith stared at the huge figure of the police spy with thought-slitted eyes. "Scuttle," he said, "you're almost stealing my thunder."

"Oh, no, sir! Not at all, sir! My own efforts are most clumsy and utterly inadequate. I was merely explaining how I happened to have these crime clippings so readily available."

"But you're duplicating my methods, Scuttle."

"Oh, no, sir, not duplicating! It's a feeble imitation, sir."

"Oh, well, let it pass," Lester Leith said. "What crime did you have in mind as being so interesting, Scuttle?"

"The affair of the missing heiress, sir."

"Who's the heiress, Scuttle?"

"Miss Blodson-Hess."

"And what about Miss Blodson-Hess, Scuttle?"

"She vanished. No one seems to know what has happened to her, but it's generally known that shortly be-

fore her disappearance she drew out large sums of cash."

"A man in the case, Scuttle?"

"Yes, sir. She was engaged to be married next week, and the man is naturally all broken up over it."

Lester Leith yawned. "Naturally, Scuttle," he agreed, "one would expect him to be, but his interest robs the case of its fascination for a student of crime. There's altogether too much emotion in it, Scuttle. Your perfect crime is one of cold-blooded deliberation, of cool, calm reasoning—speaking, of course, from the standpoint of a connoisseur of crime, Scuttle. What else do you have?"

"There's the matter of the Blossom robbery, sir. Mrs. Blossom had—well, sir, to put it mildly, she had deceived her husband. She had told him she was going to visit her sister in Pittsburgh for a week. In place of that, she had gone somewhere else. She had quite a bit of cash, and some diamonds—"

"How old, Scuttle?" Lester Leith interrupted.

"You mean the diamonds, sir?"

"No, no, Scuttle. Damn it, the woman, Mrs. Blossom."

"Thirty-three, sir, according to the newspaper account."

"That means forty-two," Lester Leith said with conviction. "When a woman enters the roaring forties, Scuttle, she becomes somewhat unpredictable. She certainly should be entitled to have her little fling. Why the devil couldn't her husband have taken her word for it that she was at her sister's in Pittsburgh?"

"Because she was robbed, sir."

"And so what, Scuttle?"

"So she was forced to call the police."

Lester Leith yawned. "Uninteresting, Scuttle," he said. "Had the woman any real character, she would

have either recovered her gems herself, have tricked the man who victimized her into some compromising position by which she could have regained her property, or else have kept entirely quiet about the matter. Doubtless she was vain enough to think that only her beauty was responsible for the interest of the dashing young blade who undoubtedly acted as a professional lure for a criminal organization. No, no, Scuttle, gems partake of the characteristics of the owner. I'm hardly interested in considering the gems of a fatuous woman who couldn't stand up on her two feet and take it when the going got rough. Well, Scuttle, I'm afraid that you've overestimated the interest-compelling quality of the crime news."

"Yes, sir," the spy said eagerly. "I can understand that now you've pointed it out. It was because I lacked your quick ability to analyze that I blundered into the trap. Perhaps that's why I wasn't able to do more with the solution of the cases myself. But there's just one more thing I'd like to call to your attention, the affair of the drugged guard."

"Drugged, Scuttle?"

"Yes, sir, and while he was drugged, some one hundred thousand dollars in cash mysteriously disappeared."

"What was he guarding," Lester Leith asked, "the mint?"

"No, sir. It was a private safe."

Lester Leith smiled and shook his head. "Just another newspaper story, Scuttle. Give it no thought. Newspapers are inclined to magnify the amount of loot in order to make the case sound more spectacular. People don't keep one hundred thousand dollars in ordinary safes, Scuttle. It simply isn't done. Bank-

ing institutions, yes; but private individuals, no."

"Yes, sir," the spy said, "and I wouldn't, of course, presume to contradict you, sir, but the circumstances in this case are different."

Lester Leith raised his eyebrows in silent interrogation.

"You see, sir, Karl Bonneguard was rather expecting—"

"Bonneguard, Bonneguard," Leith interrupted. "I've heard the name before. Isn't he interested in some way in a camp or something?"

"Not exactly," the spy said. "Bonneguard is trying to interest people in the formation of a political party—a sort of cult, to change our form of government."

"Oh, yes," Leith said. "I remember now. There was some sort of investigation, wasn't there, Scuttle?"

"The grand jury were about to act, and apparently Bonneguard had been tipped off."

"What were they going to act on, Scuttle?"

"I don't know exactly. Ostensibly, Bonneguard was simply trying to promote a sort of new political party. It was all done open and aboveboard in accordance with our principles of freedom of speech and the press."

"Oh, yes," Leith said. "I remember now. He insisted upon the right of freedom of speech so he could organize his party and deny freedom of speech to others. It was claimed he'd taken an oath of allegiance to some foreign organization. There was something of a stir about it, as I remember."

"Yes, sir. So, you see, Karl Bonneguard, not knowing just what was going to happen, hardly dared to keep his funds in a bank."

"One hundred thousand dollars, Scuttle?" Lester Leith asked.

"That's the best information the police have been able to obtain, sir."

Leith said: "Dammit, Scuttle. You've got me interested now. Tell me more about this drugged guard."

"Yes, sir. Karl Bonneguard maintained headquarters at 924 Wilmeier Avenue. It's a huge rambling house. Bonneguard's private offices occupied the south wing. The windows are heavily barred. There are vicious police dogs roaming the grounds, and an armed guard was kept on constant duty in the corridor just outside the door of the room in which the safe was located. And the guard didn't even have a key to that door."

"The guard was there on account of the money, Scuttle?"

"Yes, sir, and because some cranks had threatened Bonneguard with personal violence."

"Yes, yes. Go ahead, Scuttle."

"The organization was nationwide. All funds were collected and forwarded secretly to a Job Wolganheimer. Ostensibly he was the national treasurer for the organization. Wolganheimer, however, was just a figurehead for Bonneguard. As soon as funds were received, he turned them over to Bonneguard."

"And Bonneguard put them in the safe, Scuttle?"

"No, sir. Bonneguard kept them in various banking institutions under various names: the Bonneguard Cleaning & Dyeing Works, the Bonneguard Real Estate Investment Association, and accounts of that sort."

"Why did he take them out of the bank, on account of this grand jury investigation?"

"Yes, sir. He was afraid that something might happen, and the funds of the organization would be impounded."

"Proceed, Scuttle."

"The money was reduced to one-thousand-dollar bills. There were quite a few of them. Some witnesses say a hundred. Some say more than that."

"The organization must have been profitable, Scuttle."

"It was quite mercenary. Regardless of what principles it espoused, it was strict in the matter of dues."

"And the guard, Scuttle?"

"A man named Bettler, a Hanz Bettler, a man with a fine record. He had been employed by one of the large banking institutions as a messenger for many years and had given perfect satisfaction."

"He was drugged, Scuttle?"

"Yes, sir."

"When did this happen?"

"Three nights ago. Bonneguard and Wolganheimer had been to the place and deposited another package of currency. No one except Wolganheimer and Bonneguard knows how much was in it, and neither of them will say anything. At any rate, they deposited the money. Wolganheimer drove Bonneguard to the office of the attorney who was handling Bonneguard's affairs. Then Wolganheimer went to call on his flame of the moment, a young hula dancer who—"

"A what, Scuttle?"

"A hula dancer, a Hawaiian hula dancer."

"Do you by any chance mean a *professional* hula dancer, Scuttle?"

"Yes, sir. Her name is Io Wahine. She's a member of a troupe performing at night clubs and on the radio. She plays the ukulele, sings, chants, and dances."

"One would say she was a very accomplished young woman, Scuttle."



"Yes, sir. Yes, *indeed*, sir. I've seen her dance."

"So Bonneguard went to see his lawyer, did he?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, let's get to the drug business, Scuttle. That's what interests me."

"Yes, sir. I was just giving you the picture, sir. You see, Wolganheimer was driving the car. He ran out for a visit with Io Wahine. He left her apartment about five minutes to nine. He was to pick Bonneguard up at the lawyer's at nine. He was there on the dot. He picked Bonneguard up, and the two of them went to the home of Emil Bradercrust, a mutual friend. They were talking over matters of business when the phone rang. It was Hanz Bettler on the phone. He happened to know that Bonneguard was going to spend the evening with Bradercrust. Bettler said that he thought something was wrong, said he was feeling so sleepy he couldn't hold

his head up, that he thought perhaps he'd been drugged, although he had been there alone all evening. He could hardly talk, he was so stupefied with the drug. Bonneguard said they'd come right over and to try and keep awake until they arrived.

"He, Wolganheimer, and Bradercrust climbed in the car and started at once for the Wilmeier Avenue headquarters. When they arrived, they found Hanz Bettler fighting off sleep. He stayed awake long enough to let them in, then dropped to the floor and was asleep before they could even ask him any questions. So Bradercrust volunteered to stand guard while Wolganheimer and Bonneguard took Bettler home.

"Naturally they didn't want to have any notoriety or do anything which would attract the newspaper reporters. So they drove Bettler out to the house of a friend, an outlying house some distance out in the country. And when they got *there*, there was a telephone from Bradercrust telling them to come at once. His voice sounded very thick and dopey. They left Bettler to sleep it off and started at once to the Wilmeier Avenue headquarters. But they were delayed nearly half an hour in getting there. When they did, Bradercrust was lying on the floor sound asleep. Near him, in a drugged stupor, was one of the police dogs. But apparently the door to the inner office hadn't so much as been touched.

"While Bonneguard was trying to arouse Bradercrust, Wolganheimer unlocked the door, and then discovered that the safe had been entered, probably within the last twenty minutes. The combination knob had been wrenched off and the spindle driven back. The inner door of the safe had been forced open and the contents were missing."

"And did they find out how the drug was administered, Scuttle?" Lester Leith asked, his voice showing his interest.

"No, sir. That's the mysterious part of it. They didn't. When Bettler regained consciousness, he swore that he hadn't talked with a single person, and Bradercrust had the same story."

Leith said thoughtfully: "Well, let's consider that the thief had some ingenious method of administering the drug, Scuttle. It's quite apparent that he hadn't had an opportunity to complete the job of safe cracking when Bettler took the drug. Therefore, it became necessary for him to drug Bradercrust, and in doing that, he drugged the police dog. Now tell me, Scuttle; was that the only police dog or were there more?"

"No, sir. There were half a dozen of them prowling around the grounds."

"Then why did the criminal consider it necessary to drug *one* of these dogs and not the others?"

"I'm sure I couldn't say, sir."

"Give me the clippings," Leith said. "This is, indeed, interesting."

The spy, striving to hide the triumphant expression on his face, passed over the newspaper clippings. Leith read them thoughtfully, studied the illustrations.

"This photograph of Bettler shows him as a very thin individual, Scuttle. One would hardly associate him with being a guard."

The spy laughed. "He may be small, but he's dynamite," he said. "And if you think he's small, take a look at that picture of Job Wolganheimer, and then contrast it with the picture of Bonneguard."

Leith regarded the two photographs and burst into laughter.

"What the devil, Scuttle!" he exclaimed. "This is like a Hollywood comedy; Karl Bonneguard, broad-shouldered, husky, well nourished, Hanz Bettler so slender you'd think he was a professional dancer, and then Job Wolganheimer so thin he looks like a lead pencil dressed up in a double-breasted suit. Dammit, Scuttle, perhaps the man *gets* thin carrying that long-winded name around with him."

"Yes, sir," the spy said with a broad smile.

"You said they were delayed a half hour in getting there when Bradercrust called."

"Yes, sir. That's right. It seems that there was a slow leak in one of Wolganheimer's tires, and when he went to change the tire, he found that the nut which holds the spare tire in place had been put on against the threads and was screwed on so tight they simply couldn't loosen it. So Wolganheimer had to repair the flat by taking off the casing, pulling out the tube, patching, and then inflating the tire by hand."

"Couldn't they have done something better than that?" Leith asked. "Surely they could have got a taxi,



or one of them could have stopped a passing motorist and ridden in. If I had a hundred thousand dollars in a safe and the guard was drugged, I'd get there."

"Yes, sir, but you forgot they took Bettler to a very lonely isolated spot in order to keep the newspapers from finding out what had happened. Coming back, they were on a road where there was no traffic."

"I see," Leith said moodily. "Look here, Scuttle. In this photograph it shows a water cooler standing there in the corridor. As I remember it, it was very warm three nights ago. Isn't it possible that both Bettler and Bradercrust drank water from the cooler; also the dog—"

"You'll pardon me, sir," the spy interrupted diffidently, "but that's already been gone over."

"What has?"

"The water cooler."

"What about it?"

"Bonneguard thought, of course, that was how the drug had been administered, because Bradercrust remembered taking a drink of water from the cooler. But Bonneguard turned the cooler over to the police who made a detailed examination and found not the slightest trace of any drug whatever in the water."

"Was there anything different about that one police dog which was drugged?" Leith asked. "Was his history exactly the same as the others?"

"Yes, sir, absolutely the same. The dogs were all purchased from an agency which makes it its business to supply watchdogs. They are trained to recognize only certain people, and as watchdogs, they're very superior."

"And those dogs were all furnished at the same time?"

"Yes, sir."

Lester Leith frowned at the tips

of his bedroom slippers. "Let me take a look at that picture of the Wilmeier Avenue house, Scuttle."

The spy silently passed over the clippings. Leith studied them for several minutes; then, whistling a little tune, placed his thumbnail over one of the barred windows, completely blotting it from sight.

"Pardon me, sir. May I ask what you're doing?" the valet asked.

"Yes, Scuttle," he said, still absent-mindedly. "I was wondering when the house was remodeled as a fortress, those bars and so forth. Was that part of the house changed after Bonneguard purchased it?"

"Yes, sir. When Bonneguard purchased the house, he fixed it up the way he wanted it. The steel doors and iron bars were installed by Wolganheimer and Bonneguard. They're both carpenters and contractors and did the work themselves."

"Had these bars been tampered with, Scuttle?"

"No, sir, the bars were firmly in place, and the windows were closed and locked on the inside. Wolganheimer had locked them the last thing before he and Bonneguard had left, and they both inspected them again as soon as they realized the money had been taken from the safe."

"And Wolganheimer's young lady friend is the hula dancer, Scuttle?"

"Yes, sir."

"Of course, Scuttle, spies from time immemorial have been recruited from the ranks of dancers and glamour girls."

"Yes, sir, but this young woman is hardly a professional spy. She has a record back of her of several consecutive years in the theatrical world."

Leith nodded absent-mindedly, sat in silent concentration for a matter of some fifteen minutes. Once or twice his head moved thoughtfully

in an almost imperceptible nod. His pet parakeet, venturing through the open door of its cage, fluttered around the room and then settled to rest on Leith's shoulder where it began preening the hair around the base of his neck.

Leith said: "Scuttle, it occurs to me that one *might* reach an academic solution of this crime if he had certain things."

"Yes, sir," the spy said eagerly.

"One of the first things he would want," Leith declared, "would be a hula dancer, one of those girls whose form is as quivering tremulous as jelly on a plate. One would want a large-sized monkey wrench, a second-hand automobile, a ukulele, seven cowboy hats, and a 'human-skeleton' broncobuster. In addition, Scuttle, he'd want a small replica of a surfboard stamped from solid gold. The border would be embellished with several small diamonds. You know what I mean, Scuttle, a small replica of a surfboard such as is used on the beach at Waikiki. And I think that would about cover the situation. Oh, yes, one thing more. It would be necessary to organize the Hawaiian-American Aesthetic Art Association. It would be necessary for the association to have offices in a downtown office building, and the association would, of course, need a president. I would say offhand, Scuttle, that you'd make a very excellent president."



The spy stared at Lester Leith with eyes in which there was a sudden hostility. "You're making a joke of it," he said with dignity. "You're trying to ridicule the whole matter, make me feel like a fool for having tried to help you find an interesting crime."

Lester Leith shook his head. "No, I'm not, Scuttle," he said. "Given those things, I see no reason why the case shouldn't be carried to a satisfactory conclusion—by a private investigator, of course. The

police could never do it. The trouble with the police, Scuttle, as I have pointed out to you on so many occasions, is that they are completely lacking in imagination."

"Yes, sir," the spy said, regaining his assumed servility with an effort. "Of course, sir, I realize that you don't expect to be taken seriously."

Leith said: "The devil I don't, Scuttle! Here, take a couple of ads for the newspaper, something like this: 'Wanted—educated, talented, beautiful hula dancer of Hawaiian extraction. Must be slender, active, graceful and supple. Wanted—thin broncobuster who can ride them when they buck, should be between five foot seven and five foot eight and weigh under a hundred pounds, wear a seven-and-a-quarter hat and be experienced in riding broncos. Excellent pay for the right party.'

"And now, Scuttle, if you'll see about getting me a very large

monkey wrench, and seven cowboy hats, I'll attend to the rest of it myself."

"Seven cowboy hats, sir?"

"Yes, Scuttle. Now, there are several varieties of cowboy hat. There is what is known as the two-gallon hat, the five-gallon hat, and the ten-gallon hat. I want the ten-gallon hat, Scuttle, and it should be lined with silk."

"Any particular size, sir?"

"Seven and a quarter."

"Do I understand, sir," the spy asked, his enthusiasm dampened by his incredulity, "that you're planning to solve this case of the drugged watchman by any such a collection as this?"

"Good heavens, no, Scuttle! I'm merely getting these things together so I can convince you that by using them to advantage, a person *could* solve the crime, that's all."

The spy sighed patiently. "You really wish me to put these ads in the paper, sir?"

"Yes, Scuttle. Phone them in right away. No, never mind. I'll attend to the ads myself. And now I'm going to have a fast set of tennis with an estimable young lady. You may get out my tennis things, and I'll hop into them and get started."

CHAPTER II.

BEAVER'S THEORY.

SERGEANT ACKLEY sat in police headquarters, his feet elevated to the edge of a somewhat scarred and battered desk. Careless cigarettes had left charred, black marks until it looked as if the edges of the desk were festooned with caterpillars. Sergeant Ackley was reading the morning paper. As he read, his lips moved soundlessly, forming the words.

He turned to the classified ads and read them mechanically. Not that he expected to find anything startling, but since Lester Leith's surreptitious activities so frequently found a manifestation in the classified ad columns, Sergeant Ackley made it a point to glance through the "Help Wanted," on the off-chance that he might stumble onto something.

Suddenly his eye lighted on an ad which read:

Skinny broncobuster wanted. Employment for Western cowboy broncobuster, five feet seven or five feet eight, weighing under hundred pounds, and wearing a seven-and-a-quarter-size hat. Must be able to ride them when they buck. If you dig post holes with your head, don't apply. Only first-class, top-notch rider wanted.

Sergeant Ackley spread the newspaper down on the table, marked the place of the ad with a heavy spade-like thumbnail. While he took a knife from his pocket and cut around the edges of the ad, he jabbed a call



bell; and when an officer opened the door in response to his signal, he said:

"As soon as Beaver reports, I want to talk with him."

The officer said, "Yes, sergeant; I'm expecting him any minute now," and withdrew.

Sergeant Ackley, fishing a black cigar from his waistcoat pocket, clamped the end between his teeth, closed down his powerful jaw muscles, wrenched the cigar free, spat out the conical end tip of tobacco, wrapped his lips around the cigar, and groped for a match. While he was looking for the match, he read through the "Help Wanted Female" column.

Suddenly he stiffened to attention, pushed his extended forefinger against the paper, and moved it slowly back and forth along the lines of the ad which read:

Opening for hula dancer who can wiggle. Squirm your way to success. Wanted, a hula dancer of Hawaiian strain, beautiful figure and dusky eyes, who can go "around the island" like nobody's business. Girls with stiff backbones and contortional inhibitions need not apply. This position is open for a professional, native, genuine, amiable Hawaiian hula dancer. First-class pay. No references other than those you carry with you.

Sergeant Ackley once more placed the paper flat on the table, imprisoned the ad with the spatulate end of his stubby thumb, and cut around it with the blade of his knife.

He had just finished pinning the two ads together, when the officer advised him that Beaver was in the outer office, and a moment later, the huge figure of the police undercover man insinuated itself through the doorway.

"Beaver," Sergeant Ackley said, "he's at it again."

"At what, sergeant?" Beaver asked.

Sergeant Ackley handed him the two ads clipped together.

"Oh, I know all about these," Beaver said.

"Oh, you do, do you?" Sergeant Ackley observed with ponderous sarcasm. "Oh, well, then, *that's* all that's necessary. Never mind making reports, Beaver. After all, our work up here at headquarters isn't particularly important, just so *you* keep fully posted on what's happening. There's no necessity for letting *me* know."

Beaver flushed, stiffened, and said: "I'm sorry, sergeant. I didn't think there was any use reporting these two ads."

"And why not?"

"Because they're just a run-around."

"Tell me about it," Sergeant Ackley said. "And tell me *all* about it. Dammit, Beaver, when you're planted on a job, you're supposed to keep your superiors posted about what's going on. These ads must have been sent in to the paper yesterday afternoon."

"That's right. They were."

"And why the devil didn't I know about it? I could have arranged to plant a couple of applicants. I suppose it's too late now."

"The other things that he wants," the spy said wearily, "are seven ten-gallon cowboy hats, a huge monkey wrench, and a secondhand automobile which he prefers to buy himself. There are several other minor matters such as a gold surfboard incrustated with small diamonds, the organization of the Hawaiian-American Aesthetic Art Association, the renting of office room for same, and the selection of a president. At last reports, I was to be that president."

"Then he *is* nuts," Sergeant Ackley said.

"Not that," the undercover man said quietly, "but I'm afraid he's wise to us."

"What do you mean? You didn't tip your hand, did you?"

"Well, no—not exactly, no, I'm quite sure I didn't, but I did try to get him interested in that matter of the drugged guard, just as you suggested."

"That damn thing's an impossible case," Sergeant Ackley grumbled. "I don't think there ever was any robbery. I think the whole thing is a frame-up."

"Why's it impossible?" Beaver asked, his voice showing his interest.

"It's impossible because it couldn't have happened the way it did happen," Sergeant Ackley said. "We've checked that case with a fine-tooth comb, and the facts just don't fit together. Not only is somebody lying, but I think everybody is lying."

"I'd like to know," Beaver said, "because I've been trying to get him interested in that case. I thought I really had him sold on it. He was sitting right up on the edge of his chair, listening to details, and then he pulled this stuff about the skinny broncobuster and the hula dancer and—"

"Whatever gave him the idea of the hula dancer?" Sergeant Ackley asked.

"Because Bonneguard's right-hand man, Wolganheimer, is going with a hula dancer. You'll remember that he has Io Wahine on the string. In fact, he was with her—"

"That's right," Sergeant Ackley said. "I remember now."

"I'd like to know as much as you've found out about the case, sergeant," the undercover man said. "It may

make quite a difference in getting him *really* interested in it."

Sergeant Ackley raised his hand to his face, scraped the edge of his thumbnail along the stubble at the angle of his jaw. "Well," he said, "there was a bunch of money in that safe all right. We've been in touch with various police officers, and the government secret service gave us a tip-off. There's no question that money has been pouring into headquarters, and from all we can find out, that money has gone. Someone made a good haul. But it never on earth could have been made the way they claim it was made."

"Why not?"

"Well, let's start in with Bettler. Now, Hanz Bettler has a pretty good record. Of course, that may or may not mean anything. He calls up Bonneguard, tells him he's been drugged and to get some relief down to him right away, because he can't stay awake. Bonneguard, Wolganheimer, and Bradercrust start for the place. When they get there, Bettler has managed to keep awake, and has been awake all the time. Drugged as he was, if he'd ever dropped off to sleep, he'd have slept straight through. It would have been impossible for anyone to have opened that door without his knowing it. And there's no evidence the lock had been tampered with."

"Leith got that all figured out," Beaver said. "The thief didn't have an opportunity to pull the job while Bettler was drugged. That's why he had to drug Bradercrust."

"Drug Bradercrust, my eye," Sergeant Ackley said. "How the hell did he have a chance to drug Bradercrust?"

"Well, he did it, didn't he?"

"Get this," Sergeant Ackley said. "It was a hot night. Hanz Bettler took a drink out of the water cooler.



Bradercrust took a drink out of the water cooler, and gave the dog a drink out of the water cooler. Now, that means the water in the cooler was doped, doesn't it?"

The undercover man nodded.

"Well," Sergeant Ackley said, "we grabbed that water cooler just as soon as our men got on the job, and it wasn't doped. There's absolutely no trace of any drug in that water or in the cooler."

"They must have got it from *some-where*," Beaver persisted.

"Sez you," Sergeant Ackley said. "Now, get this straight, Beaver. The guard watches the inside of the house, but in order to get to the inside of the house, you have to cross a strip of lawn. Widths of that strip vary from thirty-two feet at its narrowest point to seventy feet at its widest. Those grounds are patrolled by savage police dogs. Our detectives made a series of tests. Even conceding they could get over the fence or pick the lock in the gate, they were never able to get so much as a foot on the ground before the police dogs had nailed them.

"Now, there were just four people

whom those dogs obeyed: Bonneguard, Bettler, Wolganheimer, and Bradercrust. The time of all those men is accounted for; therefore, none of them could have pulled the robbery. And yet no one else *could* have done it. Now, you figure that out and—"

The undercover man suddenly sat bolt upright.

"What is it, Beaver?" Sergeant Ackley asked, as he saw the expression on the man's face.

"Bradercrust," Beaver said, in a low tone.

"What about him?"

"The dogs knew Bradercrust," Beaver said.

"Well, what if they did? Bradercrust was drugged. There's no question about that. He was taken to the hospital, and his stomach was pumped out. There was enough dope in his system to—"

"Don't you see?" Beaver exclaimed. "It was a cinch. That burglary wasn't committed while *anyone* was drugged. Bradercrust managed to dope Bettler, knowing that Bettler would telephone Bonneguard at his house. Well, then Bradercrust went up and volunteered to take over. What happened? He picked the lock and burglarized the safe as soon as the other two had left. Since the dogs knew him, he had no difficulty whatever in going to the fence and slipping the package through the iron bars to a confederate. Then Bradercrust went back and took a drink of water from the cooler, dropped some drug into it, drank it, and gave a dose of the same drug to one of the police dogs, just to make the whole thing look convincing. Because Bettler had been drugged earlier in the evening, the whole thing made a perfect background so that no one would suspect Bradercrust."

Sergeant Ackley's eyes narrowed. For a matter of more than two minutes, he was silent. Then he said: "I hadn't meant to tell you about that, Beaver."

"Hadn't meant to tell *me* about *what*?" the undercover man asked.

"About that theory of the case."

"You weren't telling *me* about anything," the undercover man said. "I was telling *you*."

"Yes, it's true," Sergeant Ackley said, "that you hit upon the only theory which explains what actually happened. It's rather a peculiar coincidence, because it's something I'd figured out about an hour ago and had just written it in my report to Captain Carmichael. Naturally, I hadn't intended to mention it to anyone until after the captain had passed on it."

The undercover man slumped down in his chair, regarded his superior with sullen hostility.

"Oh, I see," he said. "You thought of it first."

Sergeant Ackley met his gaze without so much as the quiver of an eyelash. "Yes," he said. "I had written my report about an hour ago."

"I see," Beaver said, scraping back his chair. "Well, I should have known better— Do I outline any of this to Lester Leith?"

"You do not," Sergeant Ackley said positively. "Let him pull his own chestnuts out of the fire."

"I thought I had him interested in that case," the spy said. "Gosh, I don't know why he *wouldn't* be interested in it! There's a cold hundred thousand dollars to be picked up for the asking. The numbers on the bills aren't listed, public sympathy is against the whole movement, Bonneguard is on the defensive, and will probably be brought before the grand jury, and I under-

stand the government is figuring on deporting him. It's an ironclad cinch for a hijacker; and then Leith goes ahead and gives me the run-around with this gold surfboard and all that stuff."

"You never can tell," Sergeant Ackley said thoughtfully. "He may not intend to use the skinny broncobuster with the cowboy hat; in other words, he may have padded out his order to keep you from figuring what he really has in mind."

There was new hope on the spy's face. "There *may* be something to that," he conceded. "I would have sworn he was interested."

"You should have reported those ads to me at once."

"They sounded so foolish that I figured he was just giving me a run-around," the spy said, "and thought it was better to pay no attention to them."

Sergeant Ackley motioned toward the door with his thumb. "You get back on the job, Beaver," he said. "I'll do the thinking, and you'd better start now because I've got a lot of important work to do."

Beaver scraped back his chair, lumbered toward the door. His face was a mask of sullen rage. In the doorway, he turned and said savagely:

"All right, I'll get out, and let you write your report to Captain Carmichael."

Sergeant Ackley pushed back the chair, and got to his feet.

"What was that, Beaver?" he demanded.

For a long moment, the two men locked eyes. Then the big spy shifted his.

"Nothing," he said.

"It sounded like insubordination, Beaver. I'd hate to report you."

"It was nothing. Forget it," the

spy said, and oozed through the door.

As soon as the door had closed, Sergeant Ackley whipped a piece of paper from the drawer of his desk, and started scribbling feverishly:

Report to Captain Carmichael on the Bonneguard Safe Job. I, Sergeant Ackley, have been thinking all night, for two nights, walking the floor, working out a theory which accounts for all the facts.

He paused to read the paragraph he had written and nodded with approval as he squared away and started writing the rest of the report, scratching his pen feverishly over the paper.

CHAPTER III.

AROUND THE ISLAND.

THERE were eight tawny-skinned Hawaiian girls, and fully half a dozen thin cowpunchers at Lester Leith's apartment when the spy returned from his session with Sergeant Ackley.

Lester Leith frowned his disapproval, and said: "Dammit, Scuttle, you've been more than an hour getting the car from the garage. What the devil's the idea? Did you think you were on a vacation?"

"I'm sorry, sir," the spy lied glibly with the facility born of long practice. "The car had a flat tire and I had the devil of a time getting it off. The rim was frozen solid to the wheel and—"

"Well, never mind," Leith said. "Here are these people who have gathered in response to the ad. Get the name and address of each, and send the applicants into my private sitting room, one at a time. Give me a list of the names and addresses, and I'll check them off as I interview the applicants."

"Yes, sir," the spy said, making a surreptitious appraisal of the Hawaiian girls whose dark, smoky eyes, hinting at the romantic possibilities of a friendly race, drew his attention as a magnet.

Lester Leith, ensconced in his private sitting room, set the stage for the interviews. After five minutes, the spy opened the door and oozed into the room.

"Here they are," he said, "the names and addresses of all the applicants."

"Very well, Scuttle. I'll see the dancers first, the cowpunchers next."

The first young woman through the door smiled at him with the frank friendliness of the Polynesian.

"What's your name?" Lester Leith asked.

"Nano Kapiolani."

Leith checked off her name and address on the list. "What do you know about the hula?" he asked.

"Everything," she said, and for a moment her lips lost their smile. Her eyes were pleading and wistful. "If you people of the Mainland could only understand the spirit of our hula," she said, "it would make for so much more enjoyment of our dances. The genuine hula isn't a vulgar 'grind' such as you see at so many of the cheap exhibits. It's a portrayal of nature. With our bodies, we imitate the swaying of trees in tropical winds. With our hands, we signify the action of our songs, the tiny wavelets hissing up the sand, the drifting of clouds across the sky, the— Here, let me show you."

She kicked off her shoes, loosened the belt of her skirt, and, singing with the effortless ease of the native Hawaiian, began to sway in rhythm to the music.

When she had finished, Leith said: "You get the job. It may interest you to know that your activities will be in connection with the organization of the Hawaiian-American Aesthetic Art Association with offices in the Moronia Building. The purpose and scope of the organization will be to advance a greater appreciation of the artistic significance of the Hawaiian dances. Here's a one-hundred-dollar advance on salary. That will cover your work for a week. The job may not last longer than that, but you'll get another week's salary in lieu of notice."

"Shall I tell the other applicants that the position's filled?" she asked, her eyes glistening with gratitude as she took the hundred-dollar bill.

"No," Leith said. "I want to talk with each of them, but remember to

hold yourself in readiness for a telephone call from me."

She thanked him and went out. The spy promptly introduced the next applicant.

"Maui Huanemo," the spy said.

"How did you get that first name?" Lester Leith asked her.

"I was born on Maui," she said. Most of the girls on the Hawaiian teams come from Oahu. They started calling me Maui as sort of a nickname, until now it's the way I'm known in all of the booking agencies."

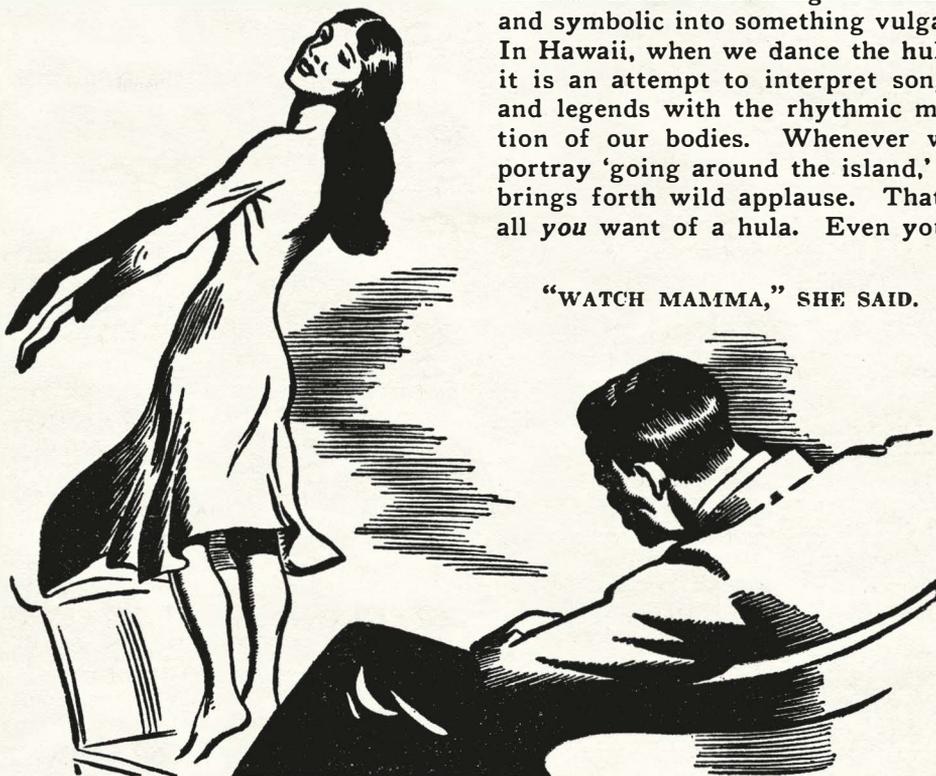
"And what do you know of the hula?" Leith asked.

"I know too much," she told him sadly.

"What do you mean?"

"I have learned that on the Mainland the Hawaiian hula has been turned from something beautiful and symbolic into something vulgar. In Hawaii, when we dance the hula, it is an attempt to interpret songs and legends with the rhythmic motion of our bodies. Whenever we portray 'going around the island,' it brings forth wild applause. That's all *you* want of a hula. Even your

"WATCH MAMMA," SHE SAID.





ad emphasized that part of the hula dance. We—”

Lester Leith interrupted to say: “I’m sorry if you misunderstood the ad. As a matter of fact, I am a representative of the Hawaiian-American Aesthetic Art Association with offices in the Moronia Building. It is the purpose of the organization to advance an artistic appreciation of the true aesthetic value of the Hawaiian hula dances. If you are employed, you will be doing field work for the association, and may rest assured that everything you do will advance an appreciation of the Hawaiian dances. Are you acquainted with Nano Kapiolani, the young woman who was just in here?”

“No, I have never seen her before.”

Leith gravely took from his pocket a hundred-dollar bill.

“You get the job,” he said, “but I don’t want you to tell the others.”

“But don’t you want to see me

dance?” she asked. “Don’t you want—”

“It’s quite unnecessary. I can tell from the manner in which you carry yourself that you are quite proficient. This hundred dollars will cover your first week’s salary. The job may not last longer than that, but you will receive another hundred dollars in lieu of notice. And remember that you start working for me tonight, that you are to hold yourself in readiness to follow my instructions regardless of how peculiar and eccentric those instructions may seem.”

“Oh, thank you so much,” she said.

Leith nodded crisp dismissal, ushered her to the door, and nodded to the undercover man.

The next young woman was Mildred Wemomano.

“And what,” Lester Leith asked, “do you know about the hula?”

“Watch mamma,” she said.

She took off her shoes, stepped from the chair to the desk, fastened big, brown, laughing eyes on Lester Leith and began swaying in the rhythmic tempo of a South Sea Island dance.

Gradually the tempo grew more rapid.

“Here we go,” she said, “around the island. Watch.”

Folding her arms, she characterized the journey around the island in the age-old Hawaiian manner.

Lester Leith gravely took a hundred-dollar bill from his pocket.

“You’re hired,” he said. “But don’t tell the others.”

Within the next fifteen minutes, Leith had hired all the Hawaiian dancing girls, and had started interviewing cowpunchers.

Harry Lanten was the first applicant, a drawling, soft-spoken individual who walked into the room with shoes that would clump despite

anything he could do, with legs that were bowed like a pair of calipers.

"What," Leith asked, "do you know about riding mean bucking broncos?"

"I've ridden a few."

"And you wear a seven-and-a-quarter size hat?"

"That's right."

"I see," Lester Leith said, "that you're exactly what I've been looking for. You're hired. Here's one hundred dollars to cover a week's salary in advance."

The blue, deep-set eyes, seemingly trying to crowd together past the barrier of a nose which was as protruding and businesslike as the beak of a mosquito, lighted with gratitude. "Say, buddy," he said, "you don't know what this means—"

"Could you," Lester Leith interrupted his thanks, "teach *me* how to ride a bucking bronco?"

The thin cowpuncher surveyed him with appraising eyes. "Yes," he said. "I know where there are a couple of horses, not downright mean uns, you know, but horses that'll start to buck if you crowd 'em a bit."

Leith said: "Tomorrow afternoon at three o'clock I want to take my first lesson. Have a bronco all ready for me."

"O. K. Swell," the man said.

Leith opened the door of his closet.

"Here," he said, "is a little present for you. Take your pick."

The man stared at the array of ten-gallon sombreros, grabbed one of them, felt the texture of the rim, looked in the band to be certain of the name of the maker, and then whistled.

"You mean you're *giving* this to me?" he asked.

Leith nodded. "And remember," he said, "to be on the job waiting

for me to telephone. Don't get drunk, and you hadn't better wear cowboy togs. Just keep on your regular clothes, but you can wear this hat."

Lanten thanked him and left, renewing his assurances of gratitude. Five minutes later, Lester Leith had hired Philip Wolsack of Arizona. Six minutes after that, Tex Sherwin of San Antonio had collected the job. Then Arthur Grebe was hired.

However, it wasn't until shortly after noon that Beaver was able to call Sergeant Ackley.

"Hello, sergeant," he said cautiously. "I just wanted to give you the lowdown. Apparently those ads are just run-arounds. He tried to keep anyone from knowing which one of the applicants he'd hired, but I was too smart for him. Whenever they would come out, I would take them to one side and ask them confidentially: 'What time did Mr. Leith say you were to start work?'"

"Good work," Sergeant Ackley said. "Whom did he hire?"

A slow grin twisted the spy's thick lips. "He hired every damn one of them," he said. "Remember, sergeant, you boys do the thinking. That puts it in your department. Now figure *that* out, and put it in your report to Captain Carmichael." And the spy eased the receiver back on its hook.

CHAPTER IV.

RANGE REGALIA.

LESTER LEITH, attired in leather jacket, vivid blue silk shirt with a wide, flaring collar open at the neck, leather gauntlets elaborately ornamented with hammered silver, black chaps, cowboy high-heeled boots, and ornamental belt with hammered silver conchs, came down the corridor

which led to his apartment, his boot heels sounding with a rhythmic *clump-clump-clump*. He unlocked the door, entered the reception hallway, and started calling almost before he was through the door:

"Scuttle. Oh, Scuttle. Where the devil are you, Scuttle?"

The undercover man came running from the kitchenette.

"Yes, sir. What was it, sir? Oh, my heavens!"

"What's the matter?" Leith asked.

The spy stared at him with wide, round eyes. "Nothing, sir, only— Pardon me, sir. A bit of a shock, sir. I'd hardly expected—"

"Tut, tut, Scuttle," Lester Leith said. "You shouldn't ever be surprised at anything I do. Tomorrow I'm taking lessons in riding a bucking bronco. I want to become proficient in the art, and I've noticed that one of the most difficult bits of cowboy technique is wearing the clothes. Tell me, Scuttle, how am I doing?"

"Yes, sir," the spy said, gulping down his surprise. "You're doing very well, sir. Very well, indeed, if I may say so, sir."

"You may say so, Scuttle," Lester Leith said. "But look at the hat."

The valet studied the broad-brimmed sombrero.

"Yes, sir," he said. "It's a very becoming hat."

"Becoming, my eye!" Lester Leith stormed. "It's a puny, half-size, five-gallon hat. Scuttle, where the devil are those ten-gallon hats?"

"In the closet, sir."

"Well, bring me one immediately, Scuttle. I started down to the garage to get my car before I realized that the Western outfitters who sold me this cowboy outfit had short-changed me on the hat."

"Yes, sir," the undercover man said, and moved toward the closet,

walking with cat-footed swiftness, despite his large frame.

When the undercover man had brought him the ten-gallon hat, Leith took off the sombrero he was wearing and put on the huge cowboy hat.

"That," he said, surveying himself in the mirror, "is better, much better."

The undercover man's doubts showed in his eyes. The huge hat, with its high crown and wide brim, seemed to throw Leith off balance. It was as though the hat were wearing the man rather than the man wearing the hat.

The spy coughed deprecatingly.

Leith glanced at him sharply. "What's the matter, Scuttle?"

"Begging your pardon, sir," the spy said, "but if you don't mind my saying so, sir, I thought that hat you were wearing was very becoming, very becoming indeed."

"Meaning that you don't like this one as well, Scuttle?"

"Oh, I'd hardly say that, sir. After all, this cowboy regalia is a bit strange to me. That first hat, sir, was very becoming, very becoming indeed."

Leith said dubiously: "I can see that you're being tactful, Scuttle. Don't do it. I like this big hat. When I want a cowboy hat, I want a real one. I shall wear this."

"Yes, sir. Very good, sir."

"And, Scuttle, how many more of those sombreros do we have?"

"Two, sir."

"Put them all in the car," Leith said. "If I decide that this hat is too large, I'll change all those others for smaller hats."

A cunning glint came into the eyes of the spy. "Begging your pardon, sir," he said, "but you can only wear one hat at a time."

Lester Leith surveyed his valet

thoughtfully. "Scuttle," he said, "never make positive statements to me in that tone of voice. It irritates me. It acts as a challenge, and it's not correct. After all, Scuttle, hats are made to telescope. Dealers carry them that way on their shelves. There's no reason why a man couldn't wear four or five hats, one on top of the other."

"Yes, sir," the spy said. "Very good, sir. It is, of course, quite readily conceivable."

"That's better, Scuttle," Leith said. "Now bring those hats down to the car."

Leith walked back to the elevators, descended to the lobby, and *clumped-clumped-clumped* out to the street where his car was parked. A few persons who happened to be in the lobby eyed him curiously, and then turned to exchange amused glances with each other. But Leith, seemingly oblivious of their stares, marched across to the automobile.

As Lester Leith pulled away from the curb, an inconspicuous car, neither old nor new, neither shiny nor shabby, slid out from the mouth of an alley and started following Leith's car. The man at the wheel was broad-shouldered, thick-necked, and his eyes had that peculiarly insistent, boring belligerency which comes to men who have been long on the police force.

Two men occupied the rear seat of the automobile, sitting well back with the brims of their hats pulled low on their foreheads so as to shade their eyes as well as conceal their faces. The man on the left was Sergeant Ackley. The one on the right was Captain Andrew Carmichael.

Captain Carmichael was staring thoughtfully at the car ahead as they speeded down the boulevard.

"Look here, Ackley," he said. "This thing doesn't make sense."

"It never does," Sergeant Ackley said. "He fixes it so it don't."

"Don't be impertinent!"

"I'm not being impertinent, captain. That's the thing about Leith which makes him so dangerous. He reasons along entirely unconventional lines. I've worked on him enough now so I'm commencing to know something of his methods."

Captain Carmichael said angrily: "Well, this time he's just taking you on a wild-goose chase. He could no more hijack money in an outfit like that than he could fly to the moon. Look at the way everyone stares at him. He's a walking side show. He might just as well be carrying a brass band with him."

Sergeant Ackley said with feeling: "And don't think that man couldn't walk in right under your nose and hijack a bunch of loot with a brass band. That's just his style."

Captain Carmichael puckered his forehead. "I certainly hope," he said, "that you know what you're doing."

"I do," Ackley said. "I've got him this time. He's hot on the trail of this hundred thousand dollars. What's more, he's going to get it, and when he does, we're going to get him. This is one time we're properly prepared. You see, captain, on the other occasions we've known what Leith was doing, but we didn't know what he expected to accomplish by doing it because we didn't know who was guilty. This time we've got the whole thing doped out, because we know Bradercrust is the one he's after. Always before. Leith has been one jump ahead of us. This time he ain't."

Captain Carmichael said: "That was an interesting bit of reasoning, that report of yours, sergeant. I

sent it on to the chief. He seemed very much pleased with it."

Sergeant Ackley beamed. "I surely worked hard enough on it," he said.

"How did you figure it out?" Captain Carmichael asked.

"Just concentration and persistence," Sergeant Ackley replied modestly.

"Simple as that?" the captain asked.

"Hardly simple," the sergeant protested. "I walked the floor for two nights. I didn't sleep a wink for forty-eight hours."

"Well," Captain Carmichael announced, "some officers could have walked the floor for a month and still couldn't have got it. I have an idea this training you've been getting with Leith has developed your deductive powers. I don't mind telling you that the chief was very much impressed. You're going to hear more of it, sergeant."

Sergeant Ackley ripped the end off a cigar. His eyes were glowing.

"Thanks," he said.

In the car ahead, Lester Leith found driving, with the broad brim of his sombrero cutting off his view on either side, sufficiently difficult to force him to concentrate his entire attention on the road ahead. Not once did he turn to look behind. He, perforce, paid no attention to the other traffic on the boulevard.

CHAPTER V.

THE GREEN-EYED MONSTER.

IO WAHINE was sprawled in velvety-skinned comfort on the chaise longue. Her features were relaxed in the effortless smile which is the natural heritage of the Hawaiian. Pearly teeth showed between red lips. The clear olive skin of her face served as

a fitting background for the smoky hue of her limpid eyes. There was something completely at rest about her, a relaxation which spoke of perfect muscular co-ordination, reminiscent of a cat sprawled on a hearth.

Job Wolganheimer, on the other hand, was the exact antithesis. So thin that he seemed to be nothing but skin and bones, bowlegged, restless-eyed, he paced the floor, walked over to the window, looked down into the alley, walked over to the wall, stared moodily at a picture, went to the kitchen, had a drink of water, and called raspingly over his shoulder:

"How about it, Io? Want a drink?"

"No, thanks," she said, in lazy tones of perfect contentment.

Wolganheimer walked back into the living rooms, snapping his fingers nervously. For the tenth time within the last twenty minutes, he looked at his watch.

"Bonneguard was to be here," he said, "ten minutes ago. I wonder what's keeping him."

Io Wahine saw no reason for trying to answer the question.

Wolganheimer again walked over to the window, looked down into the alley.

"When I tell Bonneguard what I've got on Bradercrust, there's going to be a big blowoff," he said. "You and I probably will have to lie low for a while. It's going to make a stink."

"What *do* you have on Bradercrust?" she asked, with a curiosity which was so indolent that, when he didn't answer the question, she merely yawned, stretched her superb figure, raised her arms and clasped her hands behind her head.

The doorbell rang.

Wolganheimer jumped as though a shot had been fired, whirled and raced toward the door.

Io Wahine unclasped her hands, made the gesture of pulling her skirt down over her smooth limbs. Then deciding that it was too much effort, dropped her arms so that the backs of her fingers rested lightly on the carpet.

Wolganheimer flung open the door.

"Well," he said, "it took you long enough to get—" He broke off to stare in surprise at a messenger in the conventional uniform of the Western Union Telegraph Co.

"Telegram for Io Wahine at this address," the messenger said. "She here?"

The Hawaiian dancer swung from the couch with the smooth, easy rhythm of a trout gliding through the depths of a cool mountain pool. She took the telegram as well as the pencil which the messenger held out, signed for the telegram, tore it open, and then laughed with the sheer enjoyment of life.

"What is it?" Wolganheimer asked, instantly jealous.

She smiled her thanks at the messenger, closed the door, and handed Wolganheimer the oblong of yellow paper.

Wolganheimer read:

"HAWAIIAN-AMERICAN AESTHETIC ART COMMITTEE AFTER MAKING UNANNOUNCED COMPARATIVE TESTS OF ALL THE CURRENT HULA DANCERS HAVE AWARDED YOU FIRST PRIZE FOR MOST INTERPRETATIVE PERFORMANCE OF ISLAND DANCING STOP NOTIFIED YOU BY MAIL TWO DAYS AGO THAT PRIZE WOULD BE DISTRIBUTED FIVE O'CLOCK THIS AFTERNOON STOP HAVE RECEIVED NO ANSWER STOP PRIZE WILL BE AWARDED ROOM SIX-THIRTEEN MORONIA BUILDING STOP UNLESS YOU ARE PRESENT AT FIVE O'CLOCK AWARD WILL BE CANCELED AND

FIRST PRIZE DISTRIBUTED NANO KAPIOLANI WHO STANDS SECOND ON LIST"

Job Wolganheimer, his narrow-set, nervous eyes peering greedily down his bony nose at the telegram, reacted commercially. "Why the hell don't they say what the first prize is?" he asked.

Io Wahine, slipping down the zipper of her short house dress as she walked toward the closet, said:

"I don't care if it's nothing but a box of matches. It's a recognition of merit. And think of the publicity value."

"But look here. We can't walk out on Bonneguard. We have to wait for him."

"You wait," Io Wahine called from the closet where she was dressing. "I've waited twenty minutes already, and that's enough to wait for any man."

"Well, you're not going up there alone," Wolganheimer protested. "How the devil do I know this isn't another trick to ditch me so you can have a date with that Hawaiian boy friend?"

Io Wahine was always short-tempered when she tried to imprison her legs in stockings, her feet in shoes. She said: "Come if you want to, or stay if you want to. I'm going, and you've got five minutes to make up your mind. Leave a note for your friend and let him follow us."

The telephone rang.

With an exclamation, Wolganheimer jerked the receiver from its cradle to hear a masculine voice say:

"Don't forget, sweetheart, five o'clock."

"Hello, hello!" Wolganheimer shouted into the telephone. "What the devil—"

He heard the soft click at the

other end of the line as the party who had burst into such extemporaneous conversation gently, almost surreptitiously, hung up his telephone.

His face twisted with rage, Wolganheimer slammed the receiver back on the hook so violently that it almost pulled the telephone loose from the wall.

"You're damn right, I'm going!" he shouted at Io Wahine.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PECULIAR TIRE.

BETWEEN four o'clock and five thirty, there was a "No Parking" ordinance covering the entire district near the Moronia Building. Immediately adjacent to the Moronia Building, however, was a parking lot at the end of which a sign announced: "15 cents for one hour, 25 cents for three hours." By five o'clock, a large percentage of the cars had left this parking lot. It was too late for shoppers, and the professional men in the Moronia Building usually managed to get away between four thirty and quarter to five so as to beat the rush of traffic.

Job Wolganheimer, driving a 1936 Ford, drove into the parking space. The attendant took his car, gave him a numbered pasteboard, slipped a square containing the corresponding number in under the windshield wiper, and backed the car into a stall.

Across the street, Harry Lanten, driving a 1936 Ford, with Nano Kapiolani at his side, glided in close to the curb and stopped. Directly behind him, Lester Leith, driving a 1938 Buick, came to a stop and slid from behind the wheel.

"O. K., Harry," he said. "You two

take this car, and park it in the next block as I told you."

Lester Leith walked forward to the Ford, eased in the clutch, and turned into the parking place. The attendant was still busy with Wolganheimer's car, and Lester Leith obligingly parked the car himself, selecting the stall next to that occupied by the Wolganheimer car.

The attendant glanced curiously at Lester Leith's cowboy regalia, gave Leith a ticket, inserted a numbered pasteboard beneath the windshield wiper, then hurried toward the front of the lot as a third 1936 Ford, driven by Edward H. Beaver, came nosing up over the sidewalk.

Lester Leith slid out from behind the wheel, started toward the front of the lot, then turned back.

On the far side of the street, Captain Carmichael said to the driver of the police car: "He'll spot us if we wait here. We can drive down the block and make a U turn. How did it happen Beaver met him here?"

"I don't know," Sergeant Ackley said. "He hasn't had a chance to make a report."

"Where did he get those 1936 Fords?"

"Bought them," Sergeant Ackley said shortly. "Remember I told you he was buying secondhand cars?"

"What does he want with them?"

"Heaven knows," Ackley said. "He's building up a smoke screen of some sort. Don't let it fool you. While you're watching the smoke, he'll suddenly reach in, grab the piece he wants, and leave the rest of it in a grand snarl. You can go crazy trying to unscramble that snarl."

"I feel like I'm going crazy now," Captain Carmichael said. "This is the damndest thing I ever heard."

"You haven't seen anything yet," Sergeant Ackley said. "Wait until

the blowoff. Then things start moving so fast, it dazes you."

"How about it, sergeant? Think we'd better have a couple more of the boys come out?"

Sergeant Ackley snorted. "They'd laugh me off the force," he said. "I've been giving the boys the devil because two of them can't keep track of Lester Leith's activities. That's the reason I took this job over myself. If the two of us aren't sufficient to outsmart that crook with an undercover man on the job and a police chauffeur driving the car, we'd better quit."

Captain Carmichael said musingly: "I don't know, sergeant. After all, in our work, the thing to do is to get the criminal, not try to show off."

"I'm not trying to show off," Sergeant Ackley said sullenly. "I just yanked the detectives off the job because they hadn't been giving results."

"Well, we'll see," Captain Carmichael said thoughtfully, "but I don't like the looks of this. You know, sergeant, most crooks play the police game. We know what they're doing; it's only a question of catching up with them. But as I see this chap Leith, he manipulates things so that we're always playing his game, and I don't like it."

"Don't worry," Sergeant Ackley said grimly. "You watch. Before this case gets really hot, Emil Bradercrust will enter the picture, and when he does, then you're going to see some action; and we're going to get Leith."

"What's he doing over there?" Captain Carmichael asked, turning to get a last glimpse of Leith through the rear window in the car.

As the driver went to the block and made a U turn, a traffic officer at the corner, raising his whistle in

indignant protest at the flagrant violation of the traffic rules, delayed matters somewhat while Sergeant Ackley identified himself.

Sergeant Ackley answered Captain Carmichael's question as the traffic officer turned back toward his station. "Oh, Leith just forgot something and went back to his car to get it."

"I couldn't see what he was doing on account of that broad-brimmed hat," Captain Carmichael said. "There's Beaver coming down the street. Let's flag him and see what he has to say. We'll have a minute before Leith can get back to the front of that lot. Pull into the curb, driver. Oh, Beaver!"

The undercover man stiffened to attention, looked furtively back over his shoulder, then came to the curb.

"What is it?" Ackley asked.

"I'm to go up to 613 Moronia Building and have Io Wahine put on a hula. When she's finished, I'm to present her with the brooch made in the form of a gold surfboard with a border of small diamonds."

"What's the idea?" Captain Carmichael asked.

"You can search me. He telephoned me I'd find a 1936 Ford waiting out in front of the place, registered in his name. I was to get in it, drive to a certain place, wait until he came past, then follow his car, and drive into the same parking place. Watch out, boys. Here he comes."

Beaver, with elaborate unconcern, walked down to the entrance of the Moronia Building. The police car dashed ahead. Lester Leith, attired in cowboy regalia, the high-heeled leather boots making him walk awkwardly, came clumping down the sidewalk.

Harry Lanten and Nano Kapiolani, who had parked Lester Leith's Buick

in a garage, a block down the street, returned in time to give Leith the parking ticket and receive some low-voiced instructions from Leith as they stood for a moment at the entrance to the Moronia Building. Leith walked to the elevators, was whisked to the sixth floor, and heard the sounds of voices and laughter in 613.

Leith opened the door.

Job Wolganheimer, his face dark with jealousy, was standing near the window. Out in the center of the floor, Io Wahine was talking with Beaver. She was standing very close to the undercover man, looking up into his appreciative eyes, her face upturned, her lips parted in a friendly smile.

Leith said, "Pardon me a moment," and motioned to Beaver.

The undercover man reluctantly left the dancer's presence to follow Leith into the hall.

"Everything going all right, Scuttle?" Leith asked.

"Yes, sir," the spy said, with complacent self-satisfaction.

Leith said: "Give me the parking ticket on your car, Scuttle. Here's the ticket on my Buick. You take it, and I'll take your car. I'll meet you at my apartment. No need to hurry back. Incidentally, Scuttle," Leith said, lowering his voice, "I think this man who's with her is



going to be busy with some friends in a few minutes, and if you want to take the little girl to dinner, there's no objection; it'll be on the expense account."

"Dinner!"

"That's right, Scuttle. Of course, when I say dinner, that includes cocktails, champagne, and a liqueur."

The spy pushed the pasteboard parking ticket into Leith's hand, took the one which Leith gave him, and almost stumbled over his own feet in his anxiety to get

back into the office of the Hawaiian-American Aesthetic Art Association.

Leith took the elevator, left the Moronia Building, and walked over toward the parking station. Harry Lanten and Nano Kapiolani were waiting for him.

"Ready?" Harry Lanten asked.

"Ready," Lester Leith said. "Now, I'm going to drive out the car I took in. You folks will be driving another car, same make and model, but a different car. It's the one my valet drove in a few moments ago. You meet me at the corner of Seventh and Center streets. I'll drive out first, but you pass me in the middle of the next block, and I'll follow you."

"Very good," Harry Lanten said.

Nano Kapiolani inquired archly: "When am I going to be called on

to do my dancing? I don't want to get out of practice, you know."

Leith, taking her arm, escorted her into the parking station. "You might hula your way down to the car," he said.

Laughing, she started to comply.

Leith said: "Whoa, back up. I didn't *really* mean it."

The service station attendant said, "You folks are back early."

"We come and go," Lester Leith observed, casually giving the attendant the parking ticket which he took from his pocket. "How much?" he inquired.

"Fifteen cents."

Leith handed him the fifteen cents. The service station attendant got out the car.

Harry Lanten said: "I presume it's the same on this car?"

"Sure," the service station attendant told him, and went back to get out the other Ford.

Leith was just leaving the entrance to the parking station when a car containing Karl Bonneguard and Emil Bradercrust swung into a lurching turn, narrowly avoiding him, and skidded on into the parking station.

Leith frowned his annoyance at such careless driving, swung his car to the right, and proceeded slowly down the street. Midway in the block, Harry Lanten passed him. The right rear tire on Leith's car was so soft it was almost flat.

Lagging behind, Sergeant Ackley and Captain Carmichael had a choice to make. Sergeant Ackley made it.

"Tag that car with Bradercrust in it," he ordered. "Leith has been setting the stage. The stuff which doesn't affect Bradercrust is all hooley. We tag Bradercrust now."

Captain Carmichael said: "I'm

trusting your judgment in this, sergeant."

Sergeant Ackley tilted his cigar upward, said confidently: "And you ain't making no mistake either, captain."

After four blocks, Leith tooted his horn several times, speeded up and signaled for Lanten to pull into the curb.

"I'm getting a flat tire over on my right rear wheel," Leith said.

As Leith put on his brakes, the added strain on the tire finished the casing. Lanten parked his car. The two men got out and walked around to stare at the puncture with that hesitant appraisal which is the universal first reaction of motorists everywhere to a flat casing.

"Well," Leith said, "we might as well change it. You get the tools out, and I'll get the spare off."

Leith took off his leather jacket, displaying the resplendent silk shirt.

"Here we go," he said.

Leith had some trouble with the bolt on the spare tire. It had been put on so that the threads were crossed. The ordinary lug wrench had no effect on it, but from the car Lanten was driving, Leith took a huge monkey wrench which he brought into play, and which made short work of the cross-threaded nut.

Lanten started getting out the tools. Lester Leith peeled the tire cover from the spare tire, then leaned forward as though to inspect the tire closely. For several moments, the broad brim of his ten-gallon hat hid exactly what he was doing.

A short time later, when Lanten was getting the jack under the car, Leith said:

"Take a look at this spare tire, Harry. What do you make of it?"

Harry Lanten got up from his knees, and said:

"Why, it looks all right. It—"

"Touch it," Leith said.

Lanten tapped the spare with his knuckles.

Leith said: "Not there, down here on the side."

Lanten tapped the edge of the spare tire.

"What the devil!" he said. "It's metal, with rubber on top."

Leith said: "Looks like a section of metal had been vulcanized right in the tire. That's the part that was the bottom. I turned it up when I was taking it off."

"What the devil's the idea?" Lanten asked.

"I don't know," Leith said. "Let's see if we can get it open."

It was Lanten who found the little catch concealed in the side of the casing which released the lock and enabled a section to be swung downward, disclosing a lacquered interior.

"Seems to be empty," Leith said.

"I'll bet this car belonged to a smuggler," Lanten said excitedly. "This was where he carried dope back and forth across the border."

Lester Leith whistled. "By George, you're right! Tell you what, Lanten. I have a friend on the police force. He's not exactly a personal friend. I don't get along with him very well, but nevertheless, he's an officer of the law, and I think this should be reported."

Lanten nodded.

"Tell you what you do," Leith went on. "It's a cinch we'll have to do something about that tire. You go over there to that drugstore, ring up police headquarters, and ask for Sergeant Ackley. If he's in, tell him where we are and what we've discovered. If he isn't in, leave word that Lester Leith has just dis-

covered a most peculiar compartment in the spare tire of a second-hand car which he'd purchased, and that he thinks it must have been used for smuggling."

CHAPTER VII.

THE CURVED ANGLE.

EDWARD BEAVER, his beady eyes glistening with enthusiasm, said: "I think the committee has done itself proud in picking you as the winner, Miss Wahine. That's one of the best hulas I've ever seen in my life."

Job Wolganheimer said: "Oh, hell! If you're going to give her the prize, go ahead and give it to her and nix on this malarkey."

Io Wahine turned from the undercover man, walked over to Wolganheimer, and said:

"I am from a friendly race. I love well, but I do not hate well. Instinctively I know how to love. I have never learned how to hate. I would not like to have you make me begin."

"Now listen, baby," Wolganheimer said. "If you—"

Beaver moved aggressively forward. "You," he said, "can—" He stopped as imperative knuckles sounded on the door.

Wolganheimer stiffened to apprehensive attention. Beaver, without taking his eyes from Wolganheimer, said:

"That's probably Mr. Leith coming back to see me. Open the door, will you, Miss Wahine?"

She flung open the door.

Karl Bonneguard and Emil Bradercrust pushed their way into the room.

Wolganheimer said to Bonneguard: "Well, it's about time you showed up. I've been expecting you

for an hour. Did you get my message?"

"Yes, I got your message," Bonneguard said.

Wolganheimer pushed forward. "Well, what the hell's the idea of searching my room and having your men grab me and go through me with a fine-tooth comb? Who the hell do you think you're kidding?"

"I'm making sure, that's all," Bonneguard said.

"Well, that's a great way to do it."

"It's my way."

"I don't like it."

"I don't care whether you do or not."

"Well, you're sure now," Wolganheimer said, with something of a swagger, "and I know who put the ideas into your head. Now it's my turn. I've got something to say about him!"

"I'm not so certain he's sure now," Bradercrust remarked.

Wolganheimer whirled on him, but Bonneguard said:

"That'll be enough of that, Bradercrust. We want to talk with you, Wolganheimer."

"Go ahead and talk," Wolganheimer said irritably, "and talk fast."

"Not here," Bonneguard said.

"Where?"

"Out at our headquarters."

Wolganheimer considered the invitation with knitted brows. "I don't know just what I'm getting into," he said thoughtfully.

"You're in it now," Bonneguard said.

"I've got a dame here," Wolganheimer protested.

"She'll keep," Bonneguard told him.

Wolganheimer looked at the police undercover man, and said bitterly: "That shows all you know about it."

"Get your hat," Bonneguard said.

"Where's your car?"

"Down in the parking lot."

"Get it," Bonneguard said.

"That's O. K. I'll ride out with you," Wolganheimer told him.

Bonneguard's voice was ominous. "I said *get your car*."

"Oh, all right," Wolganheimer surrendered, with a shrug of his shoulders. "If you're going to be like that, let's go ahead and get it over with."

He turned to Io Wahine. "Well, baby, I guess this is the end. I've given you about all the presents you can reasonably expect. I know what that means."

The Hawaiian girl said proudly, "One does not buy *my* friendship."

"So I've noticed," Wolganheimer remarked. "That don't keep one from paying for it."

He marched out of the door, with Bradercrust and Bonneguard falling into position, one on each side.

The door closed.

Io Wahine raised dark, limpid eyes to Beaver. "Thin men," she said, "are inclined to be nasty. Don't you think so?"

Beaver, with the assurance of his two hundred odd pounds of brawn, placed a friendly but not particularly platonic hand on her shoulder, and said patronizingly: "Thin guys are the bunk, baby. Now this first prize is a solid gold surfboard studded with diamonds."

"Don't you think it would be a good idea to have a representative of the press here when you present it?" she asked. "A photograph would make excellent publicity."

Beaver nodded. "Sure," he said. "We aren't in any hurry, are we?"

She smiled up at him.

Suddenly a look of worried pre-occupation clouded the spy's eyes. He said: "You wait here just a min-

ute. I've got to run downstairs and see about my car. I'll be back in just a minute."

"You're pinched if you've left it parked near the curb," she warned. "There's no parking—"

"It's all right. I can square it," Beaver said hurriedly. "You wait right here."

He dashed out of the door, caught an elevator flashing past the floor, yelled, "Down, six," and saw the cage come back to a stop as the door slid open. Beaver jumped in the car.

"Get to the lobby just as quick as you can, operator. Pass up all stops. It's a matter of life and death."

The cage shot downward. Beaver, running out through the door, ran to the sidewalk and almost collided with Sergeant Ackley and Captain Carmichael.

"What is it, Beaver?" Sergeant Ackley asked, his eyes fixed on the entrance to the parking lot.

"I've got something, sergeant," the spy blurted.

"Well, go ahead and spill it fast," Ackley told him. "We're waiting for Bradercrust to drive out of that parking lot. When he does, we're going to follow him. We're just about ready to spring our trap. He's got the dough and—"

"He hasn't got it at all," Beaver said hastily. "It's Wolganheimer."

"Bunk," Sergeant Ackley retorted easily. "You're always going off half-cocked with goofy theories, Beaver."

The spy said, "Very well, sergeant, I just thought I'd report," and turned back toward the office building. It was Captain Carmichael who stopped him.

"Let's hear about it, Beaver," he invited.

The undercover man turned back. "It stands to reason it was Wol-

ganheimer," he said. "I see the whole thing now. When Leith first became interested in the case, he looked at a photograph of the house on Wilmeier Avenue. I noticed that he put his thumbnail over the picture of the window. It didn't occur to me at the time what he was doing. I've been thinking it over, and now I realize he was measuring the bars on that window."

"What's that got to do with it?" Captain Carmichael asked.

"Everything," the spy said. "I remember noticing it at the time, and yet I *didn't* notice it. It's one of those things that you see, and it sticks in your memory, but you just don't understand or appreciate why it sticks until later on when it flashes through your mind all at once and then—"

"Never mind that," Carmichael said. "We're going to have to tag Bradercrust in a minute. Give me the dope fast."

"Well, Wolganheimer is a thin man. He's the only one in the crowd who could get through a real narrow opening. You notice the bars on that window on this side of the door of that house, and you'll see they aren't spaced exactly uniformly. The lower left-hand corner is oblong, and the space is just a bit larger than any other space in between the bars in any of the windows. It's a cinch that space was left purposely. Bonneguard wouldn't have done it, because he's so big it wouldn't have done him any good, but Wolganheimer could have done it."

"But Wolganheimer was with Bonneguard all the time that job was being pulled off," Sergeant Ackley said, his voice showing contemptuous disgust.

"No, he wasn't either," Beaver said, "because the job wasn't pulled



when everyone thinks it was. Just because the guards went to sleep on the job, it's a natural assumption that the safe must have been cracked while a guard was sleeping. You naturally figure that that's why the guards were doped. That isn't so. The guards were doped just as a cover-up.

"Wolganheimer and Bonneguard went in the room to lock up. Bonneguard put the dough in the safe. Wolganheimer went around locking the windows. He could have left that one window unlocked. He went out, took Bonneguard to the lawyer, doubled back in the car, slipped over the fence, spoke to the dogs, reached through the bars, raised the window, squirmed in through that opening, opened the safe by using the combination, took out the cash, then knocked out the dial, and punched back the spindle.

"Bettler was keeping guard in the outer corridor all the time, but Wol-

ganheimer didn't care because there was a locked door between him and Bettler, and Bettler didn't even have a key. Wolganheimer slipped back out and went and picked up Bonneguard. He told Bonneguard he'd been out with his Hawaiian girl. Nobody cared enough about it to check him on it because no one figured it made any difference *where* he'd been."

"But how did Bettler get drugged, and afterwards how did Bradercrust get drugged?" Captain Carmichael asked. "As Sergeant Ackley has pointed out, those facts indicate that Bradercrust *must* have been the one who administered the drug."

"No, it was a cinch," Beaver said. "When Wolganheimer left the first time, he coated the glass tumbler below the spigot of the water cooler with some tasteless opiate. Bettler took a drink. Half an hour afterward, he became groggy. He telephoned Bonneguard. Bonneguard, Wolganheimer, and Bradercrust dashed up there. They took Bettler and left Bradercrust. While they were there that time, Wolganheimer coated the inside of the glass with more dope. This time he made a better job of it, because he knew he hadn't given Bettler quite enough. This time he almost got too much. Bradercrust took a glass of water, drank some, saw the dog was thirsty, poured the rest out for the dog, then added more water to it by refilling the tumbler from the spigot. The dish the dog drank the water from was too big to go under the spigot. It had to be filled by using the tumbler."

Sergeant Ackley said, "You're all wet, Beaver."

"I'm not so certain he is," Captain Carmichael said thoughtfully. "And what do you suppose is holding them

up in the parking station? Let's go take a look."

"That will be tipping our hand," Sergeant Ackley warned.

"Well, maybe it's time to tip it," Carmichael remarked. "Come on, Beaver."

"If it's all the same to you," the spy said, "I'm working on another angle of this case. I'm working on Io Wahine. I think I'm going to be able to worm it out of her that Wolganheimer didn't come to see her at all the night of the burglary."

"Good work, Beaver," Captain Carmichael complimented.

"But in order to do that," Beaver went on desperately, "I've got to get in strong with her. I'm giving her a prize on behalf of the Hawaiian-American Aesthetic Art Association which Lester Leith organized for some purpose or other. I don't know exactly what was back of it, but I figured that it was because he wanted to get on the good side of her and find out about Wolganheimer himself. Now, let's beat him to it."

Captain Carmichael nodded. Sergeant Ackley let his eyes narrow. The cigar in his mouth assumed a less rakish angle, but the jaw muscles below his ears were taut as he bit into the soggy tobacco.

"Here's what I want," Beaver went on hurriedly. "I want some newspaper we can count on to send a man down to 613 Moronia Building to cover the presentation of this prize I'm awarding. That will make me the fair-haired child, and give me a chance to make her come across with the information I want."

Captain Carmichael said: "Ring up the *Planet*. Ask for Joe Ashe, the managing editor. Tell him that I told you to ring him up. Tell him what you want. Tell him it's for me, and in connection with some work

we're doing. He'll co-operate with you to the limit. Come on, sergeant; let's go around and see what's holding up the procession."

Beaver turned to dash for the nearest public telephone. Sergeant Ackley and Captain Carmichael, marching shoulder to shoulder, with the air of two tough cops who are ready for anything that may break, rounded the corner and entered the parking lot.

A little knot of figures was engaged in hectic argument.

"I tell you that *ain't* his car," Bonneguard said. "I know the license numbers."

"I don't care a hoot about the license numbers," the exasperated service station attendant said. "This is the number that's on his ticket. This is the number that's on his car, and this is his car. A skinny, bow-legged fellow with a Hawaiian girl came in here and parked that other car. A skinny, bowlegged fellow with a Hawaiian dancer came in and got that other car. It was a '36 Ford when they brought it in, and it was a '36 Ford when they took it out. This is this guy's car. I don't know what kind of a flimflam you're trying to work, but so far as I'm concerned, it's no soap. See?"

Bonneguard said ominously: "Now listen, brother. We don't want any of your lip. This car is important. We've searched this guy, and we've searched his room. We're looking for something. We want to search his car. Now then, it ain't going to do us no good to search the wrong car."

Wolganheimer took a deep breath. "You guys are nuts," he said quietly. "This *is* my car. It's the car I brought in, and it's the car I've been driving. I didn't recognize it at first."

The service station attendant nodded. "Sure, it's his car," he said.

Bonneguard and Bradercrust exchanged puzzled glances.

Captain Carmichael said in a low voice to Sergeant Ackley: "Looks as though you've had us barking up the wrong tree, sergeant. Now, where do you suppose Leith is? We've let him slip through our fingers, and it begins to look as though *he* was the one we wanted."

"Not until he gets in touch with Bradercrust," Sergeant Ackley said doggedly.

Captain Carmichael stepped forward, and said to the parking attendant:

"A man came in here a few minutes ago, all dressed up in cowpuncher togs, and—"

"Yeah, I know, driving a '36 Ford, same model as this one," the attendant said. "He went out a minute ago. What do you want?"

"Which way did he go?"

The attendant jerked his thumb, and said: "I don't think he went far either. I noticed his right rear tire was going flat as he pulled out. I yelled at him two or three times, but he didn't hear."

Captain Andrew Carmichael said, "Thanks," and nodded significantly to Sergeant Ackley.

CHAPTER VIII.

CARS, COWBOYS, AND CUTIES.

LESTER LEITH heard the sound of the siren, looked up from the automobile, took off his big ten-gallon hat, and wiped his perspiring forehead.

"Quite a drag on your head," he said to Harry Lanten with a grin.

The thin cowpuncher said: "Oh, you get used to 'em after a while. They seem heavy at first, but they protect your head and neck. After

you once get accustomed to them, you wouldn't ever wear anything else."

"I think mine's bigger than yours," Leith said. "Let's see those brims for a minute."

Lanten removed his big cowboy hat, passed it over to Leith who held the hats together, turned them over, and said:

"Nope. They're as like as peas in a pod. Tell you what you do, Harry. Jump in that car, go down the street until you find a garage. Send a man back here to repair this car, then you and Miss Kapiolani go down to the Crestview Hotel at Lakewood. Put your car in a garage, and you two wait until I get in touch with you. Don't try to communicate with me under any circumstances. Here's three hundred dollars for expense money. Get started right away."

"Gee," Lanten said, "this is a funny kind of a job—"

"*Get started right away,*" Leith said.

"O. K." Lanten grinned. He walked to the car ahead, said to Nano Kapiolani, "Wait until *you* hear the news."

They drove away just as the big police car came rocketing down the street.

Lester Leith looked up as tires protested the sudden application of brakes. For a moment, he seemed puzzled, then his eyes flashed into smiling recognition.

"Well, well, well," he said. "You certainly made a quick run of it, sergeant! Where were you when you got my message? The man said you were out on an important case."

Sergeant Ackley pushed open the door of the car and stepped to the pavement. He was followed by Captain Carmichael.

"What are you up to now?" he asked.

Lester Leith frowned. "Sergeant," he said, "I really wish you wouldn't cultivate such a constant attitude of belligerent suspicion. As a private citizen, I have uncovered information which, I think, should be of interest to the police. I immediately telephoned police headquarters, and asked that the information be relayed to you. I see no reason for you to adopt—"

"What's this about telephoning headquarters?" Captain Carmichael asked.

Lester Leith indicated the drug-store. "The call went in from there," he said, "not over three minutes ago. Step in and verify it if you don't believe it. However, sergeant, unless you received the call, I don't know how the devil you could possibly have known where to find me."

Captain Carmichael and Sergeant Ackley exchanged glances.

Sergeant Ackley said to the driver of the police car, "Step in that drug-store, Bill, and check up on it." He turned back to Lester Leith. "Any time you voluntarily report anything to the police!" he said sneeringly.

Captain Carmichael interposed. "Just a moment, sergeant," he said. "After all, Leith is a citizen and a taxpayer. Moreover, he's a prominent citizen. Let's hear *his* side of the story before we start any brow-beating."

Sergeant Ackley grunted.

Leith said: "I don't think I've had the pleasure of meeting you, sir."

"I'm Captain Carmichael," Carmichael said.

Leith stepped forward and shook hands. Sergeant Ackley, standing on the side lines, snorted, took the cigar from his mouth, spat contemptuously into the gutter.

Leith said: "Quite recently, captain, I became interested in the interpretation of nature through the Polynesian dances, and in particular through the Hawaiian hula dance. My interest was aroused when I advertised for hula dancers who—"

"*Why* did you advertise for them?" Captain Carmichael asked.

Lester Leith grinned and said: "Because I had an idea it might be possible to work out a purely academic solution of the Bonneguard safe robbery by the use of hula dancers."

Sergeant Ackley snapped to swift attention. "What's that?" he asked.

Lester Leith ignored him. "You see, captain," he explained, "I understood that a man by the name of Wolganheimer had been keeping company with a Hawaiian dancer named Io Wahine. I had never met Miss Wahine myself, but I thought perhaps that by taking an interest in Hawaiian dances, I would find some other dancers who could gain her confidence and who would in turn find out certain things for me."

"Did it work?" Captain Carmichael asked ominously.

"I don't know," Lester Leith said, "whether it would work or not. To be perfectly frank with you, captain, I'm not doing it for myself, but merely to win an absurd argument with my valet, a most unusual chap by the name of Beaver. I developed the situation until, as a natural result, he was brought into contact with Miss Wahine, the young woman, who I am satisfied holds the key clue to the case. I'm now leaving Beaver with her and waiting for developments. I think it won't be long until Beaver comes to me and admits I was right. It's all rather petty, perhaps, but Beaver's taking an interest in criminal matters, and

I want to encourage him as much as possible."

The driver of the police car came out of the drugstore and nodded.

"That's right," he said. "A thin guy with a cowpuncher's hat came in and telephoned, said he was telephoning on behalf of Lester Leith, and wanted to get in touch with Sergeant Ackley and report something Leith had discovered."

Sergeant Ackley frowned. Captain Carmichael inquired:

"What was it you found, Leith?"

"I purchased this car as an investment," Leith said. "I came to the conclusion that this particular model offered a very remarkable actual value, far in excess of its so-called 'blue book' listing. So I bought several of these cars. On this one, I happened to have a flat. I started to change the tire, as you will notice, and then tried to put on the spare tire. What do you think I found?"

"What *did* you find?" Carmichael asked.

Lester Leith led them around to the back of the car and indicated the spare tire and the section which had so cunningly been built into it.

"Evidently, captain," he said naively, "this car must have been used by a smuggler. Now it occurs to me that you may want to check back on the registration and find out just who had it."

Captain Carmichael exchanged glances with Sergeant Ackley.

"Let's take a look," the captain said. "And you, Bill, skip in and call the motor vehicle department. Tell them we want some fast action. How long have you had this car, Leith?"

"Not over twenty-four hours."

"You have a bill of sale and assignment of—"

"Oh, yes," Lester Leith said, pro-

ducing several documents from his pocket.

"How many of these cars did you buy?" Captain Carmichael asked.

"I don't know. Five or six, I think."

Sergeant Ackley came storming forward.

"Oh, what the hell's the use of stalling around?" he said. "Leith has some scheme to get the dough. He wants to give us a run-around and is trying to make suckers of us."

"Just a minute, sergeant," Captain Carmichael interrupted sternly.

"There's only one way to prove a case, and that's by getting proof. When you can furnish proof that a man's a criminal, arrest him. Until you can, he's a citizen and a taxpayer and entitled to courteous consideration. Shut up!"

Lester Leith smiled gratefully.

Captain Carmichael, checking through the documents, said: "But you don't seem to have anything covering *this* car, Mr. Leith."

"What?" Lester Leith exclaimed incredulously. "I must have. I bought it."

"Well, it isn't here."

Sergeant Ackley said: "Don't listen to him, captain. He's just trying to mix things all up and—"

Captain Carmichael said sternly: "Use your head, sergeant. There's been a mixup in cars at the parking lot. *This is Wolganheimer's car.*"

Sergeant Ackley stared at the secret compartment in the spare tire, looked at Lester Leith in startled dismay as slow comprehension sagged his jaw muscles, sent his cigar drooping downward at a dejected angle. Suddenly his eyes sparkled. The cigar snapped upward.

"Holy smoke!" he shouted. "We've got him! We've got him with the goods on. He read about Wolgan-

heimer having a puncture the night of the burglary and not being able to put on the spare tire because the threads were crossed on the bolt. He figured out Wolganheimer had deliberately crossed those threads so the tire couldn't be taken off. That's why he got that big monkey wrench. Wolganheimer knew his own associates would eventually search him and every place he'd been— We've got him, captain! We've got him! He switched tickets there at the parking space, copped this car, started away with it, and the tire went flat. We came storming on his heels, and he hasn't had a chance to ditch the swag. He's trying to stall around so he can hide it. Search him!"

Captain Carmichael nodded, said grimly, "I'm sorry, Leith, but I think there's enough evidence to warrant our taking you to headquarters."

"For what?" Lester Leith asked.

"To search you."

"Search me here," Leith said. "Come on in the drugstore. Search me in there."

"Come on," Sergeant Ackley said; "in the drugstore, captain. Seconds are precious. We want to clean this thing up."

They rushed Lester Leith into the drugstore, searched him from head to foot, went through every inch of his clothes—and found absolutely nothing, other than the usual assortment of articles which might have been expected, including some two thousand dollars in fifty and hundred-dollar bills.

Sergeant Ackley wiped perspiration from his forehead, scowled at Captain Carmichael.

"He *couldn't* have ditched it," said the sergeant. "He— Wait a minute. How about that skinny cowpuncher. What became of *him*?"

"He drove away," Lester Leith said.

"He's got the swag," Sergeant Ackley yelled, and pounced upon the telephone.

He called the radio department at police headquarters, ordered a broadcast to all cars to pick up a thin man wearing a sombrero, and accompanied by a Hawaiian girl. The pair were probably in a 1936 Ford sedan.

Lester Leith yawned, and lighted a cigarette.

At the end of ten minutes, headquarters called back that a detective reported a thin cowpuncher, wearing a big sombrero, accompanied by a Hawaiian girl, was sitting in a 1936 Ford in front of Lester Leith's apartment, apparently awaiting instructions.

"Get them under arrest," Sergeant Ackley bellowed into the telephone. "Rush them to headquarters. Don't give them a chance to ditch anything. We'll meet you up there and search them."

Sergeant Ackley slammed up the telephone and said to Lester Leith: "Come on, buddy; you're going to headquarters."

"This," Leith suggested, "is a damnable outrage."

Captain Carmichael tilted back his hat to scratch the side of his head.

"I'm not so certain but what it is," he admitted.

"I am warning you, gentlemen," Lester Leith said, "that if I am dragged to police headquarters, I shall cease to co-operate with you. I shall make absolutely no statement of any sort, nature, or description."

"Who wants *you* to make any statement?" Sergeant Ackley yelled. "Every time you talk, you mix things all up. We've got you this time, dead to rights. We've caught you in the act, and we're going to run

down your back trail until we nail you to the cross. All we ask of you is to keep your mouth shut. Come on, captain; let's go."

Lester Leith sat in the police car, and, during the journey, made no comment. At headquarters, he nodded to the thin, bowlegged cowpuncher in the Western hat, and the Hawaiian girl who accompanied him.

Sergeant Ackley said: "This gives you the whole sketch. Leith was advertising for a cowpuncher. *Why* did he want a broncobuster? Not that he cared a hang about whether the man could actually bust broncos or not, but broncobusters are riders. Riders are bowlegged. Now, Wolganheimer is thin and bowlegged. Wolganheimer took a 1936 Ford into the parking station. He had Io Wahine with him. The guy in the parking station was all eyes for the Hawaiian girl. Lester Leith drove in and started shuffling '36 Fords around like cards in a deck. He had every opportunity to switch parking tickets. Then when this pair came to the parking station, all the attendant could see was a thin man with bowlegs accompanied by a Hawaiian girl. He never smelled a rat. He gave them the car without any questions. Handling the number of cars that he does, he has only a hazy recollection of cars and people."

Captain Carmichael nodded. "Very logical, sergeant," he said ominously. "Very well worked out and very concisely stated. Now, just how do you expect to get your proof?"

Sergeant Ackley said belligerently: "I'll get it. Leith won't talk, but I can turn the heat on these two and—"

The thin broncobuster said, with a quiet calm which was packed with deadly anger: "I don't know what the devil you're talking about. I have been running some errands for

Lester Leith. This Hawaiian girl has been with me. We haven't been near *any* parking lot."

"That's right," Maui Huanemo said. "I know because I was with him every minute."

"That's what you say," Sergeant Ackley stormed. "Wait until that service station man identifies you."

The thin broncobuster reached in his pocket and said to Captain Carmichael: "Here's something that may help. About forty minutes ago, I parked the car in front of a fire plug, and the officer insisted on giving me a ticket. Perhaps he can identify me. In any event, the ticket will." He took from his pocket a traffic tag on which the name, "Phil Wolsack," had been signed as the operator of the car.

"Your name Wolsack?" Captain Carmichael asked.

"Yes."

"Go ahead and sign your name. Let's see you sign it," Sergeant Ackley said.

They looked over his shoulder while he signed his name.

Captain Carmichael said: "That tag was issued at ten minutes past five by Hal Whiteside over in No. 5 precinct. This car *couldn't* have been parked out there by the Moronia Building, sergeant."

Sergeant Ackley stared from one to the other with apprehensive eyes.

An orderly stepped into the room.

"Beg pardon, sergeant," he said. "Do you want another report on that radio broadcast?"

"What radio broadcast?"

"You called all cars and asked them to be on the lookout for a '36 Ford, driven by a thin chap wearing a cowboy hat, and accompanied by a Hawaiian girl."

"What have you learned?" Sergeant Ackley asked.

"Radio Car No. 13 has picked up a

pair answering the description. They were speeding out of town. The guy says he's working for Lester Leith and was delivering some packages. The girl says she's a professional hula dancer, hired by Lester Leith as a member of the Hawaiian-American Aesthetic—"

"Skip all that," Sergeant Ackley said. "I know all about it."

"Do you want them?"

"You bet I want them!"

The orderly seemed fighting to suppress a smile. "Just a minute, sergeant," he said. "Here's another one."

"Another what?"

"Another report."

"I don't want any more reports!" Sergeant Ackley yelled. "I want action! I want that car brought in. I want those two dragged into headquarters and searched."

"But this other report," the orderly said, "has some bearing on—"

Sergeant Ackley's face darkened. "Tell that radio car to bring that cowpuncher and the Hawaiian girl in here. I don't give a damn about any more reports. Beat it."

"Very good, sergeant," the orderly said.

Captain Carmichael stopped him as he was in the act of closing the door.

"Just a minute," said the captain. "I think I'm interested in that other report. What is it?"

"Radio Car 3," the orderly said, "also reports that it picked up a Ford '36 driven by a thin man who admits he's a broncobuster and who's wearing a cowboy ten-gallon hat. There's a Hawaiian dancer with him. They say they're working for a man named Lester Leith, and he hired them to drive around the city, stopping in at the night clubs and—"

Sergeant Ackley abruptly sat down in a chair, as though his knees

had suddenly refused to support his weight.

Captain Carmichael's lips twisted in the ghost of a smile. He glanced furtively at Lester Leith's calmly tranquil countenance.

"I suppose you know, Wolsack," Lester Leith said to the broncobuster, "that you have the right to sue Sergeant Ackley for false arrest, for defamation of character, and malicious prosecution. I'll be very glad to put you in touch with competent counsel if you desire to go ahead."

"You bet I want to go ahead," the thin man said, his voice vibrant with rage.

"And I do too," the Hawaiian girl chimed in.

Sergeant Ackley yelled: "You can't get away with that! This is a wholesale conspiracy. You've deliberately shuffled this thing all up, figuring that when a person sees a thin man in a sombrero accompanied by a Hawaiian dancer, he isn't going to look for any better description."

Lester Leith yawned, and patted his lips with four polite fingers in a cursory attempt to disguise the yawn. "So sorry, sergeant," he said, "but apparently you've forgotten the Hawaiian-American Aesthetic Art Association, organized for the purpose of promoting a closer appreciation of the true nature of Hawaiian art. In case you're interested, sergeant, I have quite a number of cars canvassing the city, performing errands, calling on night clubs, and leaving literature. Unless you cancel that order asking all radio patrol cars to pick up these people, I'm afraid you're going to have *quite* a few cases filed against you for defamation of character, for false arrest, for—"

Captain Carmichael said tersely:

"He's got you, sergeant. Cancel that order."

CHAPTER IX. THE BENEFACTOR.

CAPTAIN CARMICHAEL, Sergeant Ackley, and Edward Beaver sat in a huddled conference at police headquarters. On the table in front of them was the morning newspaper. A photograph appeared prominently on the second page, with the caption:

Edward H. Beaver, representative of local Hawaiian-American Aesthetic Art Association, presenting diamond-studded gold surfboard to Io Wahine, Hawaiian dancer. Miss Wahine was awarded first honors by the committee appointed to canvass night clubs.



In the upper right-hand corner of the same page was an article:

HOSPITAL GETS GIFT

Lester Leith, eccentric young millionaire and sportsman, unostentatiously donated ninety thousand dollars to the Orthopedic Hospital last night. The wealthy clubman made the donation in the form of ninety bills, each of the denomination of one thousand dollars. The windfall was entirely unexpected by the board of directors. A grateful representative of the hospital said today the institution will now be enabled to install new and much-needed equipment.

Beaver said, "I found out how he did it."

"How?" asked Captain Andrew Carmichael.

"When he heard your siren, he knew you were following him. While this man Lanten was getting out the tools and jacking up the car, Leith had found this concealed hiding place, opened it, taken out one hundred, thousand-dollar bills. He'd cut a slit in the lining of his big cowboy hat and pushed the bills down inside the lining. It was one of those big ten-gallon affairs and would hold plenty of money. He'd insisted on the hats having a silk lining. Then when he knew you were coming, he managed to switch hats with Lanten.

"Remember, they were all identical

hats. They were all the same size. They were all the same shape and appearance. He'd figured far enough ahead to know he might need an innocent man to carry the bills away, yet have them where they could be recovered at any time. So Lanten quite innocently took the loot away with him. Leith sent him to the Crestview Hotel at Lakewood. That's a road which, after the first two miles, is entirely outside the limit of the radio patrol cars. The other Leith cars were all running

around town on errands. He'd spaced them so *they'd* be right in the path of the radio patrol."

Captain Carmichael nodded. "Clever," he said slowly. "Damned clever!"

"Then when Leith left here," Beaver went on, "he made certain he wasn't followed, and drove directly to the Crestview Hotel. It was a cinch to switch hats there without Lanten knowing anything about it."

"But how do you know?" Sergeant Ackley asked.

"Because I happened to notice Leith's sombrero when he returned to the apartment last night. Of course, the money had already been removed, and after he'd taken out ten thousand to compensate himself for his expenses and trouble, he'd dropped in at the Orthopedic Hospital with the other ninety bills. Well, as I say, I looked his hat over pretty carefully, and found a slit in the lining up at the top of the crown."

For a moment, there was silence, then Captain Carmichael asked:

"How did you happen to look there, Beaver?"

The spy coughed deprecatingly. "I don't know," he said, "except that being around Lester Leith the way I am, I'm studying his methods of reasoning. Frankly I think the man is

a genius, despite the fact that I hate his guts. I couldn't imagine why he'd insisted on getting such a large number of ten-gallon hats, silk-lined and which were absolutely identical in size and appearance, unless he'd intended to switch hats back and forth so that *he* wouldn't actually have stolen property in *his* possession in case he was arrested and searched; and yet have it so he could put his hands on the money whenever he wanted it."

Captain Carmichael nodded. "Do you know, Beaver," he said, "we may or may not be able to catch Lester Leith red-handed, but whether we do or don't, I think the training you're getting out there is invaluable. I've been watching your progress with a great deal of interest, and I'm going to make it a point to keep my eye on you. When you finally are free to return to your detective work, I feel quite certain you'll make a name for yourself."

The undercover man flushed. "Thank you, captain," he said.

Sergeant Ackley could stand no more. He blurted: "All very nice, Beaver. You're making quite a grandstand of it, but how do you account for the fact that you threw *me* off on the wrong track by advancing this theory that Bradercrust was the guilty party? If you hadn't confused me with that theory, I'd



COMING NEXT MONTH

Another Lester Leith Mystery Novel

THE FOURTH MUSKETEER

By *ERLE STANLEY GARDNER*

have put the finger on Wolganheimer."

Beaver raised his eyebrows. "Why, no, sergeant," he said. "That Bradercrust angle was *your* theory."

"Why, you double-crossing—"

Captain Carmichael placed a stern hand on Sergeant Ackley's shoulder.

"Sergeant," he said, "you forget yourself."

"But that was *his* idea! It was—"

Captain Carmichael interrupted: "Sergeant, you're quite beside yourself. Apparently you have forgotten that you worked out that idea after pacing the floor for two sleepless nights. In fact, sergeant, I believe I have a statement to that effect in your own handwriting."

Sergeant Ackley subsided. After a moment, he made one more attempt to assert himself.

"Well," he blustered, "we'll drag Lester Leith in here. We'll take him before the grand jury. We'll ask him where he got those ninety, one-thousand-dollar bills which he presented to the Orthopedic Hospital. We'll make him show—"

Captain Carmichael's laugh was scornful. "I presume, sergeant," he said, "that you'd go so far as to endeavor to show that those identical one-thousand-dollar bills must have been hijacked from a thief who in turn stole them from a political organization which was planning to undermine our government."

"Why not?" Ackley asked.

"And then you'd expect the chief to go before the people and ask support for the police program by pointing with pride to the fact that we had deprived the Orthopedic Hospital of ninety thousand dollars which was to be used for much-needed equipment, and turned the money over to a foreign-controlled organization which was planning to undermine our government! I

think, sergeant, that you have quite overlooked the fact that, in the long run, the support the police department gets from the public depends upon the service the police department renders to the public.

"Of course, if you *want* to try and get a conviction in a hopeless case, predicated upon the theory that a lone individual thought faster than the police department, utilized the clues which should have been available to the department, and that all the police could do was to follow along behind and snatch the ninety-thousand-dollar donation from an institution so worthy of help as the Orthopedic Hospital, you're quite welcome to the job; but *I* don't want any part of it. And when you're back pounding pavements, you may realize why."

Sergeant Ackley's lip quivered with emotion.

"Damn him," he said. "I'll get him yet."

Captain Carmichael scraped back his chair, signaling that the interview was over.

"Well, sergeant," he said, "please don't disturb me again until you have something more definite to work on. In the meantime, I'm free to confess that I don't think Leith is the worst criminal at large in the city by a long way. He's given a stimulus to the used-car market, furnished employment to several very engaging and amiable Hawaiian hula dancers, been a godsend to half a dozen broncobusters who were on their uppers, furnished a great deal of free publicity to Io Wahine, deprived an unpatriotic anti-American organization of its sinews of war, donated ninety thousand dollars to a very worthy charity, and charged only ten per cent for his time and expense.

"For my part I'd like to have a

city pretty well sprinkled with just such 'criminals.' I think we'd get along better with the underworld, and incidentally, sergeant, don't overlook the fact that he's giving Beaver a most valuable training, a training in deductive reasoning that couldn't be purchased for any amount of money. And as for you, sergeant, I want once more to caution you against jumping at conclusions from insufficient data. Your theory about Bradercrust sounded logical upon a hasty, superficial examination of the facts. It proved to be most confusing to the department. I would suggest that, in the future, you be more careful about making accusations. Don't pace the floor nights thinking up theories to throw yourself off the track. Think your way cautiously, a step at a time. Don't try to be brilliant, because it isn't natural for you to be brilliant."

Sergeant Ackley glowered at the

undercover man who returned his stare with the meek humility of conscious virtue on parade.

The telephone rang.

Captain Carmichael picked up the receiver, said, "Carmichael talking," listened a minute, then said: "All right. We're not interested—officially."

He dropped the receiver back into place and grinned at the discomfited Sergeant Ackley. "One more good deed," he said, "that you can add to Lester Leith's account. Hollywood scouts, attracted by the publicity given Io Wahine in connection with the award of the Hawaiian-American Aesthetic Art Association, have just signed her for a lead in a Hawaiian picture."

Sergeant Ackley jumped to his feet, ripped the cigar from his mouth, threw it as hard as he could throw it in the general direction of the cuspidor, and stormed from the room.

FAKE MARIJUANA FOOLS ADDICTS

UNABLE to supply the demand for marijuana cigarettes, Pennsylvania venders of "reefers" have been passing off on addicts a harmless weed which resembles the narcotic.

The substitute, it was said, is a wild herb, known as blue mountain tea, that sometimes deceives even narcotic investigators by its appearance. The peddlers of the herb cannot be prosecuted because they are not selling an illicit drug.

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CRIMSON SIREN



**BY ROBERT W.
THOMPSON**

Crimson Siren

THE man in black read the lettering on the frosted glass panel of the door: "Erle Hagen—Private Investigator." He smiled slightly, looking down at the black leather traveling bag gripped in his right hand. His glance flicked along the quiet corridor. There was nobody in sight, no noise but the faint *clackety-click* of typewriters from the various offices. He opened the door and entered the office.

"Mr. Hagen?" he asked.

The tall, wide shouldered man standing at the windows swung about. His nose was broad, flattened a little in a wide, browned face. A thin scar twisted from the outer corner of his left eye. He was hard looking, almost ugly, until he smiled—a slow, genial smile. He nodded, gestured at the big leather chair on the opposite side of the desk.

The man in black dropped his small, rotund body into the chair, placed the traveling bag on the desk's pitted surface. He spoke in a flat, quiet voice:

"I'm Roane—Thomas Roane. Some people call me Blackie." He reached under his tight black topcoat and his hand came out with the crisp greenness of two new bills against the white skin. He placed them on the desk, looking up at Hagen with inscrutable, lidded eyes. "Two hundred for minding the bag. Like it?"

"I might." Hagen sat down in his swivel chair, his sharp gray eyes on Roane's face. "What else besides minding the bag?"

"Just that, for two, three days, maybe."

"Why?"

"Does there have to be a reason?"

"I never accept a blind commission," Hagen said.

Roane shrugged. "O. K. It's like this: I just got into town from Frisco two days ago. A guy followed me—a guy named Donovan. He wants this bag so much he'll kill me to get it. But if you keep the bag for me, I'm safe."

Hagen touched the rough leather of the traveling bag with his right hand, idly, lifted it, then let it down. "Not very heavy. Might be a load of—money, maybe?"

Roane smiled thinly. "I can't tell you that, yet. When I call for it, you get another two hundred. I'll unlock the bag and give you a look at what's inside. If you feel like holding it and bringing in the cops then, O. K. Fair enough?"

"Fair enough. But if there's something in this bag so valuable a man will kill you to get it, why trust me with it?"

"I asked a few questions around town, guy. The answers were all the same: Erle Hagen's a square shooter; used to be New England heavy champ, too, a good guy to have on your side. I need a square guy to mind the bag. You're it."

Hagen took the two bills from the desk, tucked them into a vest pocket, nodding. "I'm it. The bag goes to a friend of mine at the Farmer's Bank tonight and stays there until I call for it." He gripped the handle of the bag, pulling it toward him. "I'll see you—"

He stopped speaking, staring past Roane. The door had swung open, then closed. A man stood just inside the office, a heavy black automatic steady in his right hand. Roane's head bobbed around. He said the one word, in a gasp:

"Donovan!"

The man with the gun moved forward. He was tall, lean, with a nar-

row dour face and red hair showing under his blue, shapeless hat. Hagen watched him without moving, his hand still around the leather grip on the traveling bag. Donovan stopped halfway to the desk and said in a low, clipped voice:

"Smart guy, Blackie, givin' me the slip like that. But I seen you come in the buildin'. The boy in the elevator told me what floor he took you to. This is the fifth office I tried, and when I seen the name on the door, I knew it was the right one. Easy to figure you'd be wantin' protection." He motioned to Hagen with his free hand. "Now, brother, let's have that bag. Pass it right along to Blackie."

Roane said: "Wait, Donovan, I'll make——"

"You'll nothin'. There's forty-two G's in hundred buck bills in that bag. I got orders to get 'em."

The tightening of Hagen's fist on the leather handle was barely perceptible. A corner of his wide mouth quirked upward in an amicable smile. "Can't we settle this some way——"

Donovan stepped closer, his voice rasping: "Pass it along, dick, or I'll——"

With a swift flick of his wrist, Hagen hurled the bag straight at Donovan's face. Donovan cursed, ducked, his gun hand coming up involuntarily to protect himself. Roane jumped out of his chair, butted Donovan's middle. Donovan's gun spun from his fingers; he brought up a knee, smashed it into Roane's face. Roane made a sighing gasp and sank to his knees. Donovan leaped for the gun.

"Hold it!" Hagen said flatly. There was a small blue steel automatic gripped in his fist; he had taken it from the top drawer of the desk. Donovan froze in his crouched

position close to the fallen gun. He straightened slowly, arms uplifted. Hagen stepped around the desk with a quick, light tread and picked up the heavy automatic.

Roane's rotund body came erect; his hands stroked at a bruised check. He retrieved the black leather bag, placed it atop the desk. Hagen asked:

"Want to make a charge against him?"

"No," Roane said. "No charge. Let him go. I don't want the cops messing around."

Hagen shrugged. "O. K. Beat it, Donovan. I'll keep your gun just for safety's sake."

Donovan glared from one to the other, then strode to the door, slammed it behind him. Hagen said: "Forty-two grand in the bag—that right?"

Roane nodded. "Forty-two G's. Donovan will try to get it even if he has to kill you. I skipped him two days ago when I got into town. I fooled him by going to a third rate hotel, the Charmont. Well, he saw me coming out of the hotel this morning. I thought I skipped him again, until he came in here."

"Why didn't you go to the police for protection in the first place?"

Roane cleared his throat, patted his black hat into shape, and said: "Look, Hagen. The forty-two G's in that bag are mine. You've got to take my word for it. I have my reasons for not wanting the cops in on this. Does our bargain still go?"

Hagen looked at the bag on the desk, at the inscrutable, lidded eyes of "Blackie" Roane. He nodded slowly.

"Our bargain still goes."

It was a few minutes after eight when the clear burr of the telephone sounded in the living room of Ha-

gen's small apartment. He reached over to the telephone stand from his comfortable, deep chair, picked up the receiver and said:

"Hagen speaking."

The voice over the wire was low, sharp. "This is Captain Burns. I'm talking from Room 24 at the Hotel Charmont. There's a dead guy here. His name's Thomas Roane. We——"

"Roane! Roane, dead——"

"Yeah. One bullet, right in the old bread basket. We found a slip of paper in his pocket with your name and office address on it."

"He was a client of mine. Came to me this afternoon."

"Well, come on over, boy. You might be able to help us."

"Be right over."

Hagen turned away from the phone with his lips drawn down tightly at the corners, making his browned face ugly and hard. He went into the bedroom, opened the door of the clothes closet, picked up the traveling bag Roane had entrusted to him. He hadn't left the bag with his friend at the bank as he'd intended; the friend had been in Boston on business. He found a jackknife in a bureau drawer. With a swift slicing stroke of the blade, he slashed the bag, close to the top. He thrust his fingers into the opening, pulling at something that felt like paper.

It was paper; a dozen or so four day old San Francisco newspapers, wadded thickly into the bag. He ripped every bit of paper through the slit, then cut a side from the bag.

Quickly he sliced the lining. There was nothing else, nothing but the newsprint crumpled on the floor around him.

He swore through his teeth softly. He had expected something of the sort. He'd studied Blackie Roane in his office, and Roane, he'd decided, was not the type of man who would trust anyone with forty-two thousand dollars, even a reputable private dick. Hagen had taken the bag curiously, wanting to test his judgment against the facts. Well, his judgment had been right, but now Blackie Roane was dead.

Ten or fifteen minutes later, Hagen climbed the worn wooden steps to the second floor desk of the Hotel Charmont. There was a little alcove, with a sagging swivel chair behind a tiny desk. Beyond, through a doorway, was the big, dim room which

passed for the lobby. The entire place seemed alive with people—reporters, police, hotel roomers. Hagen climbed two flights, threaded through the group of reporters at the end of the corridor, and went into the room of Blackie Roane.

There were a half dozen men crowded into the small room. There were a battered bureau, an iron bedstead, a rickety chair, a wobbly legged table, a wall telephone. And there was the corpse. The body of Blackie Roane lay face down on the thin rug, one arm under the chest, the other straight out from the shoulder, fist clenched. There was a dark, glistening pool of blood on



each side, from under the stomach.

Hagen pulled his eyes from the corpse, looked around at the half dozen men in the place. Two plain-clothes men, a bluecoat guarding the door, the medical examiner, a white faced young fellow Hagen had never seen before, and Captain Burns of the detective bureau. Burns was heavy bodied, red faced, with a dapper manner of wearing his natty gray suit that helped hide the grossness of his figure. He nodded crisply to Hagen, pointing to a pillow on the bed. The pillow was torn through the center, burned a little; feathers were scattered on the bed and floor.

"See that?" Burns asked. "Whoever shot him muffled the sound with the pillow. One shot was enough. This guy Roane died right away." He took a small slip of brown paper from his pocket. "This is the paper we found on him with your name and office address."

Hagen looked at the paper, handed it back. "Roane probably jotted it down before he came to me so he wouldn't forget." Tersely he told what had happened, and waited while Burns gave quick orders to one of the plain-clothes men:

"You, Maxie, go and get that guy Donovan's description out to all the cruiser cars."

Maxie left the room and a half minute later there was a light, tapping knock on the door. The bluecoat opened it slightly; a woman was visible against the background of reporters. She said in a soft, husky voice:

"I'd like to see Captain Burns. I want——"

"Let her in, Sully," Burns said.

The bluecoat swung the door open wide enough for the woman to enter, then slammed it shut in the faces of the reporters.

She stood without speaking, star-

ing down at the body on the floor. She was tall, with the rounded fullness of maturity; the light blue coat seemed molded to the firm curves of her breasts and hips. Jet black hair showed under her tiny hat; a white hand clutched at the round whiteness of her throat. Soft, full lips made a red wound in her creamy white skin. And there was a sensual animalism about those full lips, the rounded body, and the wide violet eyes. She glanced up; her eyes caught Hagen's gaze.

"Are you Captain Burns?"

"I'm the one you want," Burns said. "He's a private dick the dead guy hired this afternoon—name's Erle Hagen. What was it you——"

"I—I'd rather talk to you two— You and Mr. Hagen—without these others."

Burns's red face twisted in a grimace. "O. K. Beat it, you guys. And Sully, tell those reporters I'll talk to them in a little while, will you?"

The officer nodded and walked out ahead of the others. When the door was closed again, the woman faced Burns.

"I—hardly know what to say. My name is Vera Peters. I'm from San Francisco. Blackie sent me a telegram two days ago from here. He told me where he was staying, wanted me to come as soon as I could. I came by plane as far as New York. From there I took the train. I got in a little after half past six. I——"

"What took you so long getting up here?" Burns demanded sharply.

White teeth bit at her lower lip. "I had to dodge a man who was there. My husband. That's why I didn't want to talk to you in front of all those men. It's a—personal matter."

"Yeah," said Burns. "A personal matter. You were running out on

hubby to come to this guy Roane. That the story?"

"Call it that, if you want." Fire fanned into her cheeks. "My husband found Blackie's telegram in a wastebasket. He—he threatened to kill Blackie. He took the same plane I did out of San Francisco. I took the train in from New York because I didn't want him with me. He must have gone right through by plane. Then I guess he figured I'd taken a train and waited for me at the Union Station."

"What then?" Burns asked.

"Well, I dodged him all right, then I checked my bags and had a bite to eat. I was crazy not to phone and warn Blackie. But I thought I'd wait a while, then come up, so I'd skip my husband. When they told me downstairs that Blackie was dead—" She shuddered, looked at Hagen. "Blackie hired you this afternoon. Why?"

Hagen told her curtly what had happened from the moment Roane stepped into his office. When he finished, Burns said:

"Did you see that pale faced kid that was standing near the door in here? He's got the next room. He went out about seven to get a paper, and he saw a guy rap at this door. The guy had his hand in his pocket and the kid says the pocket bulged like there was a gun in it. Well, the kid came back a few minutes later and heard voices in here. Then there wasn't any noise until about twenty to eight. The kid heard the shot then. The door slammed and somebody beat it along the hall. The kid came out, opened the door, and there was the stiff."

"Anybody else see the lad that came in here?" Hagen asked.

"Not a soul. That guy Joe behind the desk was dozing; he's an old guy, asleep most of the time. And there

wasn't a soul hanging around, except in that smelly room they call the lobby."

Vera Peters asked: "What did the man look like—the man who came in here?"

"According to the kid's description, he was a tall, thin guy in an old brown suit; grayish hair—no hat."

She gasped. "That sounds like—it is Bill, my husband!"

Burns slapped his palms together. "Boy, that's the angle! Get it, Hagen? She runs out on hubby, hubby bumps off lover."

Vera Peters made a sobbing sound in her throat. "To think that Bill — I—I'd better go. I can't stay here with Blackie like—that."

"About that forty-two grand," Hagen said. "Do you know anything about it?"

"No, nothing." She twisted around, gripped the doorknob. "I—I'm afraid I'm going to be sick. I'd better get to a hotel room right away."

"O. K.," said Burns. "I'll have one of the boys get a room at the Bennington for you. You'll have to stick in town for a while, you understand."

She nodded and Hagen said:

"Right now I'm going out and get a couple of ales. I'll see you later down at headquarters. I'm staying right with the case until the killer's caught."

"Sure, sure, master mind." Burns grinned. "Never let a client down—not even a dead one."

Close to eleven o'clock Hagen fitted the key into the lock of his apartment door. He'd had his couple of ales and been down to headquarters. There had been two or three broadcasts of the murder news and the descriptions of Donovan

and William Peters had been given. Neither one had been apprehended as yet and Burns was beginning to have a sour taste in his mouth over the case.

Hagen twisted the knob, pushed the door back, clicked on the light button. His broad back pressed hard against the closed door; he stared at the tall lean man in the center of the room. It was Donovan, gripping a short barreled black automatic in his fist. He strode forward, snapped the lock on the door, jammed the automatic into Hagen's side. His free hand patted at Hagen's pockets and under his left arm.

"No gun, eh? Now, let's talk."

"Sure." Hagen's browned face was patched with red. "First, how'd you get in here?"

"There are ways, dick, to pick any lock. You should know that. I went all through the dump, but I couldn't find what I was lookin' for. That's what I want to talk about."

"What?"

"Forty-two grand, dick. Remember? That was a sweet yarn you cooked up for the cops, tellin' 'em Blackie left a bagful of paper with you. Those radio broadcasts sure give a guy news." The gun dug harder. "Where'd you hide the dough?"

"Listen, Donovan, and get this straight. I took the bag from Roane because he agreed to open it before I handed it over. When I got word he was bumped, I ripped the bag open. Nothing but newspapers inside. Satisfied?"

"No," Donovan said. "It looks to me like you grabbed off the dough yourself."

"In that case would I be sap enough to tell the cops about the bag at all? And why would I take the trouble to get four day old San

Francisco newspapers?"

"That sounds O. K., dick. But why the hell should Blackie give you a bagful of paper in the first place?"

"Let's hear your end of the story, then maybe we can figure it out. The dope came through from Frisco that Blackie was a gambler. That right?"

"Yeah, that's right. He worked for one of the biggest gamblin' joints in Frisco. He beat it with forty-two grand in hundred buck bills. I work for the same joint." Donovan patted the gun with his left hand. "I keep the boys in line, get it? I was sent out after Blackie. Easy to trail him from the airport. I hunted for him all over town here. I found him this mornin' outside the Charmont. He tried to skip me, but I followed him. I nearly had him for keeps in your office." A wry grin twisted across the dour face. "But you got my rod. You're lookin' at my spare one now."

"What made you so sure the forty-two grand was in that bag Blackie gave me?"

"It had to be. The dough was in the bag when he copped it. And it was the only bag he took with him. I found that out easy enough. He wouldn't dare leave forty-two grand in his room at that hotel. But if you ain't got it, it must be somewhere in town."

Hagen studied Donovan with narrowed eyes. "The cops figure you or Peters knocked off Roane. What do you say to that?"

"Would I be screwy enough to bump him without gettin' the dough? I got strict orders to bring back those forty-two G's without bumpin' Blackie if I can help it, see?"

"I see. And later, perhaps Blackie was to have a little 'accident,' to help

keep the rest of the boys in line, eh?"

Donovan shrugged. "Maybe. But this ain't gettin' us anywhere. What you said about not findin' any dough looks like the goods. So I'll ease out. But if I find you been givin' me the runaround"—he tapped the short black barrel—"you go out, fast. Get it?"

Hagen said nothing, watching Donovan open the door and slip into the corridor. The detective stepped forward, then halted, shrugging. By the time he found his automatic in a bureau drawer, Donovan would be down in the street.

The sharp clamor of the telephone bell cut into the room's silence. Hagen picked up the receiver, placed it to his ear. Captain Burns's crisp, low voice carried over the wire.

"A couple of the boys in a prowler car just brought in Bill Peters. . . . Yeah, found him registered at a hotel. And get this: Roane was shot at about twenty to eight. We know that. Well, Peters was eating a lunch in his hotel coffee shop at the time!"

"So," Hagen said softly, "that means Peters has a perfect alibi."

"Perfect is right. He admits he went up to Roane's room all right, even admits he argued with him. But he says he left a little after seven, and, damn it, he's got proof he was in the coffee shop from seven twenty-five till ten of eight. Now what the hell happens?"

"I don't know, yet. But I've got an idea. If it breaks right, I'll give you a call and you can cop half the gravy when the newspaper boys come around. O. K.?"

"O. K. is right. We always work that way, don't we? A couple of musketeers, us guys. You help me, boy, and I'll help you."

"Sure." A slow grin worked across

Hagen's face. "That way we both eat regularly. And I like to eat."

Ten minutes later he stood in a bright corridor and rapped at a door numbered "763." His small automatic was in his coat pocket; he'd found it in his bureau drawer, undisturbed by Donovan. After a couple of moments the door opened and a woman stood with her back to the soft lamplight. The light outlined her tall, full bodied figure and the white oval of her face. Little burnished glints shone in the smooth blackness of her hair. She wore high heeled pumps and a blue dressing gown, belted across the middle. The gown made a V at her breasts, revealing some of their full whiteness.

"How are you, Mrs. Peters?" Hagen removed his hat, nodded his head. "Mind if I come in for a few minutes? I want to see you about your husband."

"Come right in," she said in her soft, husky voice.

Hagen stepped past her into the room and she closed the door. She turned to face him and he was conscious more than ever of her full bodied beauty.

He moved across the thick rug to the deep cushioned chair she indicated. She stood by the square, polished center table, looking down at him. A newly opened whisky bottle, and a small, half filled glass had formed dark, wet rings on the table's smooth surface.

She was watching him, her warm violet eyes running over his hard body, lingering at the broad shoulders, resting on the wide, browned face. She asked after a moment, "Drink?"

When he nodded, she glided into the bathroom, took a glass from the sink and rinsed it; glided out again with a smile and a warm glance for

him. He settled back in the cushions, watching her pour two drinks.

She handed him his glass and stood smiling down at him. "Luck for the two of us."

Hagen tilted his glass, sipped at the drink, while she took a quick swallow. She sat down opposite him, leaned back, her eyes half closed, running over his face and body. The blue dressing gown opened at the bottom, falling away on either side to reveal the white, smooth nakedness of her legs, almost to the hips.

She asked softly: "You wanted to talk to me about my husband?"

"Yes." Hagen leaned forward, looking into her lidded eyes. "They found him a little while ago. He was in a hotel coffee shop when Blackie Roane was killed. So that eliminates him entirely."

She frowned over the rim of her glass. "Funny they wouldn't call and tell me."

"I thought I'd come up and tell you myself." He let his eyes stray to the rounded whiteness of her legs. "You don't mind, do you?"

"Mind?" Her violet eyes were shining. "Do I look as though I—mind?"

Hagen laughed, and she laughed, huskily, and took another swallow of her drink. She had the glass halfway to her lips again when Hagen asked:

"Who do you think killed Blackie?"

She held the glass in front of her face for a second, then drained the remainder of her drink and shrugged. "Let's forget about that now, huh?" She rose, laughing. "You're a fine guest. Won't even make yourself at home. Why don't you take off your coat? It's warm in here."

"I'm beginning to notice that,"

Hagen said. He set his glass down on the rug, shrugged out of his coat, and hung it over the back of the chair. He stood facing her and said:

"I figured one of two people might have killed Blackie Roane. Either Donovan or Bill Peters, your husband. Both had motives. Your husband, to avenge himself on the man that stole his wife. Donovan, to get that forty-two grand. But Bill Peters has a perfect alibi. And Donovan would have to be slap-happy to knock off the only lad who could tell him where that forty-two grand was. You see, I'm convinced there is forty-two grand in this somewhere."

"So?"

"So there's only one other person who might want to get him out of the way. I mean you, baby."

She stared at him for seconds, her soft lips drawing together in a hard line. "What a little drink can do to a great big guy like you!" She wheeled, went to the table, and poured another drink into her glass. "You said I might want to get rid of Blackie. Why? We—loved each other." She laughed huskily. "You must be drunk."

"Listen, baby." Hagen said. "You didn't even put on a good act up there in Blackie's room. A woman who loved a lad like you were supposed to love him would have almost gone out of her head, seeing him like that. You didn't even cry."

He smiled a little, tightly. "Blackie took only that one bag with him. When Donovan caught up with him today, he parked the bag with me. If Donovan had got real nasty, Blackie intended to tell him I had the bag. Then Donovan would keep after me and leave Blackie alone. Meanwhile, you'd pop into town and you and Blackie would beat it to-

gether. At least, that's the way Blackie must have figured it. But he didn't figure on one thing."

"What's that one thing, wise guy?" She drained a third of her drink and slapped the glass on the table, coughing. "O. K., let's have the rest of it."

"Sure, baby. If Blackie took that one bag with him and he didn't have the money in it, he must have left the money behind him. And there's only one person he'd leave it with—that's you. You were supposed to bring the money along in a couple of days, while he pulled Donovan off the trail. A nice scheme, but he didn't figure on the one vital thing. He thought you really loved him."

Hagen laughed softly. "Baby, he fooled himself there. You're all animal. You'll try to make anything with long pants on. You even tried to get me excited the second I stepped in here. You don't know what love really is, baby. You wanted that forty-two grand. The only way to get it without strings was to kill off Blackie. You did that tonight."

She said with a rasping huskiness in her voice: "You got a hell of a lot of theory there, but no proof. It takes more than hot air to convict anyone."

"You're right there, baby. It takes proof." Hagen sighed, shrugged. "I suppose you won't be going back to Frisco?"

"No. I'm heading south as soon as possible—soon's this mess is cleared up. I'm fed up with Bill. I'll get a divorce as quick as I can. Anyway, I'm not going back to San Francisco."

"I'm glad to hear that," Hagen said. "If you're not going back to Frisco, baby, that means you brought the forty-two grand along with you.

It might still be at the Union Station, eh?"

"I—I had all my luggage sent over here," she faltered. "You can look through my things, if you want."

"All your luggage? Suppose I find a baggage check here? Suppose I find that forty-two grand still down at the station, ready to be picked up by you when you lam?"

She stared at him, fingernails biting into the palms of her hands. She twisted, lifted her drink with one hand, and fumbled at the tightened belt of her dressing gown with the other. The rim of the glass clicked against her teeth. She swallowed, set the glass down, coughing. Then she turned to face Hagen.

She was smiling now, a soft, sensuous smile. The dressing gown was open, the belt hanging free. She moved toward him, the gown slipping back from her shoulders, exposing the white, full firmness of her breasts. She pressed against him, clung to him, murmuring:

"You can forget about that forty-two grand. We can split it. The cops won't know any better. Just the two of us somewhere, together."

Her lips neared his, the hot, fetid whisky odor of her breath in his nostrils. She was pressed firmly against him, pushing him back a little, until his calves were against the chair. He gripped her left arm, scowling.

"It's no go, baby. I——"

She reached down quickly with her right hand, dipped it into the pocket of his coat. He started to twist about, cursing, but his automatic was tight in her fist, boring into his side. She backed away slightly, keeping the gun within a foot of his stomach.

"Hold it, sweetheart," she ordered through set teeth. She drew the dressing gown tight, belting it clumsily with her left hand. "You were

right the whole way. I've got the baggage check right in the pocket of my dressing gown—the check for the forty-two grand.”

“The gun you killed him with,” Hagen said. “What'd you do with it?”

She gave a husky laugh. “The gun? It's in the same bag with the money. After I shot Blackie, I went right back to the Union Station, reclaimed the bag, went into the ladies' room, put in the gun, and checked the bag in all over again. If I threw the gun away and the cops found it, they could trace it right back to me in San Francisco. But with it safe along with the money, I could lam out in a while and drop it somewhere a couple of hundred miles from here. Smart, huh?”

“Smart enough,” Hagen bit out, “to send you to the chair, baby.”

“Nothing like that, sweetheart. You're the one that's going by-by. Lucky I saw the flash of the gun in your pocket when you took off your coat. Very careless of you, sweetheart. When the cops come, I'll have a few bruises and scratches on myself and you'll have the stink of whisky all over you. I'd just come out of the shower when you came in, see? You brought the liquor, insisted I take some. Get the angle?”

Her lips twisted back over her teeth in a hard smile. “Then when you tried to make me get into the bedroom and pulled a gun on me, I grabbed it and shot you. The lady saves her honor, get it? No jury in the country would convict me.”

Hagen said: “You're trying to build up courage enough to shoot. You know you couldn't get away with it in a million years.”

“That's my worry, sweetheart. You'll be out. You'll—”

Hagen laughed, harshly. “Keep right on talking, baby. The door's

open behind you and Captain Burns is getting a big earful. Keep right on—”

She whirled halfway around, crouching, then whirled back again, with a husky curse rasping in her throat. But the second she twisted away was enough. Hagen lunged forward, gripped her wrist. The automatic spat; the bullet thudded harmlessly into the wall. Hagen twisted the gun from her fingers and slipped it into a trousers pocket.

“You fell for a pretty old gag, baby. Not so smart as you thought.”

She whipped up her hands for his face, swearing. Her fingernails raked down his left cheek. He clipped out:

“Sorry, baby, but you deserve this.”

He brought his fist up, hit her on the side of the jaw. There was a snapping sound; her eyes seemed to lose all life; her mouth flew open and stayed that way. She wilted suddenly. He plopped her into a chair, went to the phone on the table, and asked for headquarters. When he got Captain Burns on the wire, he said:

“Make it snappy over to 763, the Bennington. The Peters woman is it. . . . Evidence? Plenty. She's ready to sing, anyway.” He looked over at Vera Peters. She was whimpering now, sprawled in the chair, her long, smooth white legs out before her. Hagen sighed a bit and said into the mouthpiece: “Some other guys I know might have made a bargain with her. I socked her instead! Maybe I'm a sap. But I'm still working on Blackie Roane's money.”

He waited while Burns talked at the other end, then: “Forget Donovan, can't you? If your men grab him, O. K.; if they don't, O. K. He didn't hurt anybody, and we don't need him.”

"Boy," came Burns's sharp voice, "I'll be right over to share the gravy. And listen, I'll take you to the Troc in a few days. They've got a swell new bubble dancer there—a swell show."

Hagen said, "O. K.," and cradled the phone. He turned to face Vera Peters. "Can you imagine that?" he muttered. "He wants to take me to see a bubble dancer. What the hell kick could I get out of that now?"

HERO COP'S SON IS PHANTOM BANDIT

FOR fifteen years Policeman Ernest L. Keen, forty-two, had served on the Chicago force, achieving an excellent record for valor. But his son Harold, twenty-three, had been a lawbreaker since he was ten. After serving five years for larceny, Harold was paroled from the State penitentiary.

A short time afterwards, an elusive phantom bandit committed twenty-eight robberies in Chicago, in the space of two weeks. Then he was wounded in a gun battle with the police, and abandoned his automobile.

The following day Policeman Keen told his superior officers that he was convinced his son Harold was the phantom robber.

"I want to be the one to catch him," Keen said. "He'll shoot, I know, and I'd rather get it than have some other policeman killed."

Harold's wife, Angeline, nineteen, an expectant mother, admitted that she had kept a rendezvous with her husband following his wounding, while the police were conducting a city wide search for the young gunman. She had made another date to meet him at the home of a girl friend.

Seven detectives went to the home to await his arrival. But Policeman Keen was not permitted to accompany them.

Young Keen arrived on schedule. As he stepped onto the rear porch of the house, he saw Detective Joseph McCabe, holding a machine gun, behind a screen door. McCabe ordered the youth to throw up his hands. Keen hesitated and jerked a pistol from his pocket. The detective fired and Keen fell dead.

Policeman Keen, credited with having made the capture possible, said: "Harold was a bad boy. His mother and I tried our best, but we failed."

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FACE



By **JOHN D. SWAIN**

Face

LITTLE Mr. Hirohito had lost face, and spent all his leisure meditating on it. No white man can hope to understand the reactions of an Oriental. Slap a Caucasian face, and the matter becomes strictly personal. One either puts up, or shuts up! Not so in the Orient. He who gets slapped becomes a minor character. It is his gods, his patriotism, his ancestors that are affronted; and hence he must do something drastic about it to tranquilize his universe.

Hirohito had been born in Seattle of Japanese parents, and until his thirtieth year was employed profitably in a factory that made fireworks. Then an explosion had mutilated both his hands, forcing him to seek some sort of nonmanual work. At the time, he was an orphan, unmarried, and with a modest fortune made up of his savings and the compensation received for the injuries he had suffered.

Drifting eastward, he had settled in an Atlantic seaport and opened a Japanese restaurant, the first of its kind in the city. It was a modest establishment employing only a cook, kitchen helper, and two waiters, all Japanese brought on from Seattle. To a small but discriminating clientele the Chrysanthemum was known as a spot where one could get sukiyaki, and such delicacies as slivers of raw fish dipped into a ravishing sauce, unusual blends of mushrooms and shellfish, fragile cups filled with warm rice wine or fragrant, pale-green tea.

No Japanese had dwelt in the city until Hirohito settled there; and the indiscriminating eyes of the police confused them with Chinese, which

race operated numerous laundries and chop suey places in town, and was occasionally involved in dope peddling. And it was on an anonymous—and false—tip that the local narcotic squad raided the Chrysanthemum, looking for opium but finding none, as Hirohito neither used nor dispensed it.

In this raid much damage was done to the premises, and to the owner's feelings. Costly utensils of porcelain and lacquer and teak were broken; and so was Hirohito's head when Officer Luke Malley's club descended upon it. Luke was a husky, free-swinging member of the strong-arm and narcotic squads; and when the indignant little Hirohito rushed chattering from behind his cash register, protesting in two languages and with frantic gestures of both mutilated hands, Malley stretched him out cold, and then arrested him for obstructing an officer. Next morning Hirohito was discharged with a bandaged head and a heart filled with bitterness. The newspapers ran the story in jocose vein. The Chrysanthemum was restored to order, and business went on as usual. But Hirohito took little further interest in it.

Something must be done about his loss of face! Otherwise the serenity of his ancestors would be disturbed in their Celestial abode. Hirohito as yet unborn would stir uneasily in the womb of Time!

He would have admitted in all modesty that the Hirohitos were not indeed of the oldest families of Nippon. In fact, their authentic records could be traced back little more than a thousand years. But during this brief stretch the record had remained immaculate. Family honor had been upheld. Never had a member of the clan been beamed by a person of low origin! Had such a tragedy befallen

in Japan, Hirohito would have known exactly what to do about it. He would have resorted to hara-kari; have parked himself upon the doorstep of his assailant, bared his honorable abdomen, and with a keen knife spilled his vitals thereon. Thus would shame have infolded his enemy, who would lose face forever and suffer the contempt of all men. But Hirohito, having lived all his days in America, well knew its curious and distorted psychology. Were he to commit hara-kiri on Officer Malley's front porch, that husky guardian of the law would doubtless be irritated at having such a mess at his very door; but later, the publicity would probably gratify him. It might even hasten his advancement in rank!

For the wrong done, some special form of rebuke must be devised; something that the Americans, those readers-of-newspapers, would appreciate. Let it be understood that mere revenge was not in Hirohito's mind. That, in his philosophy, was an ignoble emotion. He was not even angry at Officer Malley. It was doubtless his nature to swat people with the club he carried; just as it was the nature of a cat to use its claws, a dog its fangs. Malley had bashed the heads of a great many citizens. Even his captain had been known to grumble that he was a bit too free with his nightstick!

That Hirohito had been suspected of selling dope was inconsequential. Like most Japanese, he refrained from the use of the poppy; but although he had never sold its magic gum, he regarded it as entirely proper to do so, if one could avoid being caught. But Malley had offended more deeply than by a blow; for had he not mistaken Hirohito for a Chinese? Called him, in fact, a "heathen chink?"

It wouldn't be an easy matter to get at Malley. He was an alert, capable man, armed and ready at all times. Also, Hirohito's crippled hands could not use any lethal weapon with force or accuracy. To be sure, were it merely a question of killing the policeman, that might be arranged. Some subtle Oriental poison, for instance. But then nobody would identify the avenger! It was essential that it be known to all that the rebuke administered to Malley came from Hirohito's hand. Yet he must make sure that this did not lead to his arrest and imprisonment, or execution! For in such case, the police would have the last laugh. The honorable ancestors would not be appeased.

It will be seen that the matter was complex. Upon it the little Japanese concentrated with Oriental patience. At last the solution came to him, and with a glorious gesture he wiped his escutcheon clean and added luster to the family name.

First of all, he shaved his head. This, a world-wide rite of mourning, was fitting enough. By this time the lump raised by Malley's club had disappeared. Only a scalp scar remained. Next, he had made for him a wig. It was a good one, and cost much cash. Fitted to his head, its stiff, bristly black hair was as natural as life. Only Hirohito's faithful employees knew that he was not wearing his own hair.

Thereafter, he sought to get close to Luke Malley; and this proved to be easy enough, as he had recently been transferred to traffic duty, and was now posted at the city's busiest downtown intersection. Having noted his hours, and choosing a time when traffic was lightest, Hirohito made his way to Malley's post. He had during the past week set all his affairs in order; and on this morning

he had bathed with unusual care, and put on clean linen and his best suit. He wore no hat.

What followed was seen and overheard by two chauffeurs whose cars were waiting for the green light when Hirohito appeared. A number of pedestrians were crossing the street, and the little Japanese was among them; but he paused beside the traffic officer as the others scurried past. Malley, about to give the "Go" signal, looked down at the little man standing at his side.

"Move on there," he growled.

Hirohito smiled, shook his head.

"No move. I the man you hit on head, back in Chrysanthemum."

Luke Malley had rapped too many heads to remember them all; but he remembered Hirohito. He was the fresh little guy with the busted hands. And scowling at him now, he asked: "So what?"

"So you never hit me, no more." Hirohito smiled.

"I'll hit ya right now if ya don't get a move on!"

Hirohito shook his head again. "Please, no, Mr. Officer! You no hit because you *coward man*."

He stepped lightly back as Malley lurched forward, a sinewy hand reaching for his collar. Then, having carefully secreted a generous supply of saliva, he spat full in Malley's face!

With a roar, the officer drew his club and closed in; and Hirohito made no effort to evade the blow. He seemed in fact solicitous that it land squarely on top of his head. And when it promptly did—this on the testimony of the two chauffeurs and several others—it seemed as if Hirohito exploded like a human bomb! The noise was terrific. Malley's right arm was torn off at the shoulder; it was found many yards away,

a muscular hand still grasping the club. Hirohito suffered little damage beyond decapitation. Nothing was ever found of his head but a few teeth scattered over a wide area, and a fragment of black wig sticking on a third-story windowpane of a department store.

That same day each of the city newspapers received a brief and identical note written by Hirohito, in excellent Americanese, explaining why he had been obliged to rebuke Officer Malley. It also explained how he had managed to do so.

His years in a fireworks factory had made him familiar with many forms of explosive. Among them gelatinite, which is much like dynamite, only more so. Hirohito knew where to get it; and had molded a small portion into a sort of plaster, or toupee, fitted it to his skull and placed it beneath his wig. When gelatinite is struck a heavy blow, things happen at once. It was his hope, Hirohito said in his letters, that Officer Malley would be properly rebuked, he himself removed from the reach of the law, his honorable ancestors pacified, and no innocent bystander be made to suffer! Which indeed, save for a few cuts from broken glass, none was.

Thus everything happened according to plan. Malley lived, but not to bash any more heads. He, and the reading public, knew that the Hirohito name had been cleansed, and lost face recovered. But the final gesture of little Hirohito was perhaps too subtle for Occidental psychology. For, having no heirs or needy relatives, Hirohito in the will his attorney offered for probate, after bequeathing his restaurant to his faithful employees, had left his considerable estate to the Fund for the Widows and Orphans of the Police!



MARCH OF CRIME

BANDIT KILLS PAL, COMMITS SUICIDE: Attracted by shots to a haberdashery shop in Havana, Cuba, police found the unarmed shop owner gravely wounded and two robbers dead. The police deduced that one of the thieves fired at the storekeeper in a scuffle, but accidentally shot his accomplice and then killed himself.



LIQUOR RAIDERS GET THE CHASER: A Sioux City, Iowa, police raiding squad seized two barrels filled with what they thought was whisky. It was a back breaking job to load the barrels on a truck and get them to the station. There they removed the covers—and found water.



DISCOVER STILL IN PEN: Officials of the Missouri State Penitentiary found a liquor still beneath the prison hospital for tubercular inmates. Dan Porter, acting deputy warden, said the still apparently had been used to supply liquor to the convicts.



POLICE PLANE TO SPOT SPEEDERS: Reckless drivers in New Jersey have little chance of evading the police any more. The State police have an airplane which cruises over the roads and spots unruly motorists. When one is seen, the pilot radios police headquarters, which broadcasts to radio car police to catch the lawbreaker.



DOPE SMUGGLED INTO U. S. FROM PALESTINE: Jerusalem police estimated that half a million dollars' worth of narcotics was smuggled into the United States from Palestine by the drug ring allegedly headed by Isaac Leifer of Brooklyn, New York, who was arrested in Paris.



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When were tires purchased? Front left _____ Front right _____ Spare _____
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LEAVES DESSERT FOR COPS: State police went to the home of Clair Sanders in Selinsgrove, Pennsylvania, to arrest him for questioning in a robbery. He asked them to "excuse me until I finish dinner," and the officers obliged. Sanders, however, dashed out the back door and disappeared.



STEALS WHILE VICTIMS SLUMBER: At New Philadelphia, Ohio, a thief jacked up the trailer of a truck and stole a wheel and tire while the truck driver and his helper were asleep in the cab.



WOMAN SUBDUES BURGLAR BY SITTING ON HIM: When two-hundred-pound Mrs. Rosina Aioria found an eighteen-year-old boy of one hundred and six pounds ransacking her Brooklyn, New York, candy store, she sat on him. Later, when she arose to turn her captive over to a policeman, the youth had fainted. An ambulance surgeon treated him—for shock.



BARBER SLASHES CRITICAL CUSTOMER: Fahmy Mohammed Ibrahim was dissatisfied with the haircut he was given at a barber shop in Alexandria, Egypt, and an argument ensued. Fahmy went to the hospital with a half dozen razor wounds in the stomach; the barber went to prison.



BIGAMIST'S MISTAKE: A New York City man had three wives when he was jailed for bigamy in 1935, but when he got out, he promptly married a fourth. Jailed again for this offense, he said he thought that his prison term "wiped out" his previous nuptials.



NEW FEDERAL PRISON: Plans have been completed for the construction of a Federal penal institution, to be built at a cost of \$1,750,000, at Candlewood Lake, near Danbury, Connecticut.

POSES AS MUTE, PROVES HE'S DUMB: Two St. Louis policemen were trying to question a prisoner. Shaking his head and waving his arms, he repeatedly showed them a card reading, "I am deaf and dumb." When they persisted, the prisoner blurted, "Can't you guys take a fellow at his word?" He was booked for begging.



GIRL IN CAR NAPS WHILE IT'S STOLEN, RECOVERED: Ruth Holflick, five, of Atlantic City, New Jersey, slept through an exciting automobile ride in Philadelphia. As she lay curled up on the rear seat, thieves drove away with her father's parked car. Police found the machine abandoned two hours later. Ruth was still asleep.



ROBBERY DIVIDEND: A jeweler of Orillia, Ontario, reported that forty-two watches had been taken in a robbery of his store, but in solving the case, the police recovered forty-three.



LIGHT THEFT IS LESE MAJESTY: Two ranch hands, who stole the special red light from the official car of the chief of police of Suisun, California, were given thirty days in jail.



CONNECTICUT COURT BARS BANK NIGHT: The State Supreme Court has outlawed bank night in Connecticut, ruling that it was contrary to the policy of the State. Chief Justice William M. Maltbie wrote: "It is designed solely to serve the selfish ends of the owners of theaters who support it. Nothing can be said from the standpoint of public morals in defense of this plan."



THIRTY DAYS TO DREAM: Joe Vincent and Eugene Sallouie of De Smet, Idaho, told Justice W. A. Weise they had dreamed there would be a large crop of huckleberries. They said they had stolen the fruit jars for which they were arrested to preserve the bountiful crop. Judge Weise said they could dream about huckleberries for thirty days—in jail.



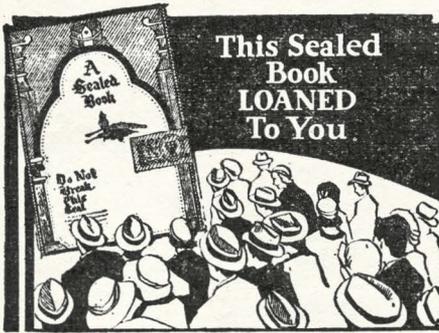
PEPPERED JUSTICE

BY GILBERT BARNEY

MORE curious than worried, Jed Amory glanced at the clock ticking the minutes away on the stone shelf over the fireplace. Nine o'clock! He whistled. The kid sure was taking a long time getting home. But

it was no wonder, he reflected, his eyes veering to the high windows where each tiny pane was a glittering crust of ice and snow.

In fair weather it took Stark Cameron a good half hour to walk the two miles up the mountainside



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from the railroad depot, where he was lone station master, to the cabin that he shared with Jed. And tonight, with the snow piling in waist-high drifts and swirling through the air in stinging white clouds, it wasn't surprising that he was late.

Perhaps, he had not even attempted to make the trip at all. He might be going supperless to bed in the small room adjoining his office. He had been glad enough to use that room as his living quarters before he came in with Jed.

Hungrily Jed sniffed the savory rabbit stew. More than an hour overtime is a long while for a starving man to wait. If the kid didn't intend coming he ought to have let Jed know. There was the telephone and, over on the low hanging shelf that did duty as a desk, there was the telegrapher's outfit that Stark had rigged up and taught Jed to use, so that they could communicate with each other through that medium if the emergency ever arose.

A couple of hours ago the instrument had given a sharp click that brought Jed's head jerking up. But he had returned to mixing his biscuit dough when nothing happened after that first click. Thoughtfully Jed eyed the two contraptions that connected his isolated cabin with the outside world. Why not telephone the station and learn if the kid had left yet?

He took down the receiver. No buzzing response greeted his listening ear. The line was dead. As dead as the dry leaf tacked by the snow and frost to the outside of one of the windowpanes. From the telephone Jed hurried to the telegraph set. He made several futile efforts to get something out of it before he was ready to admit that it was useless. He nodded. That explained why the kid hadn't sent any message. He couldn't.

Jed walked over to the door, slid the stout bolt, and pulled the door

in. The wind whistled its battle cry around the corners of the sturdy log cabin. Trees beat naked branches together. Down at the corral a lone gate creaked. From the crude barn, made snug with a banking of peat and dried mud, the restless stirring of animals seeped out.

Jed could picture the horses there in the dark. His own gentle mare rubbing a friendly nose over the boards that divided her stall from Stark's horse, Danny Boy. And Danny Boy, arrogantly aloof, would be restlessly pawing the floor.

There was no calm for Danny Boy. Like his young master his ears were always flung back straining to catch the call of the distant world. Always his feet were moving and his eyes wandering. Only Stark's and Jed's loving hands could pat Danny Boy's quivering flanks to quiet.

Jed was shutting the door when, above the ordinary noises that were the accompaniment to every mountain storm, his keen ears caught a different sound. A sound oddly suggestive of a tolling bell. It reminded Jed of a life buoy tossing on a storm-beaten sea. *Ding-dong! Ding-dong!*

Jed's knuckles stood up white on the rim of the door. Then his tenseness relaxed. It was a bell. A real bell on a real engine down in the valley by Stark's station at Runway Junction. But why was it ringing so persistently? Was there a train trapped in the drifts and signaling to Stark on his way up the almost impassable mountainside? If the kid was coming, even if he had already reached the peak of the hill, he would turn back. It would make no difference to him that, officially, his hours of duty were over when the *Black Panther*, the streamliner from the coast, flashed past at seven o'clock.

Jed shut and barred the door against the heavy hand of the wind. The tolling bell penetrated the room. Jed shoved another stick of wood into the stove. He decided to wait a little longer. The kid might be close to the cabin and stop to snatch a bite of food before he beat it back.

To kill time Jed spun the dial on the radio. For a wonder it was working. It crackled like a bunch of exploding firecrackers, but the music from the surf room of a Hollywood hotel was a pleasant undercurrent to the ear-splitting racket. Jed made himself comfortable beside the radio. He closed his eyes and his boot toe beat time to the melody of a throaty blues singer.

"You're my honey. You're my honey,
Say,
My heart would break to pieces if
You went away."

An object noisily falling against the cabin door whipped Jed out of his tuneful trance. Stark, at last, hitting the door with the blind floundering of a storm-tossed bird!

In a leap Jed was at the door, shooting the cumbersome bolt. Snow, wind, and a cowering man rushed in. Jed slammed the door and wheeled with a welcoming grin.

The grin disappeared when his gray eyes encountered the blinking dark eyes of a stranger. Neither spoke. Then suddenly the radio broke the spell that bound them, the music ending to send a man's crisp voice through.

"This is Station KVNO, Denver, Colorado, bringing a tragic news flash. At seven this evening, as the *Black Panther*, the streamliner from the coast, flashed by the lonely mountain station called Runway Junction, the engineer observed the station agent, Stark Cameron, slumped over

his desk in what seemed to be a pool of blood."

A cry gurgled from Jed's throat. The voice raced on, each word striking a hammer blow on Jed's heart.

"Not even for death can the flyer slow up. At the first stop the engineer made his report and a special was rushed back. Stark Cameron, the agent, was found dead, a bullet hole between the eyes. His fingers were on the keys of the telegraph instrument on his desk, the wires of which had been severed."

Jed's tortured gaze shifted giddily to the telegraph instrument in the room. He recalled the click of a couple of hours ago. That had been Stark trying to get him; the murderer's bullet must have stopped his moving fingers. Again the announcer's voice broke the spell of his teeming thoughts.

"The office had been ransacked and the contents of the safe were strewn all over the floor. But if robbery was the motive the killer was sadly disappointed, for nothing of value is ever kept on the premises."

Nothing of value! Jed's teeth bit into his lips. They could not know that every month since Stark had the job he had cashed his check and tucked a large portion of his pay into that safe. Only last night the kid had looked over the top of one of the books he was eternally studying and remarked.

"I counted my fortune today, old-timer. I have three thousand dollars in good American cash to give me a start when I get married and shake the dust of this wilderness off my feet."

And now Stark was on the way to becoming dust himself! Jed gripped the back of a hickory chair and the radio blared on.

"The police are inclined to credit

this killing to Lawson Meade, the desperado who, while under sentence of death for murder, escaped from the county jail at Falls Village this morning. An hour after he made his successful break for freedom a State trooper was found beside the road, his head battered in, his body stripped of his uniform. The police believe that Meade changed his prison garments for the officer's clothes, hopped a passing freight, and dropped off at Runway Junction later. He is reputed to know those hills around there like a wolf."

A rush of horrible suspicion caught Jed. This man who had come tumbling in, spent and beaten, was wearing a trooper's uniform. Jed's head went up sharply. Sturdily, through water-beaded lashes, the stranger was watching him. His coat was flung back, his hand on the gun showing at the side of his tunic. Jed's fingers clenched. Unarmed, accusation in his eyes, he gamely held the other man's glance. Oblivious of the drama his words were pouring in on, the radio announcer's tongue raced on:

"But there are other wolves on the lonely trail. Trooper Charles Coburn is already prowling the hills, hot on the trail of the fiend who killed a comrade, as well as the station agent, who was little more than a boy. And back here, hugging the comfort of our fires, we are sending up a prayer that somewhere in the snowy mountains a cold-blooded killer will get what he deserves."

Abruptly the air tragedy ended and the song took up its interrupted refrain. Music after an interlude of murder! A pine bough crashed onto the roof. Sparks sputtered from the fireplace onto the uncovered floor boards. The stranger's tenseness subsided in a deeply drawn breath of relief. His hand left his gun.

"For a moment, pardner, you came damn near making a mistake," he said.

Jed nodded bleakly. "You're Co-burn, I suppose."

The stranger snorted. "Who else would I be? Not a rat like Lawson Meade, I hope."

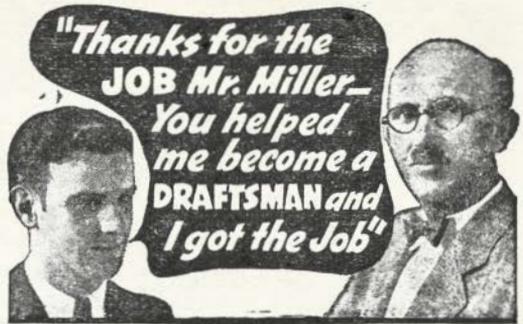
Jed rubbed his smarting eyes. "I had the jitters," he said apologetically. "The kid that slime killed bunked here with me. I was expecting him home for supper when you barged in the door."

"Humph!" The man's nose twitched. "Not a bad smell, chow time, eh? As long as the table is set for two, I'll take the extra place. It sharpens a man's appetite to be fighting these hills. I'll have to be getting on, and I'll need strength to do it."

A pang shot through Jed when the man unceremoniously pulled out Stark's chair and sat down. But that was being ungrateful, he reflected fairly. Could any one more fitting be taking Stark's place than the man who was after his killer? Swiftly, his heart a cold stone inside of him, Jed dished up the savory stew.

"Pull up and join me," his guest commanded. "I enjoy company as well as the next one."

Jed turned off the radio and sank into the second chair. The man hadn't waited for him. In ravenous gulps he was wolfing down the food



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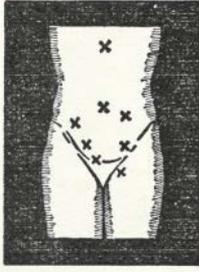
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that Jed could not bear to look at. He could not have swallowed a mouthful if the trooper's gun were on him, instead of only his little sharp eyes.

Apathetically Jed studied the man occupying Stark's chair. The stranger was about thirty-five, with unshaven blue jowls and the look of a hawk. He had kept on his fur cap and leather windbreaker. The jacket gaped open, and the lights in the room glinted on the buttons on his tunic. He was eating with a relish and, at the same time, ready to fly.

"Find any tracks of Meade?" Jed asked, a lump in his throat.

The man shook his capped head. "Blizzard-bitten hills don't leave much of a trail for a man to follow. I was a chump to try to bust through this way. I'd never have made the top if the path hadn't climbed up through a gulley, rock-walled on both sides. It sure was a break that you had all the lights in these diggings going. I needed a beacon to guide me right."

Jed's voice was husky. "That's what they were supposed to be, a beacon," he said.

He gazed past the man so greedily swallowing his food, into Stark's face smiling back at him from a snapshot tacked on the wall. It was a small picture, but memory had carved every line of it on Jed's brain. Stark was mounted on Danny Boy and had one arm linked over a blossoming dogwood bough. From his own saddle on Dolly Gray, Jed had snapped the picture.

Danny Boy and Stark! They had been together when Jed first met them that spring day several years ago. Jed had been riding Dolly Gray down a blossoming trail, feeling somewhat lonesome, when a voice issuing from a thicket by a mountain stream caused him to rein up short. He parted the branches and peered through. It did not embar-

rass him to see a man in earnest conversation with a horse. As unembarrassed, Stark saluted him, a stranger then, with a grin.

"Hello," Stark said. "A talkative fellow just has to have some one to let off steam to. I was chinning with my best friend."

Understandingly Jed had nodded. "You'll never have a better friend," he remarked, his gaze on the spirited animal contentedly nuzzling his master's hand.

He winked back the tears at the memory of that day. They had chatted a while. He had ridden to the Junction to inspect Stark's quarters behind the small railroad office and to examine the law books belonging to the course Stark was taking at a correspondence school. Afterward Stark had ridden up the trail to Jed's cabin and somehow, the first thing they knew, they were setting up housekeeping together.

Another bunk was screwed to the wall. Stark's books were transferred to homemade bookshelves beside the homemade desk in the cabin corner that they jokingly designated as the library. Danny Boy was bedded in a stall near Dolly Gray in the long, low barn behind the house. Morning, noon, and night, Stark traversed the distance between his work and new home on Danny Boy's back if the weather was not too bad, afoot if it were.

It had been fine having the kid around, listening to his dreams, and watching them slowly come true. Dreams that had been ruthlessly ended by a convict's bullet. Jed's fingers dug into his palms. The storm battered the house with cruel fury and, spent, whistled off into a momentary lull. Then the stillness was shattered by a horrible shriek. Jed's startled eyes flew open. The stranger leaped from his chair.

"What's that?" he ground out, the skin at his unshaven jaws going taut.

It came again, ripping the silence away, rising to a blood-curdling crescendo, then sinking eerily into nothing. Jed recognized the sound that time. It came from Danny Boy, tied in his stall, sending the challenge of his imprisoned spirit into the wild riding storm. Perhaps he knew that somewhere in the screaming midst of that storm his young master's spirit had been torn from him and was whirling farther and farther away.

Jed brushed the moisture from his eyes with a horny finger. Danny Boy was his now. Once, long ago, Stark had told him so.

"If anything ever happens to me, remember I bequeath my horse to you. I might go too quick to take him with me, and you're the one person I can trust to treat him right."

A sob buried itself within Jed. If it hadn't been for that fish-eyed stranger across the table he would have risen and fought his way through the swirl of wind and snow to the barn where he could throw his arms around Danny Boy's arched neck and let tears fall unashamed on the silky golden mane.

"What was it?" the stranger croaked again.

"One of the horses in the barn behind the cabin," Jed answered. "The storm is making him uneasy."

Visibly the man relaxed. "Horses." A glitter shone between his dark lashes. "That spells luck for me. My legs are sort of giving out, and it's practically impossible to see through the blizzard. But a nag don't have to see. They can plow their way blindfolded through anything. I'd kind of like to reach Jasper and, if I have a horse to turn

its head that direction, I probably will."

Jed thought of Danny Boy who reared to heaven with any one but Stark or him on his back; of docile, iron-muscled Dolly Gray, who patiently carried anybody anywhere. It would be Dolly he'd have to give the trooper, though Danny Boy was the logical mount to bring vengeance to his master.

"I can let you have a horse all right," he said.

An infinitesimal noise from without grated through the stillness and sent both men upright in their chairs. It came again—the stumble of a footstep on the snow-carpeted veranda. The man at the table kicked his chair back and leaped to his feet. His sharp dark eyes darted from window to window. They were too high for any one outside to see in; besides, the ice crusted over them fashioned an opaque curtain. On to the barred door his glance leaped, returning swiftly to Jed.

Rigidly the two of them remained poised there, ears on the night outside. The sound repeated itself. Footfalls on the veranda, scuffing up to the heavy door. A fist hammered on the door. The stranger's hand went to his gun.

"Meade!" the stranger whispered. "Lawson Meade! The skunk! He sure has stumbled into a trap. I'll stand out of sight. Act as if you were alone when you let him in. Don't be afraid. I'll have him covered."

Sly as a skulking cat, he sidled over to the wall behind the door. Jed's blood was boiling hotly in his veins as he stepped to the door. He was there, an arm's reach away—Stark Cameron's brutal killer. Jed's fingers were stiff when he slid back the bolt on the door.

For a second time in a brief space

of time a man catapulted in out of the storm, head and shoulders powdered white. Roughly he shook the sparkling powder off. He was wearing a trooper's uniform, too; and an ice-glazed fur cap. He rubbed his eyes with gloved forefingers to free the frozen lashes. The lashes opened at the pressure of a gun in the small of his back.

"Swing 'em high, buddy," came the curt command. "And swing 'em swift."

"What the devil?" The trooper blinked. The gun dug in. His hands, in fur-lined gauntlets, lifted toward the ceiling. "Say, you've got me wrong," he rasped. "I'm a trooper."

"We're looking for a trooper," Jed's guest spat. He nodded toward Jed. "Frisk the louse and dump everything you find in his pockets on the table."

Jed walked over. His gray eyes, dark with loathing, clashed with the eyes of the man who called himself a trooper. They were astonishingly fine eyes to be in a murderer's head—keen, clear, and blue. Jed steeled himself against them.

"Keep those hands up, Lawson Meade," he snapped.

"Lawson Meade?" The other laughed. "You've got me all wrong, fellow. I'm——"

"Skip it." The man who was holding the gun kept out of sight. "And make it snappy," he added to Jed.

Jed jerked open the trooper's leather coat, located the gun in the belt beneath it and tossed it upon the table. Deftly he worked. Two pairs of handcuffs followed the gun. A thin, cheap wallet. A flattened package of cigarettes. A folder of matches. A flashlight. A key ring. A handkerchief. A crumpled envelope, still holding its letter. Jed looked at the envelope; at the name

in the address. A puff of wind seemed to lift his heart up and carry it out of his stiffening body.

"Charles Coburn!" he ejaculated.

The trooper smiled. "That's who I was trying to tell you I was. Trooper Charles Coburn, on the trail of the dirtiest killer that ever broke into jail or out of it. Now, if you'll just request your buddy to get his gun out of my ribs—"

Jed stumbled a step back, his shocked glance going from Coburn to the man grinning an evil grin behind him.

"It's Meade who has his gun in your back," he exclaimed. "He fooled me into thinking he was you."

Meade chuckled and moved out from behind his latest victim.

"He's a clever guy, this Lawson Meade," he boasted. "Corners one trooper, then another. You're a dumb bunch of cops, you troopers. Keep reaching for the sky, Coburn."

His gaze on the two of them, Meade backed up to the table and picked up the second gun. He fondled it a moment before dropping it into his pocket.

"I ought to blow a hole through your heads with it," he remarked. "If I was as dumb as the two of you maybe I would. But it would be almost like a double cross sending two adlepatates to hell at the same time. I don't like to put anything over on the devil. And I'll get a kick out of letting you both live so you'll

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have to remember how much sawdust there is where brains should be."

"You aren't fooling me, Meade," Coburn said. "The reason you aren't shooting us is because you're afraid you might need the bullets to save yourself later. There aren't enough in any dozen guns to do that. You're the chump."

"Yeah?" Meade's head whipped toward Jed. "Get over here and get these handcuffs."

Jed obeyed. There was nothing else to do with those eyes and that gun whipping him on.

"Take the keys out of those handcuffs and hand them to me," Meade ordered. The keys made a clinking sound when he slipped them into his leather-jacket pocket. One eye held Jed; the other flickered to Coburn. "Sit down," he said to the latter. "In that chair by the desk, with your arms still in the air."

Coburn hesitated, made up his mind, and sat down.

"Put one pair of those handcuffs on his leg and attach it to the leg of the desk," Meade commanded, "and snap it. Put the other pair on his wrist and snap it around the bracket on the bookshelf."

There was misery mirrored on Jed's face as he stood beside Coburn, the handcuffs in his hand.

"You have no choice, buddy," Coburn said. "There's no better tongue than a gun to talk a man into anything."

"I'll listen for the snap of the lock," Meade reminded.

The clicks reverberated sharply in the silent room. Jed stepped back. He felt sorry for Coburn, manacled to the desk, an imprisoned hand and arm high in the air. Meade cocked his head.

"He looks pretty, don't he? Like he was a wooden cop with a hand raised to stop the traffic. I wouldn't mind staying to laugh, but I have a hunch I better be moving. I have

a yen to get down the other side of the mountain and catch a train that's due to be leaving the town of Jasper in a couple more hours. You ought to have a horse that could find the town, pardner, if his nose is started off that way."

"It's the trading post," Jed said. "Any horse in these parts could make it blindfolded."

Meade's head nodded approval. "You can saddle me the best," he said.

Coburn laughed scoffingly. "If you have a nag that doesn't need *pepper* to make it go," he remarked.

Jed's teeth caught his tongue. Coburn wasn't so slow, even if he had barged head-on into a trap. He was hinting to him, wasn't he, that if he flung pepper into the animal's eyes after Meade was on his back, they might win yet? If the horse bolted and threw his rider, wouldn't Meade be at his, Jed's, mercy long enough to give him the upper hand? And would not any horse bolt with a stinging rain of pepper whipping into its nostrils and eyes?

Jed flung up his shoulders. Any horse would bolt. But that was nothing to what Danny Boy would do. The flick of a hazelnut twig on his flanks was enough to send his front hoofs pawing skyward and what would a handful of pepper flung straight into his face do?

"My horses will go all right," Jed said. "God willing, they can't go fast enough to take this devil away."

Meade's finger moved on his gun. "I'll not shoot," he said, after an instant. "I'm no good saddling a horse. Get busy, pardner. There'll be time enough to write off your score yet."

"I'll need a lantern," Jed reminded.

Chills ran down his back, the back Lawson Meade was staring at, as Jed stepped over to the shelf above the cookstove. Luckily the pepper box

was on the shelf with the lantern. Jed's big hand made a screen around the box and swept it to the base of the lantern. With the palm of his hand he lifted the lantern from the shelf.

"Funny way to pick a lantern up," Meade commented shortly.

Jed's heart was cold jelly. The lantern grazed his sweater on the side away from Meade's watchful glance. The pepper box went into his pocket instead of clattering to the floor as he feared it might.

"I'm not picking it up," Jed retorted. "I'm only dragging it down on the table to light it."

He knew his hand was shaking as it reached for the big box of safety matches. The glow he observed in Charles Coburn's eyes steadied him and the hand. Jed raised the glass globe, touched the match to the wick, and the wick licked it up in a yellow flame. He adjusted the globe.

"All set," he said.

Meade buttoned his jacket to the tips of his ears and pulled down his fur cap. His gun never wavered.

"All set," he repeated.

He motioned Jed ahead of him and paused on the threshold of the room to give him a mocking salute.

"When your arm gets tired, trooper, put it down," he taunted.

Coburn smiled. "I like reaching for heaven," he answered. "It's only guys who reach for hell that come to grief."

The door banged behind Jed and Meade. The wind shrieked in their ears and battered at their legs. The lantern was less than a pale yellow star in the blanket of swirling snow. They bumped against the barn before they saw it and fumbled their way to the door. Jed got the door open, and they ducked inside.

Dolly Gray whinnied happily, and

Danny Boy sent up a trumpeting snort.

"That's my horse," Meade announced. "That last one. There's smoke in its nostrils."

"You can't have him," Jed said. "He's the best in this neck of the woods, and you'll never send him back. The little mare will take you where you're going."

He waited a breathless minute. He wanted Meade to choose Danny Boy and stick to his choice, but he recognized Meade's type too well to give in readily to his first demand. If he saddled Danny Boy too eagerly, Meade would probably change his mind and decide on Dolly Gray. He might yet. Jed's blood was an icicle extending the whole length of his body.

"I'll ride the stallion," Meade said. "And take no back talk from you."

Jed set the lantern down. He shivered, and blew on his fingers, thrusting them into his sweater pockets as if for warmth. The ruse gave him the opportunity to get at the pepper container. With a finger nail he worked the tin slide apart and the pungent spice flowed over his hand and half filled the shallow pocket.

Danny Boy flung up his head when Jed went into the stall. He didn't jerk away when Jed caught his halter rope and backed him out into the wider spaces of the barn. But restlessly his head kept whipping up and his feet pawing the floor.

"Steady! Steady, old boy," Jed calmed him.

Jed unhooked Stark's saddle from the wall and flung it over Danny Boy's back. Only yesterday he had watched Stark perform the simple act never dreaming that Stark couldn't do it again. Tears stung Jed's eyes as he tightened the

cinches. He gripped Danny Boy's reins and nodded to Meade.

"Ready," he said snappishly.

Meade advanced, his eyes black sparks in the dusk of the barn. "No monkey business," he advised. "I can find any target I'm after from an open parachute."

Danny Boy leaped when the unwelcome rider vaulted into the saddle, when his hoofs struck the floor again he was vibrating like an electric current.

"He *is* good," Meade commented, grasping the reins. "Open the door."

Jed stepped ahead. He had no intention of opening the door and permitting Lawson Meade to leap out into the soft snow where no fall would hurt him. Futilely he tugged at the cross bar. He was afraid his heart was beating in his face when he turned.

"The damn thing's stuck," he said. "I'll have to find an iron bar or something to pry it up."

Meade grew alert in the saddle. One hand clutched the reins; the other the gun.

"Remember what I said about the parachute," he recalled. "And don't forget to drop the bar before I pass you."

"I wouldn't strike that horse for ten of you," Jed retorted, "if that's what's on your mind."

Jed's hand was in his sweater pocket as his eyes roamed the walls apparently in search of an instrument that would act as a lever for the recalcitrant bolt. He paused at Danny Boy's stall, his shoulder on a level with Danny Boy's head. He whirled suddenly, hurling a smarting black shower full into the animal's eyes and nose; then, in a split second, he was flat on his stomach in the stall.

A piercing whinny tore at the

rafters and a peal of thunder shook the roof and walls. It was thunder from Danny Boy's flying heels, Jed knew. He lifted a cautious head and was in time to witness the reins being torn from Lawson Meade's frantic fingers and to see him go hurtling from Danny Boy's back. He could hear the sickish thud of his striking body, then a sound that sickened him. The crunch of bones beneath trampling hoofs. Lawson Meade screamed. He screamed again. After that a terrible stillness seemed to eddy through the barn.

Jed caught at the side of the stall and helped himself to his feet. He darted out of the stall, miraculously avoiding Danny Boy's thrashing hoofs.

"Danny Boy," he called softly. "Danny Boy!"

The pointed ears pricked up; the whipping mane fell back. Jed laid a hand on a quivering flank, and the horse grew quiet. Jed unsaddled it and led it into its stall. Water was streaming from Danny Boy's eyes; his head kept twitching; but there was no danger of the sharp hoofs harming Jed. Jed stroked Danny Boy's damp nose, making sure he was using the hand that had not come in contact with the pepper.

"Sorry, old fellow," he said. "It was cruel, but we had to come across for Stark."

Danny Boy whinnied at the mention of the beloved name. Jed slipped the horse's halter over a hook by the feed box. It would not do for him to be wandering out of his stall stepping on things that lay on the barn floor. Dolly Gray's head poked over the division board and nuzzled onto Jed's shoulder. He gave her a friendly pat and eased out of Danny Boy's stall. He paused at a twisted heap on the outer floor.

It made him sick to do it, but he dropped to his knees and turned the battered bundle of clothes, flesh, and



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blood over. It helped to remember that the other man who had lately worn that trooper's uniform had been left by the side of a road no prettier sight than the one who was wearing it then. Jed's fingers felt for a pulse beat in an inert wrist, for a heart throb beneath the stolen leather jacket. Lawson Meade was dead. Jed had not expected the outcome to be that. The most he hoped for was that Danny Boy would throw his mount and stun him so that he, Jed, could get his guns.

Jed turned the body on its back, keeping his glance away from the horrible thing that such a short time ago had been a leering face. He removed the guns from their holsters and went through the man's pockets. He found what he sought. The keys

to the handcuffs and Stark Cameron's roll of bills. The latter belonged to the girl who was waiting for Stark, and Jed was going to see that she got it.

He picked up the lantern, opened the door, and shouldered his way into the howling storm. Trooper Coburn was anxiously watching the cabin door. Jed flung the guns onto the table.

"Maybe you better take a horse, too, when you go for the coroner," he said. "But Danny Boy deserves a rest."

He inserted the key in the lock of the handcuff manacled Coburn's arm to the shelf. The handcuff parted and Coburn rubbed his wrist.

"It's a medal Danny Boy deserves," he said.

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IN order to finance the delivery of her baby, Mrs. Louise Rostland, a twenty-three-year-old New York City woman, stole two furs valued at five hundred dollars from the home in which she had found employment as a domestic, after the death of her husband a few months previously.

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SCENE ON THE PLANET EARTH A.D. 6939



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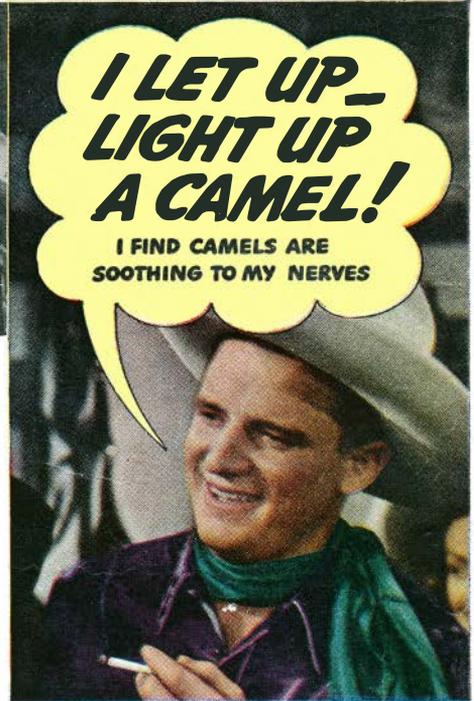
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