The World's Leading Mystery Maga

ELLERY QUEEN'S Mystery Magazine

beginning a brilliant NEW series by VICTOR CANNING

FEBRUARY 1962

35c.

Hugh Pentecost
Hover Through the Fog

Ross Macdonald
Bring the Killer to Justice

Julian Symons
Strolling in the Square One Day

Robert L. Fish
Adventure of the Double-Bogey Man

Henry Slesar
Museum Piece

Edgar A. Poe
Diddling

Juan Page
Fair Game

A DAVIS PUBLICATION

The World's Leading Mystery Magazine

ELLERY QUEEN'S
Mystery Magazine

***including* BLACK MASK MAGAZINE**

10 editions; U.S., Australia, Dutch, England, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Portuguese

PUBLISHER: *B. G. Davis* EDITOR: *Ellery Queen*

Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine, Vol. 39, No. 2, Whole No. 219, FEB., 1962, Published monthly by Davis Publications, Inc. at 35¢ a copy. Annual subscription $4.00 in U.S.A. and possessions and Canada; $5.00 in the Pan American Union; $5.00 in all other countries. Publication Office, 10 Ferry St., Concord, N. H. Editorial and General offices, 505 Park Ave., New York 22, N. Y. Change of address notices, undeliverable copies, orders for subscriptions, and other mail items are to be sent to 505 Park Ave., New York 22, N. Y. Second-Class postage paid at Concord, N. H.

JOEL DAVIS, *Assistant Publisher* PAUL W. FAIRMAN, *Managing Editor*
MELVIN FLAMM, *Business Manager* CONSTANCE DI RIENZO, *Executive Editorial Secretary*
FRANK TAGGART, *Art Director*

50 NOW ONLY $5.95 BEST SELLING MYSTERIES

If Mystery Is Your Oyster,
Feast On 50 Best Sellers!

OFFER GOOD UNTIL JUNE 1, 1962

- ☐ 956 **Mrs. McGinty Dead,** Agatha Christie
- ☐ 1010 **The D.A. Takes a Chance** Erle Stanley Gardner
- ☐ 1013 **Tales for Salesmen** Dr. Francis Leo Golden
- ☐ 1150 **The Man on the Couch and Other Cartoons,** Mischa Richter
- ☐ 1206 **The Murder of the Missing Link** Vercors
- ☐ 1214 **Dragnet: The Case of the Crime King,** Richard Deming
- ☐ 1250 **The Killer Is Mine,** Talmage Powell
- ☐ 2088 **The ABC Murders,** Agatha Christie
- ☐ 2106 **The Case of the Lucky Legs** Erle Stanley Gardner
- ☐ 6005 **The Case of the Rolling Bones** Erle Stanley Gardner
- ☐ 6007 **The Case of the Stuttering Bishop,** Erle Stanley Gardner
- ☐ 6027 **The Case of the Lonely Heiress** Erle Stanley Gardner
- ☐ 6030 **Marked for Murder** John Ross Macdonald
- ☐ 6038 **Murder on My Street** Edwin Lanham
- ☐ 6040 **The Case of the Calendar Girl** Erle Stanley Gardner
- ☐ 6044 **The Case of the Fiery Fingers** Erle Stanley Gardner
- ☐ 6048 **Price Tag for Murder,** Spencer Dean
- ☐ 6067 **The Case of the Baited Hook** Erle Stanley Gardner
- ☐ 6075 **Killer on the Turnpike** William P. McGivern
- ☐ C•282 **The Case of the Glamorous Ghost,** Erle Stanley Gardner
- ☐ C•297 **The Case of the Nervous Accomplice,** Erle Stanley Gardner
- ☐ C•307 **The Clue of the Forgotten Murder,** Erle Stanley Gardner
- ☐ C•377 **The Case of the Screaming Woman,** Erle Stanley Gardner
- ☐ C•382 **The Seventh Man,** Max Brand
- ☐ C•392 **The Big Bankroll,** Katcher
- ☐ C•395 **Murder in the Calais Coach** Agatha Christie
- ☐ C•397 **Easy to Kill,** Agatha Christie
- ☐ C•426 **Too Many Ghosts,** Paul Gallico
- ☐ M•3055 **The Con Man,** McBain
- ☐ M•3089 **The Brave, Bad Girls,** Dewey
- ☐ M•3093 **Unarmed Killer,** Harrison
- ☐ M•3108 **Killer's Choice,** McBain
- ☐ M•3111 **The Best from "Manhunt,"** Scott and Sidney Meredith, eds.
- ☐ M•3122 **The Velvet Ape,** David C. Holmes
- ☐ M•4096 **Murder of a Wife,** James A. Howard
- ☐ M•4118 **The D.A.'s Man,** Danforth and Horan
- ☐ M•4121 **The Forbidden Read,** Canning
- ☐ M•4150 **Killers Wedge,** McBain
- ☐ M•4167 **The Chinese Box,** Eyre
- ☐ M•3051 **F.O.B. Murder** Hitchens and Hitchens
- ☐ M•3032 **The Mean Streets,** Dewey
- ☐ M•3013 **Massacre Trail,** Appell
- ☐ M•3009 **Honky-Tonk Woman,** Lomax
- ☐ M•3008 **Horsethief Crossing,** Hopkins
- ☐ M•3005 **Tender to Danger,** Reed
- ☐ C•376 **The Case of the Dubious Bridegroom,** Erle Stanley Gardner
- ☐ C•378 **The Case of the Substitute Face** Erle Stanley Gardner
- ☐ C•379 **The Case of the Perjured Parrot** Erle Stanley Gardner
- ☐ C•380 **The Case of the Borrowed Brunette,** Erle Stanley Gardner
- ☐ C•399 **Voices in the House,** Pearl S. Buck

MYSTERY POCKET CLUB February 1962
c/o E.Q.M.M.
505 Park Avenue
New York 22, N.Y. (262)

I enclose_____($5.95 for each set of 50 books) which will be sent to me prepaid. (Please send check or money order.) I understand that if I am not completely satisfied I may return my books within 14 days for a complete refund.

NAME_____

STREET_____

CITY_____ZONE_____

STATE_____

Beginning a brand-new series by Victor Canning—one of the fastest rising stars in the firmament of English mystery writers . . . This new series carries on that grand tradition of detective short stories which includes Carter Dickson's (John Dickson Carr's) Department of Queer Complaints and Roy Vickers' Department of Dead Ends. Now meet, for the first time in print in the United States—

THE DEPARTMENT OF PATTERNS

The Sunday Fishing Club

by VICTOR CANNING

THE DEPARTMENT OF PATTERNS has its headquarters in a rather shabby Eighteenth Century building on the Quai d'Orsay. Only the two top floors belong to the Department and it houses about a dozen people, including six young men like myself—and by that I mean young men with a law degree who intend to make the judicature or the police their career.

It is considered a great honor to be chosen to work in the Department of Patterns. There are four permanent heads of subdepartments—these subdepartments are separately responsible for civil, military, criminal, and international affairs; and there is the Chief of the Department himself—Monsieur Alphonse Grand.

Papa Grand.

Papa Grand has a little attic room all to himself with a tiny window that looks out over the Seine. One seldom sees him—but he is always available if one has a good reason to disturb him. But the reason must be impeccable.

We are encouraged, most stringently, to pursue our own lines of investigation, seek out our own patterns, and trouble Papa Grand only when we need his direct authority or advice. I should mention that the Department of Patterns does not come under the jurisdiction of the police or of the armed forces or of any Ministry. It is a sort of love-child of them all, regarded with affection but never openly acknowledged. Its most important function—or characteristic—is that it has time to pursue all those unresolved trails, murders, incidents, accidents, and other inexplicable phenomena which the regular authorities shelve after a few months if no results are forthcoming.

Perhaps the best way to explain the Department's work would be to give you an actual example—one,

of course, in which I was involved —indeed, in which I was successfully concerned. It was also the first pattern formulated by me which led to a definite resolution. I am well aware that I may sound a little pompous. If so, I apologize, but unfortunately I cannot help my manner.

However, to continue: for some weeks I had been making a small research into the number of unsolved murders of males between the ages of thirty and fifty over the last ten years—in the hope, of course, that some pattern would evolve. That is how we work—completely at random. One takes any starting point, and by analysis, statistic sample, and so on, hopes that something will turn up. Over a number of years the Department of Patterns has had a percentage of success of about ten out of every hundred patterns evolved—a much higher proportion than it seems.

However, to get back to this particular pattern of mine: I discovered that there had been almost fifty such cases in France, and in breaking down the mode of murder employed I found that twenty of them had been committed by a shooting of some sort. Of course, I had subjected this group of twenty to the elementary test set out in the Department's *Manual of Pattern Making*—an extraordinary work compiled by Papa Grand—and of which no single copy (there are only five) is ever allowed to leave the building. The test, of course, was to have the appropriate police authorities of the various departments where the murders had occurred send to me the bullets which had been extracted from the victims —so that I could have them examined by a ballistics expert to check whether more than one of them had been fired from the same revolver. Most murders, of course, are done by .38, .32, and .22 revolvers or by .25 automatic pistols.

Well, all the bullets examined had come from different firearms, but while I was waiting for the expert's report I went through each police dossier of these twenty murders and in seven of them a most extraordinary phenomenon came to light. In fact, it was the first time it had ever happened and subsequently, I am proud to say, Papa Grand had it incorporated as an additional pattern test in the Manual. Of all the young men who have worked at the Department I am the only one ever to be directly responsible for an amendment to the Manual.

I went at once to see Papa Grand. He was sitting at his little table by the window with a pair of field glasses to his eyes. Without turning or lowering his glasses, he said, "Who is it? Either Mortadel or Renoblier—you both have the same knock and you both shut the door as though you were scared of waking someone."

"Renoblier, *patron*."

"Learn to shut a door firmly,

with decision, Renoblier. It will give you a feeling of authority. And now tell me why should a man below the Pont Solferino be fishing without any bait on his line?"

"It is simple, *patron*: many of the men who fish the Seine in Paris do not put bait on their line. They have nothing to do. They just like to sit, but merely to sit in a great city gives one the appearance of idleness. But to sit with a rod in one's hand gives a man an ostensible occupation, which covers his desire simply to sit and do nothing."

He lowered his glasses and swiveled round in his chair. He looked at me hard for a moment and then smiled. Very softly he said, "Correct, Renoblier, correct. God help the defense when you eventually prosecute."

He pulled out a snuff box, tapped it sharply, and took two pinches. I knew better than to move or say anything while this ritual proceeded. Papa Grand was a hale man, over sixty, with a fresh Norman complexion, a little veined from wine, white hair, and bright, crystal-clear blue eyes. He always wore a high, old-fashioned stiff collar and when his head moved, the loose folds under his chin rubbed against the collar making a small brisk sound. His right hand had the middle finger missing and the skin of the back of the hand was badly and anciently scarred. No one had ever dared to inquire how this had happened.

His snuff taken, he said, "Proceed, Renoblier."

I took the piece of paper on which I had made my notes from my pocket and read: "Pierre Appell, murdered, Paris, 20th September, 1952. Olivier Cour, murdered, Paris, 20th September, 1953. Raoul Duban, murdered, Lyons, 20th September, 1954. Roget Gervaine, murdered, Boulogne, 20th September, 1955. Andre Godonne, murdered, Paris, 20th September, 1956. Manuel Lardennois, murdered, Vichy, 20th September, 1957. All seven were killed by revolver shots from different guns. In no case was anyone ever apprehended on suspicion or any arrest or conviction made. All seven cases are still unsolved. It is now, *patron,* the 30th September, 1958. Moreover, all these men were in the age group of thirty to fifty. Police records show that there were two murders reported on the 20th of September this year. One was that of a woman in Cannes, and the other of a Jean Baptiste Manin at Biarritz. So far the police have no clues to the murderer. It is a fascinating date pattern."

Papa Grand said nothing for a while. He sat with his elbows on his table, rubbing his big hands across his chin. His eyes closed and one might have imagined he had gone to sleep.

Then his eyes opened suddenly and he said with that smile of his which could be a danger signal to the imprudent, "It is not only a

fascinating date pattern, Renoblier, but as you are well aware and perhaps half hope I won't be, it is a fascinating alphabetical pattern. Appell, Cour, Duban, Gervaine, and so on. What time of day were they shot?"

"All within the bracket 1600 hours to 2000 hours."

"What sort of occupations did they have?"

"All tradesmen, artisans—no professional men. All were married, except Duban."

"What research have you done on them?"

"None, *patron,* except the facts available in the police dossiers. There is no apparent link there."

"Seven men, eh? Renoblier, if you took any random group of eight men and arranged their names alphabetically, how far down, statistically, would you expect M to come?"

"I do not know, *patron."* It was no good guessing with Papa Grand.

"And you would be correct not to know, Renoblier. Only God could tell. But there may be other men left, also marked for murder. You wish my permission to proceed?"

"Yes, *patron."*

"You have it. But you will inform the Sûreté of the facts immediately and call on them for assistance only if it is absolutely necessary. They are too busy to be bothered with this yet. For your own assistance I advise you to reread the section *Group Associations, Male* in the Manual before you start, and also to remember that a motive for murder which persists over years usually develops into a mania. Maniacs, I need hardly say, are dangerous and wear no labels. I would be sorry to have to attend your funeral, Renoblier, though I have no doubt you would carry it off with great pomp and dignity. Good luck, my son, and come to me when you need to."

The next day, confining myself to Paris, and beginning at the head of the list, using the police dossiers for the addresses, I went to work.

Veuve Appell had not married again. She lived just off the Avenue des Ternes and was the concierge of a block of flats. Her husband had been a carpenter. She was a shrewd and vigorous woman who answered my questions frankly. I had decided, since Papa Grand would not have mentioned Group Associations idly, to follow that line. Her husband had belonged to no clubs which she could remember. Outside his work, he had few activities.

"At the week-end he would go off fishing and usually come back drunk—so much so that sometimes he could not work until a Tuesday. I am better off without him."

When I read her the list of other names, none of them meant anything to her. I tried her on all the groupings I could think of, but without success.

Madame Cour had become Madame Brunois and she now helped her new husband run a small tourist souvenir stall near Notre Dame. With her it was much the same. Her husband had been an employee on the Metro. Apart from his work he had had few outside activities. He collected stamps and he was the domino champion at the local bistro. She herself had worked at a hotel as a maid while he had been alive and this had kept her away from the house much. At weekends she had seen little of him and had no idea what he did, except that when she got back late at night from the hotel he was usually home and comfortably in bed.

"Did he drink?"

"As much as he could afford."

I had the impression that even in those days the present Monsieur Brunois had been around and that Madame's week-end work could have been an excuse to get away from her husband to spend time with her lover. She too did not recognize any of the other names on the list.

With Madame Godonne the picture suddenly changed. She was quite different from the other two women. She now ran the small bakery which her husband had started and clearly had been much in love with him.

"He had his faults, monsieur. He used to drink a little too much at times. But why should he not since he worked so hard all the week? On a Sunday he relaxed and would go off all day fishing and come back drunk."

"Fishing?"

"Yes, monsieur. He was mad about fishing."

I read the list of names for her and she recognized two of them, not as people she knew but as people she had heard her husband talk about. And then, to my astonishment, she went up to her bedroom and brought down a small, tattered, cheap exercise book.

"I have never bothered with this, monsieur. All his things I have kept as they were, but this might help."

It did. On the cover was written the title: *Club de Pêche de Dimanche*. Inside was a list of names of club members and the book recorded their Sunday meetings during the season, the catches they made, and the various levies paid by them for the hire of boats and cost of lunches; it also contained the minutes of their one yearly meeting when they elected a new President and held a small annual dinner at a restaurant in the Boulevard des Capucines.

There it was, straight from Papa Grand's Manual. *Men are held in the bond of a small group, not by their affection for one another usually, but by their mutual passion for some pursuit. Wartime associations die, school amities wither, but a golf or a bridge four may last a lifetime.*

I took the book away with me for

study. There were nine names in it —two more than the seven of the murder pattern which had first caught my interest. These two were a Marc Acrut and a Philippe Vandrand. On inquiry I found that Acrut had been killed on the 20th of September 1951—thought not by a shot from a gun. Of the Sunday fishing club's nine members, only Vandrand remained alive—clearly thanks to his alphabetical position on the list. Whether he lived for another year now depended on me.

The club, I learned, had been formed in 1948 out of the idle association of a group of fishermen who happened by chance to use the same stretch of the Seine near Villeneuve each week-end. It had been their custom, individually, to go in the evening to a small riverside café. They had met, nine fishermen, and the club had been formed.

But the curious thing was that in the notebook itself there was a record of the dissolving of the club. The minutes were there for a day in October 1950. The minutes simply stated that the club was being dissolved, and immediately underneath the last entry in the books was written: *The remaining funds of the club plus a levy on each member of five hundred francs to be used for the purchase of a wreath to be placed on the grave of Mademoiselle Yveton.*

The investigation immediately following these discoveries was not of great difficulty. We, in the Department of Patterns, had every facility we needed. We could telephone a police sergeant in the most remote village of France, announce "Department of Patterns," and receive instant attention. All files, all records were promptly opened to us. But it was three days before I decided that I could safely approach Papa Grand again. It would have been useless to face him with any aspect of research not fully uncovered.

I found him sitting at his window table with a dozen pepper mills all of the same size and shape before him; from each he was grinding a little black pepper onto separate sheets of paper. Without looking up, he said, "Renoblier?"

"Yes, *patron.*"

"I gave you six days. You have made it in five. Good. How are your seven mysterious victims doing?"

"There are nine, *patron.*"

I proceeded very carefully to tell him all I had learned, finishing, "It is clear, *patron,* that in some way this fishing club became involved in a revenge pattern. On the 17th of September, 1950, which was a Sunday, they were all returning to Villeneuve in a motor launch they had hired for the day's fishing. There was a thickish evening mist on the river and they were all more or less drunk. They ran down a small rowing boat in which there were two persons. One of them was a Mademoiselle Yveton. She was drowned. So was her companion, a

man. But his body was not recovered from the river until a month later and by then it was unrecognizable. Nobody knew him. At the inquest a verdict of accidental death was given."

"Have you made any contact with the Yveton family?"

"No, *patron*. Monsieur Paul Yveton is a member of the House of Deputies. It would be outside my authority to have done anything without—"

"Quite. He is also, I may tell you, a very well-known collector of firearms. Each man was shot from a different calibre weapon. Except Acrut. Tell me about him again. This Acrut. He interests me."

I told him. Acrut was a gardener and he was the only one of the Club de Pêche de Dimanche who had been permanently affected by the tragedy. He had been admitted to an asylum some months afterward at Soissons. Each afternoon he worked from four until six in the solitary greenhouse the asylum possessed. It stood in a walled garden alongside the main buildings of the asylum, and the main buildings themselves were surrounded at a distance of about a hundred and fifty yards from the house by a tall brick wall about thirty feet high and topped by broken glass and a cheval-de-frise.

On the 20th of September 1951, while he was working alone, two hand grenades had exploded one after the other in the greenhouse and killed him. Where the grenades had come from no one knew. The walled garden had been empty except for Acrut. Several keepers testified—it had been raining at the time—that no unauthorized persons had been within the asylum walls, and no inmates, except Acrut, had been out of the house.

The grounds of the asylum were surrounded by fields in which there had been farm workers. Their testimony was positive that only two explosions had been heard—those of the grenades. If they had been cup grenades fired from a special rifle outside the grounds, the noise of the rifle firing would certainly have been heard first.

"Interesting," Papa Grand said when I had finished. "What now?"

"I suggest, *patron,* that someone should interview Deputy Yveton. And also that it might be interesting to inspect his collection of weapons."

"Good. You shall do that."

"Me, *patron?"*

"Why not? He is only a Deputy, not the President of France. Go, Renoblier, and beard the Deputy. But—" He paused, his blue eyes firmly on me.

"Yes, *patron?"*

"Consider some things. The river accident did not take place on the 20th of September. It occurred three days before—on the 17th. But every revenge killing—if we may call it that for convenience—has taken place on the 20th. Consider that.

Also tell me, have you ever been to the Basses Pyrénées, to Biarritz, or to St. Jean de Luz?"

"No, *patron*. I always go to Bordighera."

"A pity. You are too young to become so settled in your habits. Also," he smiled, "give Yveton my kind regards. We were at the Sorbonne together and elsewhere." Just for a moment I thought that he looked down at his right hand, but I could not be sure.

Paul Yveton was charming, helpful, and friendly. He lived in a villa outside Villeneuve and quite close to the river. I was shown up to his bedroom by his housekeeper—Yveton was a widower of long standing—who explained that the Deputy had been in bed for two days with a cold.

He lay in bed, a big, white-haired man, rather like the *patron* in a way, wearing a gold dressing gown with clearly no pajamas underneath for his chest was naked where the gown fell apart. The room was stiflingly hot from a large fire, and the Deputy was smoking a cigar.

I explained to him most explicitly what I had been doing and he showed the greatest interest. He spoke too of his only daughter, Marcelle Yveton, quite frankly.

"We never did get on, monsieur. She was wild and headstrong and it was my duty to curb her, to protect her from her own instincts. I loved her deeply but she was not willing to be loved unless I always gave her her own way. You must understand that at the time of the accident she was within a few days of her twenty-first birthday. On that day she would have come into a considerable fortune from her mother. But there was a clause in her inheritance deeds which expressly stated—you see her mother knew her nature, too, and sought even after her passing to protect Marcelle from herself—that should she marry without my consent before she was twenty-one she would forfeit her inheritance and it would revert to me."

"And did she ever wish to do this, Monsieur?"

"She did. A year before she was twenty-one she announced that she had fallen in love and wished to marry. I told you she was a girl of highly individualistic ways. I well remember her approach to me in this matter. She had met and known for sometime, she said, a good, honest man who loved her as she loved him. But he was not of her class. His name was unimportant. Would I give her permission to marry? Naturally, I refused. She might love him, and he might be a good man, but I wished to know his name. Also, to be frank, I did not wish her to marry out of her class. These unions do not last.

"She refused to tell me the man's name and simply announced that she would wait until she was twenty-one and no longer needed my

consent. Privately, I hoped that by the end of the year she would have changed her mind. But she did not. And now, Monsieur Renoblier, I will tell you something which I have always kept to myself, but since you are from Papa Grand I am willing to make it known. When she was drowned she was already on her way out of my life, and the man with her was to become her husband immediately after her birthday. She left me a note in her room telling me this, but she still did not reveal the man's name. He died with her, of course, and was never identified. Is there any more I can do to help you?"

"Monsieur, you have been most kind. I hesitate to impose myself further on your good nature, but there is one thing. I should like permission to inspect your collection of firearms and, if necessary, take some of them away with me."

He frowned and for the first time I sensed the weight he could bring to bear on people. Then with a shrug he said, "If you must." And then with a smile that dispelled all his ill-humor he went on, "It is an uncomfortable train ride back to Paris. I am bedridden, you see, so I will send you back by my car. I do not need it—No, no, I insist."

Thanks to Deputy Yveton's car and chauffeur, I was back in Paris just after noon. I immediately took the firearms to the ballistics laboratory at the Sûreté and got an immediate test made on them. The results were so confirmative that I did not bother with lunch but went at once to see Papa Grand.

I was unlucky, however. Papa Grand was out and did not return until four o'clock. It was with considerable impatience that I managed to pass the time waiting for him. There was no hurry, of course —only my natural desire to prove my ability as soon as possible to my *patron.*

When I finally entered his room he looked up from his window seat and said, "Ah, Renoblier, what is this I see on your face? The flush of the successful hunter, the *elan* of the scientist whose test tubes have at last given up the sweet distillation of a perfect formula?"

"Patron, with some modesty—for you have helped me enormously—I think that may be so."

"Good. Now then let us have the answers. First the discrepancy between the date of Mademoiselle Yveton's death and the date of the revenge killings?"

"The 20th of September is the anniversary of her birthday. A significant date." I went on to tell him the details of Marcelle Yveton's inheritance and her interrupted elopement with the unknown man who had shared her fate.

"I see," said Papa Grand. "And the actual killings?"

"All done with different revolvers or pistols *from Yveton's collection*—the ballistic people matched them two hours ago."

"All," said Papa Grand, "except that of—" He paused to take a pinch of snuff"—except that of the gardener, Acrut."

"Quite, *patron.*" I smiled to myself. "But I pondered your comment about the Basses Pyrénées and I came to the conclusion that there were only two types of people who would have had any chance of hurling hand grenades a hundred and fifty yards over high walls with accuracy—the deadly accuracy needed to kill Acrut. In England it would be a professional cricketer—"

"A most tedious game," said Papa Grand.

"But this is France. The only comparable person would be a pelota player. To a skilled pelota player with a basketwork glove it would be child's-play. Deputy Yveton was born at St. Jean de Luz and in his youth was a skilled pelota player."

"And where was he on the dates on which the killings took place?"

"Naturally, *patron,* I took the elementary steps of acquainting myself with the details of his household. I was driven back to Paris in his car and the chauffeur was quite talkative. It is a simple household—only the chauffeur and the housekeeper. The housekeeper goes off duty at five o'clock, unless Yveton is entertaining. Normally after that hour if he wants anything he rings through to the chauffeur's bachelor quarters over the garage. I learned that Yveton was in the neighborhood of Soissons on the 20th of September 1951, in Paris on the relevant dates, at Lyons in 1954, and so on right through the list."

"Excellent, Renoblier. But why should the pelota-grenade method have been used in 1950?"

"Because, *patron,* to get inside the asylum would have meant signing the visitor's book."

"Sound, very sound, Renoblier. But have you given sufficient attention to the question of motive? Sometimes in the excitement of putting a jigsaw puzzle together one overlooks the final picture."

"Not at all, *patron,* if I may say so. Yveton was at odds with his daughter, it is true. But by his own admission he had a deep love for her, wanted to protect and save her from herself. Her death must have been a great blow to him. But most important, he is one of the few deputies who has taken an almost fanatical stand against *L'ivresse publique.* He wants much stricter drinking laws for this country. That his daughter met her death because of the drunken bêtise of a handful of fisherman could have decided him on this course of revenge. It has become a mania with him. He decided to kill these drunken fishermen one by one."

I stood there awaiting his response and, I confess, I was a little nervous. One does not arrive every day at the point of instigating the arrest of a Deputy of France. No one would ever know of my part in the affair, of course, but the honor

would be there, the satisfaction of unearthing an obscure truth.

Papa Grand put out his hand and let it rest on the telephone. "You want me to ask the Sûreté to make an arrest?"

"Yes, *patron.* Of Deputy Yveton."

He picked up the telephone and in a few seconds had arranged for his old friend, Inspector Offiard, to take him out to Villeneuve.

"You will come with us, Renoblier. It is only just that you be present at the finish."

We drove in a police car to Villeneuve and the Yveton villa. It was past six when we got there and since we knew that the housekeeper had gone home, Papa Grand, presuming on his friendship with Yveton, pushed open the hall door and we went directly up to the bedroom.

I shall never forget the moment of opening the bedroom door. Papa Grand stood ahead of us, the door swinging in on his knock.

Yveton was sitting up in bed, a cigar in his left hand. A few feet from the bed stood the chauffeur who had driven me to Paris, a tall, dark-haired man of about thirty-five, with a brown, rather handsome face. He turned toward us—and I saw his eyes blazing. In his hand he held a pistol, a "Manhurin" Walther .22. It is curious how in moments of stress one notices little things.

Not a word was said for almost a minute, and then Yveton from the bed remarked calmly, "Papa Grand, *mon vieux copain,* you come at a moment when I need an advocate. My chauffeur here, Delabut, has decided to leave my service and proposes to kill me before doing so."

There was a smile on Yveton's face which I envied. How could a man be so brave?

Delabut half turned to Papa Grand and said harshly, "Keep back. One move—just one move . . . don't force me, I have nothing against you."

He began to edge toward the window which stood close to the head of the bed and the pistol now covered Yveton. It was clear he meant to kill his master and then leap for the window.

Papa Grand shrugged eloquently; then beginning to walk toward Delabut he said, "You are a fool, Delabut. You should have taken your disappointments like a man. Now, you have become an animal."

"Get back!" Delabut almost screamed the words, waving his pistol hand between Papa Grand and Yveton. And in that second of movement Papa Grand jumped. His hand came down on Delabut's wrist, grasping at it. The pistol fired three times.

As Inspector Offiard ran past me to Papa Grand's assistance I saw the mirror on the dressing table beyond the bed shatter and the bottles on the table splinter. Then—my reactions had not been so quick

as the others,—I joined Offiard and Papa Grand and we soon had Delabut under control.

Never shall I forget how Papa Grand patiently explained everything to me later in his little attic office.

"Ah, my young Renoblier," he said, shaking his head, "you have done well—better than many could do. But you were wrong. How could you know you were wrong? You have to sit in my window seat as long as I have. Then one gets a wider view."

"But, *patron . . . ?*"

Papa Grand shook his head again. "Deputy Yveton was in the first World War. How could you know that he was gassed and the effect of the gas was to debilitate the nerves and muscles of his right arm? One would not notice it looking at him—he hides it very well. But I know him. I know, too, of his youthful pelota playing. This he did right-handed. But that is nothing—one could excuse that. Such mistakes are part of the pattern of all of us.

"But you should have questioned more deeply the simple fact that his daughter would not reveal to him the name of the man she wished to marry, the man of humble station. Why should she not? What is in a name? Nothing, Renoblier. Yet everything, *if it is the name of a young chauffeur who has been with the family for years,* and whom, probably, Marcelle had loved since she was an impressionable schoolgirl. To name ***him*** would have been to have him dismissed—and then they would have been parted for the one year left to her twenty-first birthday. She could not bear such a parting. So, just before her birthday came, she eloped with this man, and when her birthday would come, they would be married. But what happened, Renoblier? Mitigate your error."

I blushed at my stupidity.

"Of course, *patron,* the chauffeur. He too must have come from St. Jean de Luz—with the Yveton family. Most certainly he too is a pelota player. And of course he would have access to Yveton's armory. They were both run down by the launch as they left the villa. But he was not drowned. He came ashore, unseen, still near the villa. He went immediately back to his quarters and took up his job again—as chauffeur. And the man's body that was found later—the Seine is always giving up unidentifiable bodies."

"Correct, Renoblier. And this chauffeur who drove you back to Paris has each year avenged himself for the loss of love and—for he is only human—the loss of a fortune. But do not fret about it, Renoblier. We all make mistakes—you made one in wanting to arrest the Deputy, but I made much bigger ones. You see, Delabut was no fool. Your visit to Yveton and your questions in the car going back to Paris

must have made Delabut aware that his deadly game was almost over. I guessed he might realize this, but I thought there was still time.

"But my biggest mistake was not to penetrate the full extent of the pattern. There were not just nine victims, ending alphabetically with Vandrand. The pattern was more classical, it was longer. Remember the children's traditional nursery song? Sometimes it is called "Ten Little Indians" or "Ten Little Pickaninnies" or "Ten Little Crows"—there are different versions in different countries. Ten—that was the true key to the pattern.

"So, my young Renoblier, when Delabut saw that his time was running out, he did the unexpected—he forsook the alphabetical part of his pattern and skipped Vandrand, the intended ninth victim, to kill the man he had left for the very end, the man he hated most, the man who had prevented his marriage—his intended tenth victim, Deputy Yveton."

And Papa Grand took out his snuff box, inhaled two large pinches, sneezed contentedly, and turned back to his eternal window overlooking the chimney pots above the Quai d'Orsay.

EDITORS' FILE CARD

AUTHOR:	**ROSS MACDONALD**
TITLE:	***Bring the Killer to Justice***
TYPE:	Detective Novelette
PRIVATE EYE:	Lew Archer
LOCALE:	Buena Vista Valley, California
TIME:	The Present
COMMENTS:	*A fine, restrained example of the current hard-boiled story—by the writer whom most critics have nominated as today's heir to the mantles of Hammett and Chandler . . .*

I WAS DREAMING about a hairless ape who lived in a cage by himself. His trouble was that people were always trying to get in. It kept him in a state of nervous tension. I came out of sleep sweating, aware that somebody was at the back door.

Crossing the cold kitchen linoleum in my bare feet, I saw first dawn at the window over the sink. Whoever it was on the back porch was tapping now, quietly and persistently. I unlocked the door and opened it.

A very large young man in dungarees loomed up against the gray light. His pale-blue eyes returned my questioning look, too steadily.

"Are you Mr. Lew Archer? This is the address my friend gave me."

"You have the right address. It's early for visiting."

"I know. It's inconsiderate of me to bother you like this. But I have so little time."

"To do what?"

"To straighten out my life, to make sense of it." He sounded very young. "I was told you make a business of investigating criminal activity."

A pre-breakfast client was the last thing I needed that morning. But the boy interested me. The odd formality of his speech didn't go with his faded work clothes, his mud-stained boots.

"This friend who referred you to me—do I know him?"

"I think so. I rather doubt he'd want me to use his name, under the circumstances. My own name is Carl Hellman. You may have heard of my father, Jeremiah Hellman. He used to be State Senator from Purissima."

I remembered the Senator's name from the obituary columns. "Didn't your father die about six months ago?"

"He didn't die. He was murdered. That's why I'm here."

"Maybe you better come in and tell me about it."

I let him into the kitchen and pulled out a chair for him. His clothes smelled of country and sour exhaustion. It struck me that they were the kind of clothes that men wear in prison. He moved with the awkward humility that men acquire there.

"Are you on the run, Carl?"

He hung his head. "Technically, I am. I took off from the state hospital last night."

"The state mental hospital?"

"Yes, but I'm not a mental case any more. I should have been discharged long ago. Only, my brother Jerry made them keep me there."

"How could your brother do that?"

"Political pull," he said darkly.

The melody was familiar. Mental patients were always blaming their incarceration on somebody else, preferably a close relative. I looked down at Carl Hellman's clipped blond head and tried to guess what was going on inside of it. Could be I had a tiger by the tail.

"Why were you in the hospital in the first place?"

"I'm not sure what the diagnosis was. I know I was disturbed when I went in. But that's all past."

"Are you certain?"

"You keep asking me questions about myself. You think I'm crazy, don't you?"

"It doesn't matter what I think. If you're as well as you say you are, this is no way to prove it. You ought to go back and get yourself checked out."

"But they'd never let me out, not now."

"They will when you're ready. I suggest you get a doctor to take you back. Do you have a personal doctor you can go to?"

He laughed harshly. "I wouldn't go back to Grantland if I were dying."

"Is Grantland your doctor?"

"Not any more, thank God. He's almost as bad as Jerry. Grantland was the one who signed my commitment papers, so they could lock me up and throw the key away. Yes, I know I blew my top when we found him in the bathtub. But they had no right to send me away like that. They didn't even let me go to his funeral."

"Your father's funeral?"

He nodded jerkily. "They didn't want me snooping. They got Dr. Grantland to make a false report on the cause of his death. They didn't even hold an inquest."

"Who are 'they'?" It was always a good question.

"My brother Jerry and his wife, Dr. Grantland, and probably the Sheriff, too. They're all part of the conspiracy."

I suspected that he was fantasying, but it was hard to tell. Like any other private investigator, I'd had to deal with my share of mental cases, but I was no expert. Sometimes even the experts had a hard time distinguishing between justified suspicions and paranoid ones.

I said as neutrally as possible, "Where did you get this information, Carl?"

"I have my sources. I promised not to divulge them."

"Have you talked to anyone else about it?"

"Just to Mildred, last time she vis-

ited me. Last Sunday. I couldn't say very much, with those hospital eavesdroppers around. I don't *know* very much, actually. I just got hold of the facts last week."

"In the hospital?"

He nodded tensely. His hands were clutching his knees.

"From another patient?"

"He's a patient, yes. That doesn't make him wrong. There's nothing the matter with his mind."

"Is that what he says?"

"The doctors say it, too. He's in for narcotics addiction."

"That hardly recommends him as a witness."

"All *right*." His eyes blazed electric-blue. He stood up suddenly, knocking over the kitchen chair he'd been sitting in. "You don't believe me. I'll find somebody who does."

"Wait a minute, Carl. Is Mildred your wife?"

"Yes."

"Do you mind if I talk to her?"

"What about?"

"Things in general. Your family. You."

"I don't object, if Mildred doesn't."

"Where can I find her?"

"She's staying with her mother in Purissima. They live at 220 Grant—but I'll show you, I'll come along."

"I don't think so. I'll make you a proposition, Carl. Let me take you back to the hospital. It's more or less on the way to Purissima. Then I'll talk to your wife, circulate generally, learn what I can. If I find any evidence that your brother's trying to cheat you, or that Dr. Grantland pitched any low curves, I'll do something about it."

"How do I know that?"

"Because I'm telling you. Now pick up the chair and sit down and I'll make us a cup of coffee before we get going."

He picked up the chair. I turned my back to him for the first time, and plugged in the coffeemaker.

The morning turned hot and bright as we drove up the valley. Carl Hellman had become calmer and more reasonable. I made the mistake, as it turned out, of encouraging him to talk about his wife.

"Mildred's been wonderful to me," he said, "much more wonderful than I deserve. She visited me every Sunday. She didn't miss a week in six months. It doesn't seem possible that she should still love me."

"Why not?"

"I've given her nothing but two years of misery. I had no right to marry her, or any other woman."

"She probably sees things differently."

"How could she, after all the mistakes I made?" His voice sank into bitter self-contempt. "She should have married one of the others, someone capable of looking after her. But I had to talk her into marrying me. She was so lovely. She still is lovely, in spite of the beating she's taken, from me and my rotten family."

"Forget about them for now."

"I can't forget about them. I keep remembering how they treated her—simply because she had no money in her family. I have to admit that father was fairly decent to her. But Jerry and Zinnie treated her like dirt, as if she was another one of the servants. The worst mistake I ever made was dragging her out to live on the ranch. We should have gone somewhere else to live."

"Why didn't you?"

"There were reasons that seemed very important at the time. Father had a serious heart condition, and he needed help in running the orange ranch. Jerry is above that sort of thing."

"What does your brother do?"

"He's what you might call a non-practising lawyer. His only real interest is growing cymbidium orchids. And stirring up trouble. Jerry was always making trouble between me and father. It wasn't too hard to do. Father never really liked me. Ever since my mother died—" He broke off suddenly.

"What happened to your mother?"

"I don't know. She died when I was very young, and I don't remember. When I tried to ask father, his face closed up like stone. It was one of the things I couldn't forgive him for. He never *told* me anything. I had to find out the facts of life from other people."

"The facts of life?"

"I don't mean sex. I was thinking of politics, for instance. Father was the political boss of the county, and it brought him in contact with some pretty shady characters. That was what our last big argument was about, the night he lost his life."

Carl was getting tense again. His words were coming faster and the thinking behind them seemed disorganized.

"Let it rest for now," I said.

He was quiet for a while. I was relieved when we came to the hospital turnoff. It led through an underpass onto a blacktop road which ran across flat fields, past a giant hedge of eucalyptus trees. The buildings of the hospital appeared on the horizon, in the gap between two hills.

Carl spoke in a voice that hummed like a stretched wire, "I have to say this, Mr. Archer. Words can kill. I don't know for certain whether I killed my father with my words. We had a terrible argument, and he died that same night. Dr. Grantland said it was a heart attack, brought on by over-excitement. I have to find out if he was telling the truth. It's the strain of not knowing that I can't stand. If father died of a heart attack, I'm no better than a murderer."

"That's stretching it, isn't it? Old men die every day."

He went on as if he hadn't heard me. "But if he was drowned in the bathtub, as I have every reason to believe, then someone else is the murderer. And Dr. Grantland is covering up for him."

I was almost certain now that these were paranoid delusions.

"That doesn't sound too likely, Carl. Why don't you think about something else for a change?"

"I can't!" he cried. "You've got to help me get at the truth. You promised—"

He took hold of my right elbow. The car veered onto the shoulder, sliding in gravel as I stamped on the brake pedal. It came to a stop at a tilt in the shallow ditch.

"That wasn't very smart."

Carl didn't seem to care what had happened. "You've got to believe me. Somebody's got to believe me."

"You don't believe yourself. You've told me two different stories. Your thinking needs some shaking out. The hospital is the place to do it in."

"I'm not going back there. You promised to help me, but you don't intend to. I have to do it myself."

"Do what?"

"Find out who murdered my father, and bring the killer to justice."

"He probably died a natural death."

"I see." His tone was disconsolate. "You're on Dr. Grantland's side. You want me to think I'm responsible."

"Listen to me."

But he was deep in himself. Dull sorrow filmed his eyes. He sobbed once in dry pain. Without any other warning he turned on me in a kind of desperate fury. His left hand pushed me back against the door. His right came over hard to the point of my jaw. Daylight waned.

I came to in the dry ditch, beside the tire marks where my car had stood. As I got up the checkerboard field fell into place around me, teetering slightly. I felt remarkably small, like a pin on a map.

I took off my jacket, slapped the dust out of it, and started to walk toward the hospital. It lay like a city in the middle of its own fields. The concrete buildings, divided by broad and busy avenues, gave no outward indication of their use.

After some palaver with nurses and secretaries I found myself in a small office in one of the buildings, shaking hands with Carl's psychiatrist. Dr. Brockley was a middle-aged man in a gray herringbone suit. In a series of precise movements he placed me in a straight chair facing the window, brought me an ashtray, then sat down behind his desk.

"I understand you had some trouble with Carl Hellman. Perhaps you should understand that the hospital is not responsible for his actions. We're interested, but not responsible. He left here last night with another patient, entirely without permission."

"He told me."

"You're a friend of Hellman's, are you?"

"I don't know him at all. He came to my house early this morning, to try and get my help."

"What sort of help?"

"I happen to be a private investigator. He gave me an involved story about his family. I think a lot of it was pure delusion. The main thing seems to be that he feels responsible for his father's death. He wants to get rid of the feeling."

From the moment I had named my profession the temperature in the room had been going down. Dr. Brockley said frostily, "If you're looking for family information, I can't give it to you."

"Right now I'm interested in Hellman, period. I talked him into coming back to the hospital. But he changed his mind on the way, knocked me out, and stole my car."

"Are you sure? It doesn't sound like him."

Dr. Brockley was beginning to irritate me. Another bureaucrat, I thought, with a noose of red tape up his sleeve. I said, "I confess, Doctor. I never really had a car. It was just a sex symbol in a dream I had."

He answered without a flicker of expression. "I mean, are you sure it wasn't the *other* patient who took your car?"

"I only saw the one. Who was the other?"

"A young man named Tom Rica. He's quite a different kettle of fish from Carl Hellman. Rica's a heroin addict. Like most addicts he has some sort of police record. I think it includes car theft."

"I used to know a Tom Rica. He

stole at least one car when he was in his teens. That was about ten years ago. He'd be twenty-eight or -nine now. How old is your patient?"

"Twenty-eight or nine," Brockley said drily. "He looks a good deal older. Heroin has that effect." He lifted a manila folder out of his in-basket and studied its contents. "Our Tom Rica graduated from Compton High School in 1948."

"So did mine."

I wasn't surprised, just disappointed. Tom had been one of the salvageable ones, I thought. I'd helped to get him probation after his grand-theft-automobile conviction, taught him a little boxing and shooting, tried to teach him some of the other things a man should know. But he'd dropped away.

"What happened to Tom?" I asked Brockley.

"Who can say? He came in about ten days ago, and I've only seen him once. I didn't think he belonged here. But somebody managed to convince the Purrissima authorities that he could be rehabilitated. Which reminds me, I'm going to have to notify them of his escape. You say he isn't with Hellman?"

"Not when I saw Hellman."

"Did he mention Rica?"

"Not by name. He mentioned a friend who referred him to me. He also relayed some accusations against his personal doctor, which he said he got from a fellow-patient, an addict."

"Undoubtedly Rica. Hellman's been close to Rica here. As a matter of fact, he helped to nurse him through withdrawal. I'd have kept them apart if I'd had any idea—well, what's done is done." Brockley gave me a probing look. "These accusations were directed against me?"

"Against a Dr. Grantland, in Purissima."

"Oh, yes, he's the Hellman family physician. What form did these accusations take?"

"Carl said Grantland had falsified the report on his father's death. That his father had been murdered, and Grantland was covering up."

"So he's back with that. I hope you didn't believe him."

"I didn't believe him or disbelieve him. I'm no psychiatrist, but he sounded rather paranoid to me. He said among other things that his brother Jerry was using his political pull to keep him here in the hospital."

"That's nonsense, of course. These matters are decided by our staff. In this case the decision was essentially mine. Carl's greatly improved, but he still needs further treatment. There are certain unconscious memories which have to be dredged up and faced."

"Memories of his mother?"

Brockley gave me a quick probing look. "Did Carl discuss his mother's death with you?"

"Vaguely. He didn't seem to remember it, and it bothered him."

"That's an understatement. I'd say the circumstances of her death were crucial in his illness. However. I can't go into them with you. Carl has to remember them for himself. I believe that when he does he'll be well enough to take up normal life again."

"Just how ill is he?"

"We don't go in much for labels. If you have to have one, I can say he had manic symptoms when he came in. He hasn't now."

"Is he likely to get them again?"

"It depends on what happens to him. Too much pressure all at once could throw him into a windup. This busi-

ness of your car now—I'd appreciate it if you wouldn't press charges right away."

"I have no intention of pressing charges."

"Fine. It's better for Carl if we handle it unofficially, keep it off the books until he's had a chance to think about it. I've already been in touch with his family. They're contacting Ostervelt, the Sheriff in Purissima. He happens to be a friend of the family."

Brockley rose and came around his desk. "You might leave your telephone number with my secretary. When and if your car turns up, I'll get in touch with you. Right now I'm overdue on the ward."

He gave me a walking handshake which terminated at the door. I took a bus to Purissima.

The address which Carl had given me for his wife was in an older section of town, between the highway and the waterfront. It was a two-story frame house, painted a faded gray, with a fanlight of ruby-colored glass over the front door.

The woman who answered the door had unlikely purplish-red hair cut in bangs. She wore a low-cut sun dress, much too young for her. I placed her age around fifty. She couldn't be Carl Hellman's wife—at least, I hoped she couldn't.

"Is Mrs. Hellman home?"

"No, but she's supposed to be on her way. I'm Mrs. Gley, her mother." She looked me over with intent blue eyes, which burned like gas flames in her rather inert face. "Is it about—him?"

"If you mean Carl, I would like to talk to him. Is he here?"

"No, thank God for small mercies. He hasn't got around to us yet. I've been expecting him ever since Mildred got that call from the hospital. You wouldn't be from the hospital?"

"I just came from there."

I'd intended some misrepresentation, which she made me regret immediately: "Why don't you keep them locked up better? You can't let crazy men run around loose. If you knew what my daughter has suffered—if you knew what I've suffered! I begged and pleaded with her to stay home today. But no, she has to go traipsing off to work. She leaves me here by myself, to cope." Her gaze moved past me to the street. "Speak of the devil, here she comes now."

An old black Buick convertible had pulled up at the curb. The girl who got out filled her dark business suit the way fruit fills its skin. She had honey-colored hair, a fine small head, a piquant face which seemed almost childish at a distance.

But there was nothing childish about the look she gave me. Anxious and expectant, it held a startled awareness, as if she'd had to grow up in a painful hurry. Her eyes were the same color as her mother's, and had the same intensity.

I told her who I was and why I was there. She listened with her head bowed, holding her black bag like a shield in front of her body.

"I'm sorry. Carl never did anything like that before."

"It was only a matter of time," her mother said. "Maybe you'll believe me now, when I tell you he's dangerous."

"He isn't!"

"I say he is, and he's liable to turn up here any minute. You should call up Deputy Carmichael and ask him for protection."

"I don't need protection. Carl's never even lifted his hand to me."

"Maybe not *so* far," Mrs. Gley said darkly.

Somewhere in the house a telephone rang like a muffled warning. Mildred brushed past her mother and ran down the hall to answer it. Mrs. Gley asked me to come in. She showed me through a curtained archway, then left me in a sitting room whose balding mohair furniture maintained an air of genteel poverty.

From where I sat I could hear Mildred's voice, thin and high on the other side of the wall: "He can't be, Zinnie. I don't believe it . . . No, I can't possibly . . ." Then, on a lower note of resignation: "All right. I'll come."

Her heels tapped along the hallway. She leaned in the archway, her eyes shock-bright: "Carl's been seen on the ranch. My sister-in-law's terrified."

"What's she so scared about?"

"Jerry isn't there. And Carl has a gun." Her voice was low and wretched.

"You're sure?"

"One of the gardeners saw it. I can't believe Carl would use it to hurt anyone."

"I doubt it myself."

She gave me a surprised and grateful look. "I thought you were out to get Carl."

"You thought wrong. He's my client, in a way. My main interest is getting him back to the hospital in one piece."

"Yes," she said. "I've got to go out and find him, talk to him."

But she was having a hard time getting under way. She stood pale and tense against the dark green curtains, hands knotted at her sides.

"Go where?" her mother said behind her. "Where are you going? You're not going to leave me alone."

"I have to go to the ranch. Carl's out there now, so there's nothing for you to worry about." Mildred gave her mother a cold look of appraisal. "Have you been drinking this morning?"

"What if I have? You can't expect me to face these things without any support. If you had any love and understanding—"

"Come off it, Mother. You've had all the love and understanding I've got. Between you and Carl, I'm just about squeezed dry."

Mrs. Gley retreated, shaking her head and muttering. Mildred rested her fair head against the curtains and closed her eyes for a moment. Without their light and depth in her face, she looked about thirteen.

"Better let me drive you," I said.

"Thank you." She smiled with a kind of wilted graciousness. "I was dreading going out there by myself."

The main street of Purissima became a county blacktop which wound up over the coastal ridge. On its far side a broad valley opened, floored with rich irrigation-green. A dozen miles across it, the green made inlets between the foothills and lapped at the bases of the mountains.

The girl beside me stirred. "All that belongs to the Hellmans. You can see the house from here. It's off the road to the right, in the middle of the valley."

A sprawling tile-roofed building floated low like a heavy red raft in the ridged green. As we went downhill the house sank out of sight.

"I promised myself I'd never go back there," she said. "A house can soak up people's emotions, you know. After a while it has the same emotions

as the people who live in it. Everyone who lived there was greedy and hateful and snobbish. Except Carl. Carl's not like the other Hellmans."

'What is he like when he's himself?"

"Carl is a good man," she said earnestly, "terribly sensitive and conscientious. You may not believe this, but it's often the very best people who crack up. His family's more responsible for his trouble than he is."

"I sort of gathered that was your opinion."

"It's true," she said, "and Dr. Grantland agrees with me. The way they handled his mother's death, for instance—it did dreadful things to Carl. She was killed right before his eyes."

"Killed?"

"By a horse. She was mounting it in the corral, and Carl set off a firecracker behind it. His mother was dragged from the stirrup. The horse trampled her and broke her neck."

"Did Carl tell you this?"

"He doesn't remember. The family hushed the whole thing up, treated it as a guilty secret. But his father turned against him." She twisted in the seat toward me, her eyes like dark-blue lights. "How could they blame a little boy for a thing like that? He was only four when it happened. He didn't know that firecrackers were dangerous. It was the day before the Fourth of July, and I guess he couldn't wait to set one off."

"Your husband's had bad luck."

"Yes, he has. I think his father would have forgiven him, but Jerry wouldn't let him. He always did everything he could to turn the Senator against Carl. Jerry and his wife have just one purpose in life: to cut Carl out of the estate and have it all to themselves. They were responsible for a lot of the quarrels between Carl and his father."

"Does that include the last one?"

"Did Carl tell you about it?"

"Not very much."

"Jerry and Zinnie did start it, as a matter of fact. They deliberately got Carl talking about political corruption —a subject he's hipped on, anyway. He'd found out somewhere, perhaps from Jerry, that there was some kind of graft in the Sheriff's office. Carl accused the Senator of condoning it. I suppose there was some truth in that, because the Senator always supported Ostervelt for Sheriff. There was an election coming up, and Carl and his father had a shouting match about it. You could hear them all over the house."

"And the Senator died that night."

"Yes. He always took a warm bath before he went to bed, to help him sleep. Carl and Jerry found him in the morning, dead in the bathtub. It's a dreadful thing to say about a man, but Jerry was really responsible for it. He may even have planned it. He knew his father wasn't to be excited. I heard Dr. Grantland warn him."

"Do you know Dr. Grantland well?"

"Fairly well. He looked after my husband last year when Carl was depressed."

"Is he honest?"

"Oh, I think so. Why? Did Carl say something against him?"

"Plenty. Is there anything in his idea that Grantland and his brother conspired to have him committed?"

"No, I don't think so. It was perfectly aboveboard so far as Dr. Grantland was concerned. Carl needed hospital treatment. I signed the necessary

papers myself. Only Jerry got me and Carl to sign other papers at the same time, making him Carl's legal guardian. I didn't know what it meant. I thought it was just a routine part of the commitment. But it means that as long as Carl is ill, Jerry controls every penny of their father's estate."

"Is there much money involved?"

"If you mean cash, no. The Hellmans are land-poor—the Senator kept them that way. He believed the ranch would be worth a great fortune some day, when the population pushed up from Los Angeles. Actually, it's going on now. I work in a real estate office, and I happen to know that Valley land is worth at least two hundred and fifty dollars an acre. The ranch is twenty thousand acres. Figure it out for yourself."

"Five million dollars. Is Jerry planning to sell?"

"I don't know. Jerry doesn't discuss his plans with me. I don't care, either—at least, not for myself. But Carl *needs* money. He could have better treatment—the best psychiatrists in the country. Of course that's the last thing Jerry wants, to see his brother cured. It would end his guardianship."

"Jerry sounds charming."

"He hates Carl. He'd like to see him dead. That's why I have to get there before Jerry does. Sheriff Ostervelt has always taken orders from the Hellmans."

"Are you implying the Sheriff might shoot your husband on Jerry's orders? It doesn't sound likely to me."

"You don't know Sheriff Ostervelt. He's a foul-tempered old man, and he's been criticized for being trigger-happy. He shot an escaping prisoner last year. A lot of local people thought it was unnecessary." Her voice diminished to an anxious whisper. "If anything like that happened to Carl, I'd die."

I said, without intending to, "We won't let it happen, Mildred."

A large wooden sign appeared at the roadside ahead: ***Hellman Citrus Company.*** I turned up a private road which cut ruler-straight for over a mile through the geometric maze of the orange groves. We passed a deserted corral, a series of barnlike parking sheds, and finally came to the main house.

Its brown adobe walls looked as indigenous as the oaks that shadowed its wide lawns. The new cars in the semicircular driveway—a red station wagon and two black Sheriff's cars—seemed out of place or time. The thing that struck me most was a child's swing suspended by new rope from one of the trees. No one had mentioned a child.

When I switched off the Buick's engine, the silence was almost absolute. It was broken by a screen door's percussion. A Palomino blonde wearing black satin Capri pants and a white shirt came out on the front verandah. The entire scene regrouped itself around her: she was that good-looking. She folded her arms over her breasts and watched us come up the flagstone walk.

Mildred raised her voice, "Zinnie? Is everything all right?"

"Oh, fine. Just lovely. I'm still waiting for Jerry to come home. You didn't see him in town, did you?"

"I never see Jerry. You know that."

Mildred halted at the foot of the steps. There was a barrier of hostility, like a charged fence, between the two women.

Zinnie's ice-green eyes shifted from

Mildred to me. "Who's your friend?"

Mildred introduced me.

"A private detective yet," Zinnie said. "The place is crawling with policemen already. For once in my life I was really glad to see Ostervelt and his cohorts." She looked past us toward the empty patrol cars. "But they seem to have disappeared again. I suppose they're out beating the groves."

"Has Carl been seen?"

"Not since Sam Yogano spotted him. He's got twenty thousand acres to lose himself in, and he knows the ranch better than anybody."

"I'm sure you have nothing to fear from Carl," Mildred said.

"I wish *I* was sure. But let's not get morbid. Come in if you like."

We followed her down a hallway bristling with antlered heads, into a vast dim living room. Its bright new furniture was sectional, scattered around the dark-oak floor in arcs and oblongs. The adobe walls were hung with modern reproductions in limed-oak frames. The room gave me a sense of an uneasy present trying to overcome the persistent past.

A tiny girl in a pale blue frock came up to Mildred. "Hello, Aunt Mildred." She couldn't have been much over three, but she spoke very clearly and purely.

Mildred reached down to take her hand. "Hello, Martha. How are you?"

"I'm fine. Is Uncle Carl coming? Mommy said on the telephone Uncle Carl is coming."

"No," Zinnie cut in, "I was talking about somebody else, dear. Daddy is coming, and Dr. Grantland."

The child looked up at her mother, her eyes clear and untroubled. "I don't want Daddy to come. I want to go for a ride with Charlie—"

"Dr. Grantland, you mean? He's going to take you for a ride, you and Mrs. Hutchinson. And you can spend the day at Mrs. Hutchinson's house. Won't that be fun?"

"I don't know," Martha said gravely.

"Of course it will." Zinnie turned to me with a forced smile. "I've been waiting for an excuse to have a drink. Will you have one with me?"

"Any other time, thanks. What I'd like to do right now, if you don't object, is talk to the man who saw your brother-in-law. Sam something?"

"Sam Yogano. Of course, talk to Sam if you like. Come on, I'll help you find him. Coming, Mildred?"

"I'll stay with Martha."

The child was still holding her aunt's hand. There seemed to be a quiet understanding between them.

Zinnie took me out the back way, through a great gleaming kitchen where a Filipino houseboy was cracking crabs. As soon as we stepped outside, I noticed a heavy revolver glinting behind a woodpile, like something in a Western movie scene.

A young man in deputy's suntans emerged, replacing his gun in its holster. His face had the polished brown finish of hand-rubbed wood. He swaggered slightly, as if he were highly aware of Zinnia's sex and his own scenic possibilities.

"I'd stay inside if I was you, Mrs. Hellman." There was a touch of drama in his deep drawling voice. "Things could start popping any minute. The Sheriff picked up his tracks out behind the bunkhouse."

The deputy indicated a crumbling adobe which stood against the dense green of the orange trees, a hundred yards from the house.

"I hope we can take him without gunfire," I said.

"Naturally. We all hope that." The young deputy gave me an inquiring look.

"This is Mr. Archer," Zinnie said. "He's a private detective."

The deputy looked me up and down, and offered me his hand. "Carmichael. You the owner of the car he stole?"

"Yes. Have you come across it?"

"We found it stashed in one of the packing sheds, right near where the old Jap ran into him. Green Ford convertible."

"That's my car. But I'm not making any charges. We'll say I lent it to him."

"Why say that if it isn't true?"

"He's a sick boy, and he's got all the trouble he can handle. So take it easy with him if you can."

"That's always been my policy," Carmichael said a little pompously. "I never fire unless fired upon." A dark look shadowed his eyes, and he added as if to himself: "I wish I could say the same for everybody in the department."

The sound of an approaching car drifted over the housetop. Zinnie seemed to recognize it. She turned and walked quickly around the attached greenhouse which flanked the side of the house. We followed her.

A silver-gray Jaguar entered the driveway. Zinnie ran toward it. The man who got out of the Jaguar slowed her with a gesture of his hand, but she didn't stop. Running across the lawn under the high sky, she resembled a little puppet, black and white and gold jerked across green baize.

"Her husband?" I asked Carmichael.

"You must be kidding. It's a doctor from town, name of Grantland."

Dr. Grantland looked as if he had dressed himself to match his car. He had on gray flannels, gray suede shoes, a gray shirt with a metallic sheen. His beak-nosed face was thin and flexible. As they passed us, I could see he used his face as an actor might, with conscious charm.

Zinnie was charmed anyway. The price you paid for being a Hollywood type was that you fell for other Hollywood types.

She brushed against Grantland as they entered the house. He pulled away from her, as if she'd burned him, and gave us a quick look.

Carmichael made no comment. He spat tobacco juice in the grass and drifted away.

Without going out of my way to make a lot of noise, I climbed the verandah steps and stood by the door. Grantland and Zinnie were murmuring under the antlers, in voices too low to be understood. I got the general idea, though, when she moaned.

Childish laughter bubbled at the side of the house. I moved to the end of the veranda, leaned on the railing, and looked around the corner. Mildred and her niece were playing a game on the lawn with a tennis ball. Its rules were very simple. Mildred rolled the ball in the grass and the child scampered after it like a small utility-outfielder in fairy blue.

They both looked happy—the only happy people I'd seen all day. A gray-haired woman in a flowered print dress was watching them from a long chair in the shade. She called out, "Martha! You mustn't get overtired. And keep your dress clean. Remember you're coming visiting."

Mildred turned on the older wom-

an. "Let her get dirty if she likes."

But the spell of the game was broken. Smiling a perverse little smile, the child picked up the ball and threw it over the picket fence. It bounced out of sight among the orange trees. Mildred started for the gate in the fence. I opened my mouth to warn her to stay out of the trees. But something was going on in the driveway at the front.

A big car slid to a stop beside Grantland's Jaguar. It was a new lavendar Cadillac with gold trim, and it seemed to collect all the light and color in the countryside. The dumpy man in tweeds who got out was insignificant by comparison. He had the same coloring as Carl, but he was older, fatter, shorter.

Zinnie came out to meet him. Unfortunately her lipstick was smeared and her eyes looked feverish.

"Jerry! Where on earth have you been all day?"

He faced her on the walk, not quite as tall as she was on her high heels. "I haven't been gone all day. I drove down to see Brockley at the hospital. I told him what I thought of the loose way they run that place. These damn fool doctors, coddling homicidal maniacs!" His face was full of angry blood. He jerked a thumb toward Grantland's car. "What's *he* doing here? Somebody sick?"

"Didn't anyone tell you? Carl is on the ranch and he's carrying a gun. I thought that's why you were staying away, because you're afraid of him."

"I'm not," he said in a frightened voice.

"You were the day he left. You should be, after the things he said." She added with unconscious cruelty. "I believe he wants to kill you."

His hands went to his stomach, as though she'd struck him a physical blow there. They doubled into fists.

"You'd like that, wouldn't you? You and Charlie Grantland?"

The screen door rattled. Grantland came out on cue. "I *thought* I heard somebody taking my name in vain. How are you, Jerry?"

Jerry Hellman ignored him. He said to his wife, "I asked you a simple question. What's he doing here?"

"I happen to be your brother's physician—"

"The hell you are. You haven't seen him in six months."

"That doesn't change the relationship, old man."

"Don't old-man me. If I hadn't listened to you, Carl would be where he belongs."

"In the death house?" Grantland spoke with a thin-lipped sneer.

"That's right, you lousy quack."

"I don't have to take this, Hellman."

"You'll take it and like it, if you want to go on practising in this county."

Grantland lunged down the steps. Zinnie clutched his arm and held him back. For a man of his size, the doctor was fairly easy to hold back. She said, "He's only trying to make trouble because he's frightened."

She looked up and gave Grantland a little smile, her smudged mouth doubling its meaning. Of the three, they formed the paired unit. Jerry Hellman stood alone. As if he couldn't bear the loneliness, he turned on his heel and walked stiffly into the greenhouse.

Grantland took a gray silk handkerchief out of his breast pocket and wiped Zinnie's mouth. They were so

intent on each other, they didn't notice me.

"For God's sake, don't be so obvious," he said.

Jerry Hellman came out of the greenhouse with a dull, blotched look on his face. A pair of garden shears projected outward from the grip of his two hands, and gleamed in the sun like a double dagger. He planted himself in front of Grantland, opening and closing the shears. They snicked in the silence.

Jerry said in a small dead voice, "Get out now, if you want to go on functioning. Get off my property and stay off. That includes my wife."

Grantland had suddenly gone haggard. He backed away from the threatening edges and looked to Zinnie for support.

She stepped between the two men. "Listen to me, Jerry. I thought Martha would be safer in town with Mrs. Hutchinson. I had no man around I could trust, so I asked Dr. Grantland to come out and drive them in."

"He's taking nothing of mine. My daughter stays here with me."

"She does not!"

"We'll see."

The ugly weapon in his hands threatened her body. He was at that trembling balance-point in human rage where he might have alarmed himself into doing murder. I shouldered Grantland out of the way, a little harder than necessary, and told Jerry Hellman to put the shears down.

I think he wanted to be told that. For a moment his eyes were puzzled by dry pain. Then he threw the shears on the flagstones and went back into the greenhouse.

Grantland and Zinnie looked at each other, trying to pretend I wasn't there.

Voices rose on the far side of the house, female and excited, like chickens after a hawk has swooped. I went around the end of the verandah. Mildred emerged from the trees. Her face seemed tinged with green by their green shadows. She came through the gate in a little staggering run, with the tennis ball clutched in her hand.

The child went up to her. "Why did Uncle Carl run away?" Her voice was high and penetrating.

Mildred bent over her. "It doesn't matter why. Uncle Carl likes to run."

Zinnie swept past me and lifted Martha in her arms.

Carmichael was close behind her, unhitching his gun. "What happened, Mrs. Hellman? Did you see him?"

Mildred nodded, but waited to speak till Zinnie had carried the little girl out of hearing. Mrs. Hutchinson answered for her. "I saw him, sneaking and slurking under the trees." Her head was twisted at an angle toward the groves. Her face was as gray as her hair.

Mildred turned on her. "He wasn't sneaking! He picked up the ball and brought it to me. He came right up to me." She displayed the ball, as if it was important evidence of her husband's gentleness.

Carmichael stepped between them. "Did he say anything, Mrs. Hellman?"

"I did most of the talking. I tried to persuade him to come in and give himself up."

"Did he threaten you in any way?"

"No. When he wouldn't come with me, I put my arms around him, to try to hold him. He was too strong for me. He broke away and I ran after

him. But he wouldn't come back."

"Did he show his gun?"

Mildred hesitated, biting her lower lip. "I don't believe he's armed."

"Which way did he go?"

She hesitated again. "I won't tell you."

"You'd better. This is a matter of life and death." His hand went out toward her as if he wanted to shake her, but he didn't touch her.

"I saw him go." Mrs. Hutchinson waved her arms toward the groves. "He took off in the direction of town."

Carrying his gun like a relay-runner's baton, Carmichael ran through the gate and entered the trees. I went after him, with some idea of trying to head off violence.

The ground under my feet was adobe, soft and moist with cultivation. I never had gone well on a heavy track. The young deputy was soon out of sight. After a while he was out of hearing, too. I slowed down and stopped, cursing my middle-aged legs.

Tracking wasn't my forte, except on asphalt. I got my breath and started back, taking my time about it. After a long morning crowded with people under pressure, it was pleasant to be walking by myself in the shade.

I'd run further than I'd realized, perhaps a third of a mile. Eventually the house appeared through the trees. The yard was empty. Everything was remarkably still.

I went through the house from front to back, and finally found two human beings in the kitchen. Mrs. Hutchinson was sitting at the kitchen table with Martha on her knee. Her face had thinned and sharpened in the quarter hour since I'd seen her. She looked at me bleakly, and put a worn finger to her lips.

"Tell me another story," the child said.

"We don't have time. You run and play in the living room for a bit."

She set the child down. Martha ran to an inner door and rattled the knob. "I want to play in the greenhouse."

"No! Come back here!"

Martha was frightened by the woman's tone. She came back, dragging her feet.

"Where is everybody?" I said.

Mrs. Hutchinson gestured toward the door which Martha had tried to open. I heard a low murmur of voices, like bees behind a wall. Holding the child tightly against her, the woman said:

"Mr. Hellman was ess aitch oh tee. He's dee ee ay dee."

(*continued on page 62*)

The announcement of our 21st Anniversary issue is on page 17. If you missed it, please turn back.

EDITORS' FILE CARD

AUTHOR:	**NEIL M. CLARK**
TITLE:	***The Secret Life of Henry Geech***
TYPE:	From the Case Book of Chief of Police Ben Day
LOCALE:	United States
TIME:	The Present
COMMENTS:	*It has been said that there are some men who should not marry. Perhaps little Henry Geech was one of them; or perhaps he married the wrong woman . . .*

CHIEF OF POLICE BEN DAY ADMITS he keeps a spot warm in his heart for the murderer whom he refers to as "that little brown poet." He points out that he earned no credit for solving the case, since he didn't know there was a case to solve; and he found the deed unspeakably grim. But he feels that he gained an understanding of the quiet little killer and his motives and how he came to the point of no return; and for the Chief, while understanding does not excuse any criminal, it sometimes softens the horror of his crime.

Henry Geech nursed the great dream of seeing his poor verses in print. He had little need or desire for a wife. However, a girl who meant to get a husband, decided she wanted him, and she landed him easily.

It happened at the company's annual picnic at Coogan's Pond. Henry hadn't intended to go. There would be games and races, at which he was extremely inept, and since he had no special pal, and no capacity for whooping it up in a gang, he decided to spend the free day alone in the country.

But Curly Bill Cherry accosted him at quitting time the day before

and said, "Look, Geech, there's loads of room in my heap. We'll pick you up at your place in the morning and ride to the lake together. Okay?" Before Henry could summon the wit to say he wasn't going, Curly slapped his shoulder and said, "All set, huh? See you then"—and was off.

Henry didn't know that Helen Cherry in the Inspection Department was Bill's sister, and never guessed that she had put Bill up to asking him. Henry barely knew Helen. She was one of the girls who sat on high stools and picked out defective pieces as they passed on the belt. She was plump, young, and sort of pretty, with legs she wasn't shy about showing. At coffee breaks she had given him the eye a few times, but they had never exchanged more than a few words.

Henry thought of her, if he thought at all, as a giggler, and he was too bashful to try getting fresh with her or with any girl, as most of the fellows in the plant were always doing. It was a surprise to him, therefore, when Curly Bill stopped for him next morning and told him to hop in the rear seat, to find Helen Cherry there.

At the picnic she didn't let him get far away from her. Henry, who had had a lonely and introverted childhood, was unprepared for a determined female attack, and never understood quite how it came about; but in the afternoon the two of them wandered off to a secluded spot, and with some help from her he found his arm around her and suddenly discovered that he was squeezing and kissing her. Before the day ended there was an understanding that they were "that way" about each other. It was literally his first experience of the kind, and he felt sort of good about it.

Helen quickly set the day. They were married, and that was that, and for a while Henry thought he had married an angel.

Chief Day knew Henry by sight and name, as he knew hundreds of people, as the result of a simple encounter. He was on his way one noon to deliver a Rotary luncheon talk on juvenile delinquency. He strode along thinking about what he was going to say, preoccupied but still alert to people and things. Arriving at the George and Main Street intersection just as the lights were changing from amber to red, he automatically stopped to wait for the green. A small man brushed past him and started to cross against the lights. There was a screech of brakes, and only by inches did the car miss knocking the little man down. The Chief put out a big paw and hauled him back to the curb.

"Mister," he said, "that light's red."

"I-I y-yes, sir!" the little man said breathlessly.

"Jaywalking's against the law. You know that. People get arrested for it." He pulled back his coat to show the gold star on his vest.

"I-I was in a hurry to get to the post office."

Chief Day, who is handsomer than a police officer should be, and could easily play a senator in the movies, grinned at the little man's discomfiture. When the lights changed they crossed the street together, the Chief's hand still resting on the other's shoulder. On the far side the little man looked up shyly and said, "You're Chief Day."

"That's right."

"I'm Henry Geech. I'm sorry."

"Watch the lights, or you'll be sorrier!"

After that they passed each other on the street occasionally and saluted, but they never actually met again till Henry came to the Chief's office and insisted on seeing him. It then became the Chief's duty, as well as a necessity growing out of his deep curiosity about human nature, to dig up every fact he could about Henry to see what made the little man tick.

Geech seemed born to be a person of no importance. As shy as a brown trout, he never called attention to himself. At school none of his teachers saw anything in him except one English teacher, who wrote on a set of his verses turned in as a required composition: *You do good work—show me more.*

Henry had been thrilled, but it would have been unthinkable for him to have walked up to her desk unless summoned. As for her, she had forty in that class, as well as other classes, and unless a student claimed attention she couldn't do much.

So Henry had gone on alone, dreaming of a poet's fame, reading avidly, writing secret verse in the manner of Pope, Keats, Herrick, or whomever else he currently admired.

At home he learned that the easiest way to get along was to be quietly inconspicuous. His mother was an overworked drudge with a no-account husband, and if Henry did as she told him and kept out of her way, he got fewer whacks. On the playground he did not put himself forward when boys were choosing up sides, and he was usually left out of their games. This suited him; but he missed the fun and discipline boys give each other. He sank deeper and deeper into the dreams that consoled him. His one grandiose ambition was to write and publish poetry. He told no one this, and the secrecy grew on him . . .

After marrying, Henry's life changed a good deal. Helen quit her job and kept house. She turned out to be lazy, with hardly a thought in her head. But Henry didn't mind. She loved candy and he liked bringing her as much as she wanted. She had an easy gift for empty laughter, something he had never known about, and he felt lighter-hearted with her. She was grossly passionate, and sometimes shocked him in the bedroom. Once in a while he brought her a book he thought she

would like, but she read little and unintelligently.

Their life together brought him out a bit socially. Helen made him learn to dance and take her to dances. She made him go to parties, and invited others to their home and taught him to do a little light drinking. Altogether, Henry felt very lucky to have her.

Of course, he admitted she had some faults. One evening they went to the Community House to see a movie he hoped she would like, and saw a crowd waiting to enter. "Do we want to go in and stand?" he asked. He left such decisions to her.

"We'll try it," she said. "They're probably waiting for the first show to end."

The girl at the ticket window was reassuring. "You can see the whole show," she said, "even if you get in as late as 9:15."

"Are there plenty of seats?"

"Certainly."

Just then most of the people in the lobby moved ahead, and Henry bought tickets. They found, however, that the crowd had only turned the corner.

"I'm not going to stand *here* very long," Helen said. She liked being inside munching candy. They waited a few minutes more and nobody came out. "That girl told us there would be seats," she said loudly. People turned and stared. Henry wished she would speak in a lower voice. "She had no business to mislead us," she added, and a moment later, "She deliberately lied to us."

Henry saw people exchange glances, and was ashamed. A few people came out and they moved ahead slowly. Henry handed in their tickets. "I don't think we ought to give up our tickets," Helen said, still too loud. "We ought to go and get our money back."

People snickered. Henry wished he could evaporate on the spot.

"I never did like the way they run this place," she said.

Henry couldn't stand any more. "Come on," he mumbled, "let's leave."

"You'll make her give you your money back, I hope."

The ticket-taker said he was sorry and handed Henry two tickets, which he cashed at the window. Helen gave the girl a piece of her mind. Henry was very quiet all the way home. He was thinking he liked his angel better some times than others. But he couldn't bring himself to an open talk about, and gradually the feeling wore off.

At work one day the head of Henry's department called for him and handed him a bulky roll of blueprints. "Inland," he said, "just called long distance. They're big customers, you know; they've got to have these things tonight. I said we'd send somebody over with them. I'm sending you, Geech." He told Henry to catch the 3:30 train, and gave him expense money.

It was quite a thing for Henry.

His job was routine and he had never had such an assignment before. He made the delivery without mishap, but it was dark before he got back to the station and he found there wouldn't be a return train till 5:00 in the morning.

He rented a cheap hotel room for the night, but found himself amazingly lonely without his wife and home. He didn't try drowning his loneliness at a movie, or by sitting in the lobby watching TV, or taking a walk; instead, he sat at the desk in his room under the dim light bulb, and poured out his feelings on paper.

It had been a long time since he tried to write a poem, but his heart was full and the lines came easily. When they satisfied him, he did a daring thing. He titled the poem *To My Darling,* and copied it neatly on a sheet of hotel stationery:

A dream of hidden love lies
In your azure eyes;
A lily in a sky-filled pool
Speaks to the heart of a drunken fool;
Sweetheart, the night is long,
But so are my thoughts; and my song
Wings to you through the dark—as would I
Could I but fly.

He couldn't say things like that to her face to face. But he longed to have her know. Feeling proud and bold for the moment, and thinking how happy it would make Helen, he sealed the poem in a hotel envelope and addressed it to her. He bought a special-delivery stamp at the desk, and even carried the letter to the post office so it would be sure to reach her before he got home from work next day.

Helen was frying hamburgers for their supper when he got there. He kissed her. She smelled sweaty, and he noticed she was bubbling with what he supposed was pleasure at his being back. She asked about the trip, and he told her about it.

Then she said, "I got your—letter."

His spine tingled as he waited for her comment. Never in his life had he spoken so plainly of his feelings for her, and never had he laid his soul bare that way before another human being.

"Did you copy it out of a book?" she asked.

"Why, no—"

"You mean you wrote it yourself?" He nodded. She stood with fork poised over the skillet. *"You* wrote that mush?" She giggled. In a moment the giggle became helpless laughter. She dropped into a chair and laughed till tears rolled down her cheeks. "Oh, Henry," she said when she could speak, "it's so *—funny!"*

He had poured out his heart and she thought it funny.

He had a sudden vision of her telling her friends and showing them his poem to laugh at. His head whirled. He hadn't known he could be hurt so much. He could

think of only one thing to do: hurt her too.

He slapped her with the flat of his hand as hard as he could. It stopped her laughter.

The Geech marriage, if it had ever borne any resemblance to an ideal union, lost the resemblance then. He had kept many things secret for fear of being laughed at. Now he had let the bars down and was laughed at by the one who could hurt him most.

When he calmed down a bit, Henry asked Helen to forgive him for slapping her. His fury, and his expression of it, had deeply shocked him.

"You better not do it again," she said sullenly.

A slap she could understand. But the feelings he had put into his poem, and the hurt she had given him, were beyond her capacity to understand. But even she sensed that the quality of their relationship was strongly changed thereafter.

Henry decided never to lay himself open to that kind of hurt again. He began keeping more and more things from her, even little things that didn't matter. And he went back to his old dreams of writing poetry and having it printed.

He refused to go out with her whenever he could, and if her friends visited he usually sat in wooden silence. Communication between Henry and Helen became less and less. And he began to find new things to criticize in her.

He noticed now how really sloppy and unclean she was about her housework; how careless at cooking and bed-making; how greedy in her eating; how fat she was getting and how seldom she bathed. He also noticed she was increasingly bothered with shortness of breath. Once, after a very hot spell in July, she fainted and he had to call in Dr. Mansfield. But Helen wasn't minded to let her man get away from her. She needed him, and in a way, he needed her. Her need was mostly physical; his was habit.

With Henry's growing secrecy, a curious duel developed between them. Henry's aim was to keep his secrets secret; Helen's was to ferret them out and wound him by letting him know she had discovered them.

It took on the aspects of a cold war. He began putting money into a savings account, hoarding it from his lunch money, and adding little by little until it amounted to more than $140. He had no special plan for using it, but it was satisfying to know he had it and Helen didn't know about it.

But one day he was careless with the passbook. Helen saw it and badgered him about the money till he angrily drew it all out and gave it to her to buy a coat.

Reading remained one of his chief pleasures. Helen had no use for books. If she found one of his lying around, she sometimes disposed of it maliciously before he had finished it. He tried doing most of his

reading at a branch of the public library at night; but Helen found out where he went, and once when the reading room was crowded she came to the door and called out loudly, "Henry, put that book away and come home!"

He saw the amused smiles and burned with shame. "Never do that again!" he said to her furiously when they were outside, feeling as he had when he slapped her. But he never went back to the library.

He wrote his verses endlessly. He kept them in a locked tin box in a drawer in his desk at the office—Helen couldn't get at them there. One day an important idea occurred to him. His early attempts at getting his verses printed had never amounted to anything—the manuscripts had always come back with printed rejection slips.

Now he decided to send out his poems again. However, Helen always opened his mail at home, and he couldn't bear to have her know what he was doing. His important idea was to rent a box at the downtown post office and get his poetry mail there.

He put the plan into execution promptly, receiving a key which entitled him to unlock Box Number 1127. The next few months were probably as exciting for him as any in his entire life. Living with Helen became less of a chore now that he had so big a secret.

He sent poems to dozens of magazines. Nearly all came back. Once in a while an unimportant editor wrote a letter; two or three non-paying periodicals kept poems and promised to publish them; and one actually sent him a $3 check. When that came, he felt like flying.

Henry hoarded anticipation. Usually he went to the post office only once a week, during the noon hour. It was on one such expedition that he met Chief of Police Day. He read his mail in private and kept everything locked in the tin box in his office.

Helen knew he was up to something, and was tormented to find out what it was. One night he carelessly left his key ring on the dresser while he was bathing. She picked it up. She thought she knew every key he had, but this was one she didn't recognize. She imagined a love nest and giggled at the notion of Henry involved in any such adventure. But she couldn't rest until she found out what the mystery key fitted.

She wouldn't ask. She won her mean little triumphs by ferreting out his secrets, then embarrassing him by revealing that she knew about them. She began to spy on him noontimes, which were about the only times he had for doing something she wouldn't know about. And she was patient as a vixen.

One day she saw him go to the post-office box and open it. She noted the number of the box and wondered how to use her knowl-

edge. It was some time before she had a chance at Henry's keys again. When she did, she hurried to the hardware store two blocks away and had a duplicate of the key made. Then she began watching the post-office box till there was a nice accumulation of mail.

That evening when Henry got home from work she said casually, "Your mail is on the piano."

"Mail?"

"From your post-office box. I thought you'd like to have it here. The letters—are very interesting." She giggled.

Henry burned and froze. Blood pounded in his ears. He walked to the piano too angry to speak. Helen had opened every letter. Each contained a poem or two and a rejection slip. Never before had he felt so desperately humiliated, so murderously angry.

He would have liked to beat her brains out, but somehow he controlled his fury: he knew it would please her too much to know she had hurt him so deeply.

They ate supper in complete silence—except when she giggled.

Helen went to bed early, as usual, and was asleep when he came into the bedroom. His mind had been in a fury of torment all evening. He had considered not sleeping in the same room at all. But he took a stiff glass of the port wine which Helen kept in the cupboard, and sleepiness and habit finally conquered. Possibly he would have found a means of still going on living with her, if chance hadn't lent a hand.

Helen had been rehanging some pictures. In her sloppy fashion she had left the hammer and nails on the dresser. Seeing them, Henry remembered something he had once read in a policeman's memoirs.

He looked at her lying in bed. Her mouth was open, she was breathing noisily, and it sounded as if she were still giggling at him. He picked up the hammer and one big nail. His hand shook, but he steadied it. He pushed her hair back carefully so as not to waken her, and found the sensitive spot. He drove the nail furiously through her skull and into her brain.

She struggled very little. When she was no longer breathing, he pulled the nail out. Hardly a mark remained to show where it had entered, and he covered the spot with her hair.

The Geeches were obscure and unimportant. Dr. Mansfield came at Henry's urgent call the next morning. There was little he could do. He had attended Helen before and knew about her shortness of breath and her fainting. He presumed her heart had simply stopped while she slept and signed the death certificate to that effect: he never dreamed of any other cause of death. Helen was buried inconspicuously, only two cars following the hearse to the cemetery.

Six months passed before Ser-

geant Mark Thwing entered Chief Day's office and said a guy named Geech insisted on seeing him.

"Geech?" Day said, pondering names. "I once ran into a little guy named Geech—Henry Geech."

"That's him."

"What does he want?"

"He wouldn't say."

The Chief wasn't too busy. "I'll see him," and he offered his hand when Henry came in. Henry failed to see it. "How are you, Geech?" The Chief had a friendly smile. Henry didn't smile back.

"Chief," he said, "I came to give myself up."

Chief Day still smiled. "You haven't been jaywalking again?"

"I killed my wife."

Day didn't believe him at first. He listened to Henry's halting, detailed story, and realized there had to be an exhumation. This confirmed Henry's story.

Only once during the law's processes did Henry show anything except complete submission and cooperation. The contents of his pockets were lying on a table during a search. The officer, poking among them, picked up a paper.

"Give me that!" Henry shouted. He lunged, grabbing insanely, but was held as the officer read the poem. Henry had called it *Solitaire*:

He was decreed to wander,
  A lone soul, up and down,
Yet never was he lonely
  In forest, house, or town;
For comrades of the tongueless
  Abodes of night and day
Were ever calling to him
  Glad greetings by the way.

A breath of wind, a vagrant
  High cry of bird a-wing;
A star; a cloud; a moonbeam;
  Or water murmuring.

Geech was as puzzling to Chief Day as any killer who had ever come his way. In his customary relentless fashion Day assembled every fact that could have a bearing on the man's motives. He studied the poet's life almost from the day of his birth, talking with Henry himself, schoolmates, coworkers, teachers, friends, and the few members of his family. But there remained an unanswered question.

The last time he called on Henry in his cell, he asked the little brown poet the vital question.

"Henry," he said, "why did you do it?"

"Kill her?"

"No—I know about that. You were tormented into it. It was an awful thing to do. But you did it—and nobody knew, or would have known. It was what they call the perfect crime. What I want to know is: why did you come and tell me?"

Henry Geech's answer was perhaps more remarkable than anything he ever put into a poem.

He said quietly, "It got so lonely, Chief, I couldn't stand it—with nobody to keep things from."

DEPARTMENT OF "FIRST STORIES"

This is the 227th "first story" to be published by EQMM . . . a surprisingly solid story for a "first," with clean-cut characterizations and fine integration of background.

The author, with a most unusual first name and a charming surname, is in his late twenties. He left Scotland about seven years ago to live in Africa and write about African problems. After writing many factual articles, he decided to turn to fiction "as a full-time occupation," and this is his first story.

On various safaris, Mr. Gallantry tells us, he has been chased by elephants and charged by buffalo and rhinoceros; he is the only man, he claims, ever to have been mauled by a polar bear while on the African continent—it happened at a zoo in the Transvaal!

There will be more from Mr. Gallantry, we are sure—he has the "feel" of a born storyteller.

DEATH IN KENYA

by IAIN GALLANTRY

CUTLACK WAS ONE OF THOSE tough Kenya farmers who had carved wealth and beauty from virgin land with his own hands. He had shot lions that had killed his cattle, stayed awake for three days at a time to fight locust swarms, and gone alone into the bamboo forest to slaughter the Mau Mau terrorists who had set fire to his cornfields.

On one arm and across his back were the pale, gouged scars of a leopard's claws—he had fought the animal with a knife when it leaped on one of his dogs. He had cured the leopard's hide and used it to cover a divan in the living room of the comfortable farmhouse he himself had designed and built. His nearest neighbors, sixty miles away, and those who knew him in the town of Nakuru, a hundred miles distant, had only one opinion of him. "A tough," they said, "a real tough. And not a very sociable tough at that."

Consequently they were surprised when he flew to England for a month's leave and returned with a bride. She was twenty-five—twenty years younger than Cutlack—tall, slender, blonde, beautiful by Kenya standards, and domineering in a middle-class English way. And it was within a month of her arrival in Kenya that Cutlack decided to kill her.

Divorce was out of the question. He was willing to admit his own defeat, but he did not want every white man in central Kenya to know that he had chosen the wrong woman. He could imagine the gossip that would ripple over the pink gins at sundowner time in the Nakuru club.

"Henry Cutlack," they would say, "is a good farmer and a real tough. He can kill leopards with a knife, but he can't cope with a little blonde cat from Europe."

No, that would hurt. Cutlack was a proud and self-conscious man, and his life of isolation had not given him the thick skin of a man who lives closely with his fellows.

The only alternative to murder was to give in to her, and that was impossible for him. He had made his farm with his own hands, and in the making had developed his own way of life. He couldn't let her change his existence as she planned to do. He was too old, too proud, too stubborn to be changed by the whims of a young wife . . .

She had irritated him from her very first day in Kenya, and he had wondered how to stop himself from turning against her. But it wasn't until the day of the elephant hunt that he had decided to kill her.

The elephant had broken into his eucalyptus nursery and trampled the young trees, and he had wounded it in the neck with a snap shot from his elephant gun. Then he had spent a sweating day without water in the bamboo forest on the trail of the wounded giant. It had killed one of his trackers, an old Kamba tribesman who had been in his service for fifteen years, then escaped in the thickest bamboo.

So Cutlack was in a bad humour when he reached his house. She met him on the verandah, kissed him in front of a servant, gave him a weak pink gin, and said, "Sorry, no ice."

"Why not?"

"The refrigerator needs deicing."

"Well, get on with the job. You're the housewife."

"What a way to speak to your bride," she said lightly. But there was sufficient reproof in her voice to put an edge of anger on his fatigue and irritation. He unloaded his gun, dropped the shells in his pocket, and carried his drink away from her, into the living room that opened onto the verandah. He sat on the divan and put out a hand to feel the leopard skin. But it wasn't there.

He called to her. "Where's the skin, the leopard skin?"

She came in from the verandah, wrinkling her nose. "Oh, that dirty old thing? I had it burned this morning. It smelled and I found a couple of fleas in it."

He looked at the long scars that shone palely in the sun-brown of his left forearm, and remembered

how his blood had mixed with that of the leopard when he had thrust the knife between its ribs. He looked at the pictures she had brought from England to hang on his walls in place of his shields and spears she had banished to a spare room. He thought of the rose garden she planned to put beside his trout pool ("Just a little bit of old England, darling") and thought how his life would change if she had her way. Now she had burned his leopard skin, the symbol of his toughness and self-reliance. It was the last straw.

He remembered the two quarrels in his first month of marriage—the first when she had insisted that his dogs should not enter the bedroom, and the second when she had suggested that the servants should be made to speak English instead of Kikuyu or Swahili, and to wear shoes in the house. She had subtly used the blackmail of her femininity. He thought of her plan to give monthly dinner parties for his acquaintances in Nakuru, then his mind returned to the leopard skin. He looked at the scars on his arm again, and he knew what he had to do.

But how? Poison? A shooting accident? A fall on the rocks above the bamboo forest? He didn't know; he'd have to think of something. But his plot started at once: she must not know that she annoyed him. He must be especially good and pleasant to her.

So Cutlack gave his wife a long and friendly smile. "You burned the old skin? Very wise of you, my dear. My old bachelor habits were pretty filthy. A flea here or there made no difference." He finished his gin and smiled at her again. "Sorry I was so rude. I've had a filthy day. We'll go down to Nakuru tomorrow and get a new refrigerator, a real one that doesn't clog up every couple of days. We'll get some new cloth, too—then you can have those new curtains and chair covers that you've been talking about."

"You're sweet," she said, and kissed his forehead. The kiss coincided with a servant's entry, and he felt his anger revolving again in his empty stomach.

He thought of the second part of the plot as they drove the Land Rover down the red, dusty track to Nakuru the next morning. It was simply to let everyone see how much he loved her, how good she was for him. He turned to her, took a hand off the wheel, and squeezed her arm.

"Why should we rush back? Let's spend the whole day in town and whoop it up at the club this evening. Give you a chance to meet your hundred-mile neighbors."

"That would be lovely," she said. "And we can ask all your friends for a party."

"Good scheme," he said approvingly. Yes, a party would fit into his plan—let them all see how

much he appreciated her in his own home.

He forced himself into a mood of generosity and husbandly sweetness all day, stood at her elbow as she chose the new refrigerator and the cloth for the curtains, took her to an Indian goldsmith's and bought her a set of delicately chased Hindu bangles, and regaled her with amusing stories of the small town's characters as they ate lunch at the hotel.

There was an interested stir among the crowd at the bar when they reached the club that evening. Harper, the cattle dealer, more brash than the others, called out, "Stop drinking, everybody. A new bride is in your midst."

Cutlack said humorously, "Double scotch for the blushing bridegroom, then line up to meet the lovely lady. Two pounds to shake her paw, and five to give her a kiss."

He introduced her to everyone in the room, guiding her round with a hand at her elbow, occasionally giving her an obviously affectionate squeeze. He left her talking with other farmers' wives when he went to the bar.

"You're a lucky fella," said Harper.

"You're damned right," said Cutlack. "She's the finest woman in East Africa, and I'll shoot any man who says otherwise."

An impecunious old rancher with a pack of ugly unmarried daughters asked provocatively, "But why go to England when you can get a perfectly good wife in Kenya?"

"Well," said Cutlack, "I wanted a woman who would remain faithful to me. You know what Kenya is—a land where the birds have no song, the flowers have no scent, and the women have no virtue."

It was an old saying that they had all heard before, but they laughed. Cutlack wondered why he *had* married her. He supposed it was because she was so different from the women he knew, these white women of Africa who were sun-lined and hard, raddled and ginny; perhaps because she was so essentially English. It hadn't been love, he was sure of that now; merely one of those infatuations brought on by the rosy scents of an English summer.

He found it difficult to maintain his smiling and light-hearted mood; but he knew that the second part of his plot had been successful when they left the club at midnight. They had issued invitations to two dozen people to dine with them on the following Saturday night, and he had heard Harper say, "Cutlack's a different fella. That girl has made him human. Now there's a testimonial to the power of love."

He supervised the unloading of the new refrigerator from the Land Rover next morning, and as he was moving it into the kitchen he real-

ized that he now had his method for murder. The whole idea came to him in half a second. She was emptying the old refrigerator, and was looking with a distasteful expression at a slightly rusty tin box that was bound with surgical tape.

"What's this dirty thing doing among the food?" she asked.

"Oh, that," he said casually, taking the box. "Oh, that's anti-snake-bite serum." He tore off the tape and opened the box. Inside were two small bottles each bearing a label: *This serum is effective until January 1957. After that date it will have lost its potency.* He showed her the labels. "It's years out of date. I'll throw this lot away and order some more."

"We should always have some available," she said in her constantly reproving voice. "You never know when it will be needed."

"You're quite right," he said, "but it's difficult stuff to get regularly. It comes from Miami, but don't ask me why. I've always thought it odd that Africa should export snakes to America so that their venom can be turned into serum to be sent back to Africa."

He walked into the yard and ground the bottles to fragments with his heel. He couldn't be too careful. Sometimes the serum, if continuously refrigerated, retained its potency long after the expiration date. He called to her, "I'll be back for lunch. I'm just going up the valley to the mbuga."

"To the what?"

"The mbuga. Swahili for swamp."

"Well, be careful. There might be snakes up there."

"They won't hurt me," he said, and laughed. But inwardly he writhed with anger. Who did she think she was? Telling him to be careful. He could take care of himself without her advice. "There might be snakes," she had said. Of course there were snakes! He threw an empty sack into the Land Rover, drove up the track toward the swamp, stopped to cut two-forked sticks from a tree, then drove on.

The swamp was chattering and heaving with water life. The thousand insects that skate on mud made the surface scutter with movement; frogs of all sizes slipped up and down in the tawny pools like so many bobbing corks; and a ragged banner of finches spun and flittered in the buffalo grass. The birds darted around his head as he probed with his sticks among the roots of plants and in the massive holes made by elephants' feet.

He turned up a puff-adder, the ugliest of African snakes—short, fat, stinking in the hot, steaming light of the sun. He picked it up between the prongs of his sticks and hurled it far into the water. No, a puff-adder was the wrong snake. It moved too slowly and it gave a warning before attacking—it always hissed a couple of seconds before it struck.

He waded on through the sucking mud and yellow water, poking and probing with his sticks. He found two mambas, a green mamba, then a black one, but he threw those away, too. They were among the deadliest of snakes but they were shy. They were apt to slither away if surprised. What he wanted was a cobra, a vicious and deadly snake that would attack speedily, certainly, and without warning.

He found one eventually beyond the swamp.

It lay coiled in a muddy hole in the sunlight. He dropped his sack, prodded the cobra with a stick, and when it reared to strike, standing erect on its tail with its head four feet above the ground, its black hood distended to attack him, he felled it with one stick, held its head to the ground with the other, then raked it into the sack which he held open with his feet.

A neat and professional job, he thought, but the sort of job that any man had to do well if he lived under the shadow of Mount Kenya. It had to be done neatly. If you didn't do it neatly you had just enough time left to make a very brief will.

He tied the neck of the sack securely and thought of the snake's anger. It was Thursday. He would keep it in the sack without food until Saturday, then he would let the snake strike for him.

He threw his sticks into the swamp, drove back to the farm, and parked the Land Rover beside the storage hut. The door was padlocked and he had the only key. This hut was used for household goods—flour, canned food, liquor by the case, and tobacco.

He opened the door, and, concealed from the house by the Land Rover, threw in the sack. It landed among other sacks that lay on the floor. He watched the sack writhe for a moment, then locked the door, buttoned his key ring securely into his back pocket, and walked to the house. She was waiting for him on the verandah.

"How was your mbuga?"

"Fine," he said happily. He felt almost jovial.

"See any snakes?"

"Only pink ones. Too much Scotch at the club last night."

"Hair of the dog," she said, and handed him a pink gin.

He raised his glass. "Here's to a long life," he said.

"Cheers," she said vaguely, then, "I was thinking—that flat stretch of grass by the river where you have the calves—we could build a guest house there. Then we could have people to stay for whole weekends."

"Good idea," he said, smiling, and feeling, for the first time in his life, brotherly toward a snake.

She was in the kitchen as the sun fell behind a shoulder of the White Highlands on the Saturday evening. She was teaching the Kikuyu cook how to put stuffed olives and

small sausages on toothpicks. She called through to him, "Have you checked the whiskey, Henry?"

"Doing it now," he called. He arranged bottles on a table in a corner of the living room, calculating what twenty-six people might drink before dinner. Two bottles of gin, two of scotch, one of vermouth, a jug of fresh lime juice, one bottle of rum, one of brandy, a jug of fresh orange juice, soda siphons recharged, ginger ale, beer—yes, the scotch would have to go. He picked up the two bottles of scotch and carried them across the yard to the storage hut. He unlocked the door, took in the bottles, and stood them on a wooden crate.

He untied the neck of the sack, shook it, and stepped quickly from the hut as he saw the black head slip out of the sack's mouth. He clicked the padlock into position, and checked the key ring in his pocket. He found that he was sweating slightly and drew his hand across his forehead. His mouth was dry. He picked a blade of grass from the clump that grew waist-high beside the wall of the hut, stuck it into his mouth to bring back the saliva, and went back to the living room. He clinked bottles as he poured himself a gin and tonic.

She came into the room and said, "Do you like it?" She twirled round before him.

He looked at the black dress. "Yes, very much." Then he realized that it had long sleeves. "But . . ."

"But what?"

"Well—on a point of—of tact—you'll look a little out of place among the others."

"Why?"

"Evening wear in Kenya," he explained, "in this part of Kenya, is limited to a skirt and blouse. This is a farming community, you know, not a suburb of commuters."

"You mean, I'm overdressed?"

"I'm afraid so."

"Well," she said sharply, "these yokel women can see a little fashion for a change."

He found that he was sweating again. "No, please—a skirt and blouse?"

"All right," she snapped, and turned into the passage that led to the bedrooms.

He poured himself another drink and heard a slight hum from the back of the house as the household generator turned to full power to take on the evening load of lighting. A servant padded in, silent and white-gowned, and switched on the lights in the living room and on the verandah. Cutlack walked onto the verandah and felt the sweat on his forehead grow cold in the evening air.

He watched the dusk falling into his valley, saw the lights of a vehicle slanting up the valley track. "Guests," he called through the house to his wife.

"Coming," she replied, then called back, "I suppose I can wear stockings?"

"No, no," he shouted. He'd forgotten that.

"All right," she shouted angrily, "all right! God knows why I bothered to buy a trousseau."

The car's lights swung onto the grass in front of the house, and Cutlack walked down to meet his guests. He switched on his gaiety. "Bang on time for sundowners. But I'm two drinks ahead of you. Come and let me ply you with filthy liquor."

His wife called from the verandah, "Come on, you people. I'm dying to start being a colonial hostess."

Cutlack felt satisfied when he saw that her legs were bare, and that the sleeveless blouse left her arms uncovered. He grasped her bare elbow, then slipped an arm round her waist, kissed her cheek, and said with assumed solemnity, "My dear, may I present your first guests? John and Mary Rymington from Nakuru. John and Mary, this is my lovely wife."

They strolled across the verandah into the living room. Cutlack approached the table in the corner. "What's your tipple? What will you have, Mary?

"Something ice-cold and lion-strong."

"Martini?"

"That would be just right."

"Same for you, John?"

"Scotch and soda for me," said John Rymington.

"Damn," said Cutlack, looking at the bottles. "Believe it or not there's no scotch here. I could have sworn I brought some out. Dearest," he said, taking his key ring from his pocket, "could you slip over to the hut and get some scotch while I mix this martini?"

"Make one for me, too," she said as she took the keys. She skipped down the verandah steps into the dusk, across the yard, toward the hut, singing as she went.

Cutlack heard her feet tattling across the yard. Must be calm now, he thought. Mustn't show any signs. Will she scream or just totter back and say she's been bitten? Or will the wretched thing miss her? Must be calm. A steady hand and steady voice. "How dry do you like it, Mary?"

"Dry as you can make it."

"One to five."

"That's fine—but ice-cold."

The scream split the dusk.

Then a cry. "Henry!"

"What's that?" said Cutlack sharply, interrupting his pouring.

Cutlack put down the gin bottle and ran outside. "What is it?" he shouted.

"Come here—quickly!"

I should have been an actor, he thought as he ran across the yard. He felt elated by his performance. The Rymingtons were running after him. His wife stood in the doorway of the hut clutching her

right shoulder with her left hand.

"What's wrong dear?"

"A snake," she whispered. "It bit me."

The cobra reared on the concrete floor of the hut. It seemed to pulsate in the irregular glow of the single lamp that was fed by the pulsing household generator.

Cutlack said sharply, "Mary, get her indoors. Snake-bite kit's in the refrigerator. John, get my shotgun. It's in the study." Then he slammed shut the door, stood with his back to it and looked up at the first stars.

He was breathing deeply, feeling calm and slightly majestic. Beyond the house the dark valley was lanced by light as more guests approached. He would have to put on an act for them, too, but he could do it. He knew he could. "Oh, you're clever, yes, you are," he whispered to himself.

Rymington ran across the yard, loading the gun as he came. He thrust it at Cutlack, then asked, "Would you like me to shoot?"

"No. I want to do this." Cutlack lowered himself on one knee. "Open the door and stand back," he ordered.

Rymington put his hand to the door handle. Cutlack was thinking: at any moment now she will discover there's no snake-bite serum. "Push that door open," he said sharply.

Rymington pushed and jumped back. The door swung open. Cutlack took a careful aim, and blew the cobra in half with one barrel. It was then that he felt the blow on the side of his neck. It was like being struck lightly with a cane.

He turned his body and saw a gleaming black head swaying away from him in the waist-high grass beside the wall of the hut.

All the guests had arrived and were standing silently in the late Henry Cutlack's living room. "And that was that," Rymington said to the group of farmers. "The female cobra had got locked in the store, and the male was waiting outside. I suppose poor old Cutlack was so dazed by shock that he must have forgotten about that."

"About what?"

"That a female cobra always attracts a male—even through nine inches of brick."

One of the farmers' wives said sadly, "And you could see they were going to be such a happy couple."

Another one-page riddle story—and again fairplay plus . . .

FAIR GAME

by JUAN PAGE

IT HAD BEEN RASH OF HER TO GO WHERE SHE HAD GONE UNESCORTED AND unprotected. What had started on impulse as a hare-brained but possibly profitable adventure had turned into a panic-stricken flight. The minions of the old man were after her, brutal, beast-faced, grinning, the pale pair of them moving silently and obliquely, countering each desperate move she made to escape.

They worked perfectly together, tireless and efficient, and at no time did a word pass between them; even at the end they gave no sound of triumph. Their quarry too was mute: she uttered no cry of defiance, entreaty, or despair. She fled without hope, and they followed without mercy in a stillness that was somehow inhuman.

Once a small dark man tried to help her, but he was despatched before he was even in position to fight. Once she took refuge behind a friendly clergyman, but again her pursuers, no respecters of person, brushed him aside and resumed their implacable chase. The old man was determined to have her, and have her he would.

As the crowd thinned out, there was less and less chance for her to get away. Then the nearer man dodged backward and to the side, and his companion slanted in behind her, and she was forced to move quickly to prevent immediate capture.

But time was running out, and in the end she was driven into a corner, and the two pale men, the expressions on their grotesque animal faces unchanged, moved in for the kill.

It was over in a moment.

CHALLENGE TO THE READER: Can you identify the actors in this little melodrama? If not, please turn to page 117 to check your conclusions.

a new story by

EDITORS' FILE CARD

AUTHOR:	**JULIAN SYMONS**
TITLE:	***Strolling in the Square One Day***
TYPE:	Detective Story
DETECTIVE:	Francis Quarles
LOCALE:	London
TIME:	The Present
COMMENTS:	*Have you ever had your picture taken on the street by a "candid cameraman"? Did you know it could be dangerous? Well, this story will tell you what every citizen should know . . .*

FRANCIS QUARLES WALKED ACROSS Trafalgar Square on a clear blustery November day. Wind blew the fountains' spray toward him, slightly wetting his suede shoes. Round his feet pigeons cooed and strutted. A small girl stood with arms outstretched holding food, unable to contain her laughter as the birds scrambled over her hands, shoulders, and head.

As Quarles watched, smiling benevolently, a pigeon jumped onto his own head. He stood in the Square, a big man wrapped in a teddy-bear overcoat, leaning on his walking stick, a pigeon perched on his head. A photographer clicked his camera.

"Very nice, sir. Three for five shillings, post-card site. I'll just take another to make sure."

Quarles waved his hand dismissively, shook off the pigeon, and walked away. Two minutes later he was in the lift going up to his office in Soames Buildings, overlooking the Square. He went in from the corridor entrance and pressed down the switch for Molly Player. She came in.

"We have a visitor," Molly announced. "Wants to see you, urgent, won't give her name."

"What sort of woman?"

"Late thirties, I should say. Elegant. You'll like her." Molly made a face. "Class. Money. Doesn't know I exist. Looks familiar, somehow, but it may be just that air of breeding."

It was possible to tell a good deal about a woman's education and background, Francis Quarles believed, by such small things as the way she sat in a chair. The woman who now sat opposite his desk seemed perfectly at ease. The light from the bit window that faced her showed smoothly classical features, a little inexpressive perhaps, but that might have been the result of her deliberate self-contained calm.

She wore a plain blue suit, severe and simple. Yet the impression she produced was, curiously, one of controlled passion. An intelligent woman, Quarles concluded, and potentially a dangerous one.

He offered her a cigarette. She took it and inhaled deeply.

"Mr. Quarles? I have heard that you are the sort of man who doesn't betray a confidence." He merely nodded. "My name is Lesley Riverside."

"Of course. Silly of me."

Lord Riverside was Under Secretary to the Ministry of Home Security. He had married, about ten years ago, a woman much younger than himself, the beautiful Lesley Stoneham, who had had a reputation for gaiety and wildness. Her name had been linked with those of half a dozen young men, but all that, as far as Quarles knew, was in the past.

"Mr. Quarles," she said with faultless composure, "I have been very stupid. I want you to get back a photograph for me—a photograph showing me with a man. It is a perfectly innocent photograph. It was taken out there in the Square."

"In Trafalgar Square?"

"Yes. We were standing under one of the Landseer lions. This little photographer came up to us, clicked his camera, and said that he had taken a snap. We told him that we didn't want it." She added in her even voice, "We should have smashed his camera."

"Nothing else happened? He took no second photograph?"

"No. I want the negative of that photograph back, Mr. Quarles."

He met her gaze with one as steady as her own. "Why?"

"It is embarrassing," she said, but she showed no embarrassment. "Quite a long while ago I had an affair with a man named Tony Hartman. George—my husband—knew about it. I had to promise never to see Tony Hartman again. George is a jealous man—I might even say, pathologically jealous. He said that if I ever met Tony again he'd—"

"Yes?"

"George said he would kill him."

"And the man with you in the Square—"

She said coolly, "Yes. The man with me was Tony Hartman."

"You say this photograph was taken a week ago. It may have been destroyed by now. What makes you think you're in any trouble?"

"This came today."

Quarles read the letter she pushed across the desk. It said: "You and your friend make a lovely pair. A certain person would be interested. Send £20 in ones to James Johnson, c/o Charing Cross Road Post Office."

"Are you going to pay it?" Quarles asked.

"Certainly not. That's why I've come to you."

"All right," Quarles said, although he thought it was far from all right. "But this will cost you money."

She wrinkled her nose distastefully. "As long as it is understood that I am *buying* it. You can go up to fifty pounds."

"That's not very high."

"I have no intention of being blackmailed for a large sum of money, Mr. Quarles. I might go to seventy-five."

"Tell me what you can remember about the man who took the photograph."

"He was a small man, rather grubby, fair hair, brown suit, very fancy suede shoes, a bad squint in his left eye."

Quarles was glad that his own suede shoes were under the desk. "You're very observant, Lady Riverside. Did you notice whether he was wearing a badge?"

"A badge? No, I'm sure I should have noticed it. Is there anything else you want to know?"

"I don't think so. I'll report to you when I have some news."

"By telephone, please, between ten and eleven o'clock each morning. I shall answer the telephone then."

She did not extend her hand as she got up to go. Quarles watched her from his window as she crossed the Square, unhurried and unruffled and waited for a taxi. Molly came in and stood beside him.

"What was she like?"

"An intelligent icicle. She says she's being blackmailed."

"And is she?"

"That's what I'm going to find out."

Trafalgar Square is one of the three or four places in central London (Westminster Abbey and the Tower of London are two of the others) where street photographers cluster, cameras ready, to snap gaping Americans, innocent Europeans, and those up from the provinces to see the sights of London. Some of the photographers are licensed by the L.C.C. and wear badges to say so, but others operate independently and without permission.

Quarles's guess that the man he was after would prove to be an independent operator was proved correct. Two of the official photographers recognized Lady Riverside's description as that of a man named

Joe James, and one of them, who knew Quarles, was able to give him James's address.

"You want to be careful with Joe James, Mr. Quarles. What do you want him for?"

"It might be blackmail. Would he be up to that?"

"He'd be up to anything. He only uses this camera pitch as a come-on for mugs. I wouldn't trust him further than I could throw him."

The address Quarles had been given was in Fendy Street, near Paddington Station. Fendy Street proved to be a cul-de-sac of condemned, or at least eminently condemnable, Victorian houses. Children played in the gutters while their older brothers and sisters, drainpiped and lipsticked, lounged against the walls. The eyes that followed Quarles's bulky figure as he walked down the street wearing his teddy-bear overcoat, carrying his loaded stick, were definitely hostile.

The number that Quarles had been given was 22. There were five bells outside the house. Quarles pressed it. Nothing happened.

A small greasy-haired girl in a soiled red frock, her face angelic beneath layers of dirt and dust, said, "They don't work, mister. Who d'yer want?"

"Joe James."

"He'll be at the Black Horse round the corner. Least, he usually is, this time of day."

"Thank you." She stared at him as though he were speaking an unknown language, and looked unbelievingly at the shilling he gave her.

Saloon or Public, Quarles wondered, and pushed open the Saloon bar door. A couple of minutes later an unobtrusive man wearing a gray trilby hat and a threadbare gray suit, who had tailed Quarles from his office, followed him in.

Quarles recognized Joe James immediately. The photographer leaned against the bar with a glass of beer in front of him. Quarles tapped him on the shoulder.

"Mr. James?"

The squint was very marked. "Who wants him?"

"Or Mr. James Johnson, if you like that better." Quarles added mildly, "It's a mistake to use your own initials, or part of your real name, when you're sending letters like that. Let's talk, shall we?"

Joe James was less shaken than Quarles had expected him to be. James led the way to a table in the corner. "Have you brought the money?"

"No."

"Then you can get out. Who are you, anyway? How'd you find me?"

"My name is Quarles. I'm a private detective, and I've got friends who know you. Blackmail is a serious offense."

"Don't give me that. She'd never dare."

"Why not?"

One eye looked at Quarles. The other stared fixedly at the door.

"You don't know much, do you? She's sent a boy to do a man's job."

"My client wants the negative of that photograph."

"She's got a hope. When I spotted her photo in a picture paper the other day—at my dentist's it was—I said to myself, Joe boy, you're fixed for life. Don't kill the goose that's going to lay the golden eggs, I said. A nice steady twenty pounds a month I reckon it's worth. She can afford it, and that's what she's going to pay."

"It's not worth it."

The squinting eye roved wildly. "Let her go to the police, then."

"Let me see a print of it."

"Look." Joe James's forefinger jabbed at Quarles's chest. "*You're* not seeing anything. *She* knows what picture I took, and she knows I've only got to send it to a certain party and she'd be—"

"Yes," Quarles said, as Joe James stopped suddenly. "What would happen?"

The little man smacked down his glass on the table. His voice was low but intense. "I don't believe you know what it's all about. You just go back and tell her to pack up that money and send it like I said. And if you know what's good for you, get out of here."

"I'm here to buy the negative. Thirty pounds for it."

"Don't make me laugh."

"Fifty."

"Not for sale."

"A hundred."

It was a cold day, but the little man's brow was thick with sweat. He did not answer.

"Five hundred pounds," Quarles said softly. "Suppose I offered you five hundred pounds for the negative. Should I get it then, Joe?"

"Get out." Joe James's hand moved downward. The empty glass he was holding broke on the table edge, and he raised the jagged fragment menacingly. Quarles brought up his walking stick and sent the fragment of glass flying. In the hubbub that ensued he left quietly. He did not notice the man in the gray trilby hat and the threadbare gray suit, who stayed on, nursing his half pint of bitter.

On the following morning, just after ten o'clock, Quarles picked up the telephone. The voice at the other end said, "Yes?"

"Lady Riverside? This is Francis Quarles."

"Oh, yes." The voice became one degree colder. "I won't require your services any further, Mr. Quarles. If you send in your bill I will see that you receive a check."

Whatever Quarles had expected, it was not this. "But my report—"

"Is of no interest to me. The matter has been settled."

The line was disconnected. Quarles stared at the telephone.

"I was listening," Molly Player said when he went to the outer office. Not without malice she added, "Her ladyship doesn't soil her hands

with the lower orders more than is necessary. Where are you going?"

Quarles's face was dark with anger. "Back to Fendy Street."

He went out into a London which today was yellow with fog—a fog so palpable that a knife could slice it. The photographers were gone from the Square, buses crawled, even the pigeons were muted.

When Quarles reached Fendy Street it was empty and silent. Even the teenagers and the children had disappeared. He went to the door of Number 22, ignored the bells, and plied the knocker heavily.

The door was opened by the little girl to whom he had given the shilling. Her frock looked a little dirtier, her hair a little greasier, than they had done the day before.

"Oh, it's you. Joe James ain't in."

Quarles looked at his watch. "It's too early for the pub."

"That's right. 'E ain't out either. What I mean is, there's his milk. 'E always takes it upstairs for his tea. What I mean is," she said triumphantly, "'e ain't 'ere."

"I'll just take up the milk and make sure. He's first floor, isn't he?"

"Second." This time she accepted the shilling as a matter of course.

Quarles took up the half pint of milk to the second floor and knocked. There was no reply. He turned the door handle, and the door opened. The room was full of fog. Joe James lay on the floor in his pajamas, his tongue hanging out of a discolored face. The cord pulled round his neck was so tight that it had cut into his skin.

Quarles did not touch the body, but he examined the room. It was full of fog because the window had been left wide open. He crossed over to it, looked out, and saw to one side and below the flat roof of an extension. It would have been easy enough for any moderately active man to climb up on to that roof and thence to this window.

The room was in utter disorder, with the contents of drawers strewn on the floor and the bedding cut to ribbons. Empty gin and whiskey bottles lined the walls. In one corner stood a metal filing cabinet, its drawers gaping.

Quarles carefully went through the notes and photographs inside, and saw without surprise that at least half a dozen people would have had good reason for wanting Joe James dead. The little man had not confined his photography to the streets. But Quarles found no photograph or negative relating to Lady Riverside.

The papers from the dead man's wallet were scattered on the floor. Among them was a clipping from a newspaper five days old, headed *EXPULSION OF IRON CURTAIN DIPLOMAT. CHARGE OF SPYING.* The story went on to say that a particular Iron Curtain country had been notified that the British Government had informa-

tion to the effect that Max Nafescu, a Third Secretary in the Embassy, had been engaged in espionage activities, and that his presence in this country was no longer acceptable. The Embassy had protested strongly, but Nafescu had been sent home. There was a photograph of him, smiling and looking engagingly boyish, and another photograph which showed him, coat collar up, boarding an airplane.

Quarles read and reread this clipping, and then put it in his pocket.

It took him more than an hour to get back to Trafalgar Square in the fog. He telephoned Lady Riverside, and spoke to a manservant who asked his name, went away, and returned.

"Lady Riverside is not at home."

"I think you're mistaken. Tell her that it is in connection with a friend in—" and Quarles named the Iron Curtain country.

"But, sir—"

"Just tell her that. I'll hold on."

It was just a minute later when he heard her icy voice. "Mr. Quarles? I haven't the least idea what you're talking about."

"Joe James is dead."

"I have never heard the name."

"And I am talking about Max Nafescu."

There was a silence. Then she said, "What do you want?"

"To see you. Today."

"It is inconvenient. I have a dinner party this evening."

"It won't take more than a few minutes."

"Very well. Come here at seven o'clock."

The house was in Kensington Square, tall, narrow, and elegant. He was shown into a first-floor drawing room, which had French windows leading out to a balcony. Quarles walked over to these windows, parted the curtains, and stared out at the fog. When he turned she was standing in the doorway, and she had spoken his name. She wore a dark blue dress that reached the ground, and there was a blaze of diamonds at her throat. Her cheeks were flushed. She was one of the most beautiful women he had ever seen.

"Mr. Quarles, I owe you an apology. I should have explained to you this morning why I wanted no further investigation made. I was unnecessarily brusque. Forgive me."

He said nothing.

"Last night I spoke to my husband. I told him about Tony Hartman, about the photograph. I told him that whatever had been between us was over. I had misjudged my husband. He forgave me, he understood. We could afford to laugh at this petty blackmailer. You see?"

"It won't do," Quarles said. "You're very good, but it won't do. You're not worried about Tony Hartman, and you haven't told your husband anything. You're worried about a charge of treason, Lady Riverside."

She walked across to the mantel and put her bare arm on it. "That is ridiculous."

"Let me tell you a story—the story of a beautiful woman who liked excitement, and was bored with her life. Somehow—at a party, a reception—she met a handsome young man, Third Secretary in an Embassy. Was there a love affair between them? Possibly, but it wasn't important. The important thing was that her husband was in the Government, and she was in a position to pass on secrets. Perhaps at first she did it as a kind of lark, a kind of adventure. Later it became more than that.

"They met in, of all places, Trafalgar Square. But after all, why not? It is crowded—the people are preoccupied with the birds, the fountains, each other. It was bad luck that a photographer took a snap of them together. But still, this wasn't important—it became important only when the Third Secretary was accused of espionage, had to leave the country, and the photographer saw the story in the paper. And from then on the bad luck piled up.

"The photographer saw a picture of her in a glossy magazine, and he remembered the two who had been so insistent that they didn't want to be photographed. He realized that this photograph was worth a lot of money. By a further piece of bad luck, he was a petty blackmailer. So he wrote a blackmail note.

"And what was our society hostess to do now? I can tell you what she did." Quarles's dark eyes were angry. She did not meet his gaze. "She went to a private detective and told him a cock-and-bull story which he partly believed. She wanted him to find the photographer, that was all. She told somebody at the Embassy, and they had the private detective followed. He found the photographer for them. Then they killed him, and searched for the negative."

"I didn't want—" she began, and stopped. Then she said defiantly, "You have no proof."

"They didn't find the negative, did they?"

She stared. "You mean that you've found it?"

"It is in a safe place."

"What do you want for it?" Her composure had broken at last. She came over and clutched at his coat. "How much?"

"It is not for sale."

"I don't understand."

He disengaged her hands from his coat. "You can't understand, can you, that some things are not for sale?"

"But—but what *do* you want?"

"I shall deliver the negative to the proper place tomorrow morning. Unless circumstances make it unnecessary."

Her whole body seemed to sag for a moment, then she was all ice and iron again. "I think I understand now."

"Scandal is always undesirable. And I should say this: if anything happens to me, it will not help you."

In a low voice she said, "Nothing will happen. I've done with all that."

He left her staring into the looking glass over the mantel. He let himself out of the house and walked into the fog. His footsteps on the pavement were muffled, as though he were walking in cotton-wool.

On the next day the fog had lifted. A watery sun shone from a pale-blue sky. Molly had the paper ready for him when he entered the office.

"Isn't it terrible about Lady Riverside?" Quarles raised his eyebrows. "She went out for a walk last night—had a bad headache after a dinner party—and stepped right in front of a passing car. She was killed at once."

"It was the end she chose," Quarles said. He told the story to Molly, who listened spellbound.

"She was really selling secrets?"

"Giving them away, I guess—just for the thrill of it. She was that sort of woman," Quarles said.

Molly bit one of her fingernails. "There's one thing I don't see. How did you get hold of the negative?"

"I didn't," Quarles said. "There wasn't any negative. I knew that when she first came here and told me that the photographer had clicked his camera just once. These street photographers never take a film on speculation that way—they simply click the camera once to stop you, then go into their sales talk, and if you want a photograph, then they really take one. James didn't have a picture to sell—he was bluffing, as I found out when I offered him five hundred pounds for the negative. I was bluffing too—but I had more luck."

"She was a beautiful woman," he added, and sighed. "And intelligent too. But not quite intelligent enough."

BEST MYSTERIES OF THE MONTH
recommended by ANTHONY BOUCHER

Both Robert Bloch and the late Cyril Hare are familiar contributors to EQMM; and many of THE BEST DETECTIVE STORIES OF CYRIL HARE (Walker, $3.50) and the tales in Bloch's BLOOD RUNS COLD (Simon & Schuster, $3.50) are from this magazine. Bloch is as sharply American as Hare is acutely English; but both are masters of ingenuity, irony and technique in the short story of crime. ELLERY QUEEN'S 1962 ANTHOLOGY (Davis, $1) happily stresses the simon-pure detective stories from EQMM 1943-1957.

★★★★ **THE RED PAVILION, *by Robert van Gulik*** (Lounz, $2.50)

Exotica and erotica nicely blended with detection in this tale of Judge Dee and an ancient Chinese city of pleasure.

★★★★ **A FRIEND OF MARY ROSE, *by Elizabeth Fenwick*** (Harper, $3.50)

Quiet and real terror, sensitively reported, as a blind old man tracks down an unrecognized psychopath.

★★★ **IN THE RED, *by Joan Fleming*** (Washburn, $2.95)

Oddly interesting people and off-trail plot (as usual) from the gratifyingly diverse Miss Fleming.

★★★ **DIE ALL, DIE MERRILY, *by Leo Bruce*** (British Book Centre, $3.25)

The Detective Story, with full formal plotting and witty graceful writing—like time travel to the Golden Age of the 1930's.

★★★ **BANKING ON DEATH, *by Emma Lathen*** (Macmillan, $3.50)

Unusual material (a large bank's handling of trusts), unusual detective (a banking v.p.), in an unusually good first novel.

★★★ **DEATH BY DROWNING, *by Robin Daniel*** (Walker, $3.50)

Chilling study of a neurotic's scheme to destroy others by her suicide, firmly substantial in plot and writing.

Even fiction readers should be fascinated by the factual CHRONICLE OF A CRIME: THE LARRY LORD MOTHERWELL STORY by Eleanor Dabrohua, with Ray Brennan (Crime Club, $3.95)—the firsthand account of an almost unique case of successful amateur detection in real life.

BRING THE KILLER TO JUSTICE

by ROSS MACDONALD

(*continued from page 32*)

The door opened on a shallow staircase lined with shelves. I stumbled down the steps to a second door. Its opening edge struck softly against a pair of hind quarters.

These belonged to a heavy old man wearing a blue business suit and a wide-brimmed white hat. His eyes peered at me from deep nests of sun-wrinkles. They held the confident vacancy that comes from the long exercise of other people's power.

"Where do you think you're going?"

"Coming in."

"You're not invited. This is an official investigation. I'm the Sheriff of this county, in case you don't know it."

"I know it now, Sheriff."

I looked past him into the greenhouse. In the central aisle, between rows of massed cymbidiums, Mildred and Zinnie and Grantland were grouped around the body, which lay face up. Jerry's face was covered with a gray silk handkerchief.

Zinnie's mouth worked stiffly. "Let him come in if he wants to, Ostie. Judging by what's been done so far, we can use all the help we can get."

The Sheriff flushed angrily, but he stood aside to let me enter. Which reminded me that Zinnie had just fallen heir to the Hellman ranch—and the power that went with it.

'Okay," he said to me, "so you want to be a help. Take a look at this."

The Sheriff raised the lid of a black steel box which stood on a workbench beside the door. He lifted out a piece of shingle to which a medium-caliber revolver was tied with twine.

"Mrs. Hellman, Mrs. *Mildred* Hellman, said you had some trouble with her husband this morning. Did he pull this gun on you?"

"No. He had no gun that I saw. I take it this is the gun that killed Jerry Hellman."

"You take it correct, mister. The doctor found it right beside the body. Two shells fired, two holes in the man's back. The doctor says he died instantly—that right, Doc?"

"Within a few seconds, I'd say." Grantland moved around the body toward us, cool and professional. "There was almost no external bleeding. My guess is that one of the bullets pierced his heart and stopped it."

"Did you discover the body?" I said.

"I did, as a matter of fact."

"I'm interested in matters of fact. What brought you out to the greenhouse?"

"The shots, of course."

"You heard them?"

"Very distinctly. I was on the way out to my car, with some things of Martha's. I heard the two reports, in rapid succession. I came right in here, too late to catch Carl, unfortunately."

"Did you see him?"

'No. He went out the back door, just before I came in the front. I heard his footsteps, running, and I thought of chasing him. But my first concern was with the wounded man."

Zinnie said wearily, "Ostie? Do we have to go through all this again? I'm very anxious to get Martha out of here. God knows what this is doing to her."

Grantland nodded in solemn agreement. "Mrs. Hellman has asked me to drive her daughter and her housekeeper into Purissima. In addition to which, I have office visits scheduled."

"Sure, Doc," Ostervelt said. "You go ahead. Thanks for your cooperation."

Grantland went out the front door. The two women followed more slowly. They walked with their arms around each other, down the funereal aisle between the rows of flowers, bronze and green and blood-red. Their faces were sistered by shock.

"A terrible thing," the Sheriff said, wagging his head. "Brother against brother. I was close to that one there. I feel for him like he was my own son."

His eyes were cold and watchful, and I distrusted his old-man's sentimentality.

"Where were you when the shooting occurred?"

"Out in the groves, tracking the brother. He was travelling in circles, closing in for the kill."

"You're sure about that?"

"You're damn right I'm sure." He seemed touchy about his professional competence, and he went on rather incoherently, "It's no fault of mine I couldn't protect him. It's a big place—four of my men are still out there. You want to make something out of it?"

"Not a thing, Sheriff."

The back door of the greenhouse opened and Carmichael came in with another man. The Deputy's blouse was dark with sweat and he was breathing deeply. The other man was a Japanese of indeterminate age. When he saw the dead man on the floor, he stood still, with his head bowed, and took off his frayed straw hat.

Carmichael sat on his heels and lifted the handkerchief over the dead man's face. His breath came out.

"Take a good long look," the Sheriff said. "You were supposed to be guarding this house."

Carmichael stood up, his mouth tight. "I did my best."

"Then I'd hate like merry hell to see your worst. Where you been?"

"Trying to run down Hellman. I lost him in the creekbed. He must have circled around and come back here. I ran into Sam Yogano back of the bunkhouse and he told me he heard shots."

"You heard them?" Ostervelt said to the Japanese.

"Yessir. Two shots." Yogano had a mouthy old-country accent, and some trouble with his esses.

"Where were you when you heard them?"

"Bunkhouse."

"But you didn't come and look in the greenhouse?"

"No sir." Yogano held out his hands, parallel and close together, as if to measure off the narrow limits of his knowledge. "I hear two shots. I hear shots every day. I see guns all morning. Shooting quail, maybe?"

"All right," the Sheriff said heavily. "Let's get back to this morning." He moved to the workbench and picked up the shingle with the revolver attached to it. "Is this the gun Mr. Carl was carrying?"

"Yessir. I think so."

"Did he pull it on you?"

"No sir."

"How'd you happen to see it?"

"He had it in his hand. Stuck it in the top of his pants when he saw me."

"Did you talk to him?"

"He said, hello, Sam, glad to see you. I said, hello, boss."

"Did you ask him where he got the gun, what he was doing with it?"

"I didn't ask him nothing. It was his gun, none of my business."

"What do you mean, it was his gun?"

"It was his gun," Yogano repeated stolidly. "His father gave it to him long time ago. Mr. Carl used to shoot at targets in the gully. I used to load for him."

"Load this gun?"

"Looks like it." Yogano bent over the gun, examinging it minutely. "Yessir, same gun."

"Why didn't you tell me all this before?"

"You didn't ask me."

Ostervelt looked up at the glass roof as if to seek help and comfort in his deep tribulations. The only apparent result was the arrival of the Deputy Coroner, the Sheriff's photographer, and a civilian carrying a fingerprinting kit. They took over the greenhouse.

I went back through the kitchen and found Zinnie in the living room. The pain she'd just been through, or something else, had erased a certain crudity in her good looks and left them pretty dazzling. I hoped the "something else" wasn't the thought of five million dollars shining in her head.

"Where's Mildred?"

"I got her to lie down for a bit. She's worn ragged."

"You're not."

"Thank you, sir."

She disposed herself on a white bouclé oblong, shoulders and head back, one knee drawn up, breasts sharp as the mountains of the moon. The careful pose made me wonder what her background had been.

She caught my look of inquiry, and misinterpreted it. "You want to know about that scene on the front porch, no doubt. It didn't mean as much as you might think. Dr. Grantland is an old friend of the family, and incidentally my personal doctor. Naturally I turned to him in a crisis. You'd think even Jerry would understand that. But he's always been irrationally jealous. I was a model before I married Jerry, but he was so possessive, I couldn't even have my picture taken. I couldn't even look at a man for five years."

"You can now."

"I'm not interested in men."

"You're young to retire."

"All right." She rearranged her limbs for optimum effect. She had such good bones; her skelton would have been an ornament in any closet. "I don't have to be frank with you, but I will be. I've been—well, fond of Charlie Grantland in my time. We had a little thing, nothing serious. It certainly doesn't mean I shot my husband. I'm not even glad he's dead." She sounded slightly surprised.

"That's big of you."

"It happens to be true. I felt *sorry* for the poor joe when he was lying there. It wasn't his fault he didn't have it—anyway, I had nothing to do with his death. We know who did."

"Do we?"

"It's obvious enough. Carl had the

gun. He came out here to kill Jerry. That old fool of a Sheriff couldn't stop him."

"That's your version. I'd kind of like to hear his, before we judge him guilty and execute him."

"Who said anything about executing him? They don't execute crazy people. They simply put them away. Look what happened last time."

"What did happen last time?"

Zinnie forgot her pose. Her face went slack for an instant. She put the back of her hand to her mouth. Over it her green eyes narrowed watchfully.

"Did Carl murder his father?" I said bluntly. "Is that what you're trying to tell me?"

"I'm not telling you anything," she said behind her hand. "Not a thing. I don't know why you came here. What's in it for you? Mildred can't afford to pay you much."

"You can."

"I see." She rose in a single abrupt movement. "I thought we'd be getting around to the subject of money. Very well. How much will you take to leave here, to lose yourself?"

"From you, not a cent."

She missed my point again. Zinnie wasn't stupid, but her looks had made it unnecessary for her to develop her brains. She let her eyes take on a melting-iceberg look.

"That's better. We could get along."

"Charlie wouldn't like it."

"He doesn't own me. You're nice. I can be *very* nice."

She came close, resting her hands on my shoulders, easing her body forward until it rested lightly against mine. She moved in small intricate ways.

I wanted no part of her, and I let it show. She exploded against me, hissing like an angry cat, then flung herself onto her white bouclé oblong. Footsteps whispered on the polished floor behind me. It was Mildred.

"What on earth's the matter?" Mildred asked.

Zinnie yelled in a glaring fury, "You're the matter, you little sneak!"

"I don't know what you mean."

"I mean this. Get out of my house. Take your bully boy along with you. And keep your psycho husband away from me, or by God I'll have him shot down like a dog."

"You wouldn't, Zinnie."

"Wouldn't I?"

Except for her red lips and wide green eyes, Zinnie's face was carved with chalk. I hadn't expected the armistice to last.

The driveway was beginning to look like a parking lot. There were several additional cars in it, including mine, a black panel truck with county markings, and a third patrol car. A deputy I didn't know was sitting in the latter, monitoring a turned-up radio.

"Attention all units," its big dehumanized voice was saying. "Be on the lookout for following subject wanted as suspect in murder which occurred at Hellman ranch in Buena Vista Valley approximately one hour ago: Carl Hellman, white, male, twenty-four, six-foot-three, two hundred pounds, blond hair, blue eyes, pale complexion, wearing blue cotton workshirt and trousers. Suspect may be armed and is considered dangerous. When last seen he was traveling across country on foot."

Mildred leaned on the veranda

railing, looking out across the green countryside as if it was a desert where nothing grew.

"Where do you plan to go?" I said.

"Home, I guess. I have to see to Mother."

"Have you thought of the possibility that Carl may turn up there?"

"I only hope he does. He's in terrible danger running away like this. I tried to tell him that when I saw him. But he didn't seem to take me seriously."

"Was he disturbed, emotionally disturbed?"

"It's hard to say. I've seen him much worse."

"Has he been violent before?"

"Carl wasn't violent today. He simply didn't want me to hold him. He pushed me away when I tried to take his—" Mildred bit the sentence off short.

"His gun, were you going to say?"

"He didn't have a gun." But her eyes were evasive.

"Maybe I'd better make it plain to you that I'm in your husband's corner. I'd like to get to him before the Sheriff does. Ostervelt seems to have his mind made up about this case. I haven't. I think there should be further investigation."

She gave me a clear cold look. "You want me to pay you to do it, is that it?"

"Forget the money for now. Let's say I like the old-fashioned idea of presumption of innocence."

Her hand rested lightly on my arm. "You don't believe he shot Jerry, either."

"I don't want to build up your hopes with nothing to go on. You heard the shots in the greenhouse?"

"Yes, I heard them."

"Where were you at the time? And where were the others?"

"I was in the nursery with Martha. I think Mrs. Hutchinson was in the next room. The child seemed to sense the disaster, and I had a hard time calming her. I didn't notice what the others were doing."

"Where was Martha's mother?"

"I don't know."

"Ostervelt?"

"I didn't see him at all until afterwards. Surely you're not suspicious of the Sheriff?"

"I'm a little suspicious of everybody. Incidentally, I think you were lying to me just now. I think Carl had a gun, and you tried to take it away from him."

She hung her head like a child. "Yes. He had it."

"His own gun?"

"I belive so. I can't imagine how he got hold of it. Dr. Grantland took it away from him long ago, when he was depressed."

"How long ago?"

"Before Carl was committed." Her eyes were wide and dark with possibility. "Does it mean that Carl killed Jerry after all?"

I had no answer. Instead, I asked the question that was uppermost in my mind: "I hate to throw this at you now, but the idea keeps coming up that Carl murdered his father. Have you heard it?"

"Yes."

"From Carl?"

"Not from Carl, no."

"Do you believe it?"

"No. I don't know." Her voice was tormented. "It was just after Carl was hospitalized—the same day. When a

tragedy cuts across your life, you don't know what to believe. The world actually seemed to fly apart. I could recognize some of the pieces, but I couldn't seem to find any meaning in them. I still can't."

"You haven't answered my question."

"I would if I could. I've been trying to explain why I can't."

"Who told you this? Grantland?"

"Please don't make me talk about it. The circumstances were so queer and awful." The thought of them. whatever they were, pinched her face. She shuddered in the chill of memory.

The front door of the greenhouse had opened. The Deputy Coroner backed out, bent over the handles of a covered stretcher. Under the canvas the dead man huddled lumpily. Carmichael supported the other end. The two live men and the dead man moved awkwardly along the flagstone path to the black panel truck. All three looked small and transitory against the sweep of the valley, the mountains standing in the sunlight.

"I've got to get out of here," Mildred said. "I can't bear it."

I offered to drive her back to town, but she preferred to be by herself. I watched her old convertible race down the road and out of sight. Before the dust had settled, her brother-in-law followed her in the black coroner's wagon.

I strolled over and took a look at my car. Nothing seemed to be missing. Even the key was in the ignition. As I was checking the mileage, Carmichael came up.

"You can take it away if you want. If the murder rap sticks, there won't be any car rap."

"What do you mean 'if'? I thought Hellman was practically inhaling cyanide already."

Carmichael seemed faintly shocked at the suggestion. "With his mental history, they'd never gas him."

"They've gassed crazier ones. I know it, and you know it."

"Not from this county. This is a progressive county."

"Sure, planes fly over it."

My needle took. As if to demonstrate the open-mindedness of his community, Carmichael said, "He's not going to be gassed. I'm sticking my neck out saying it—"

"Why? He may not be guilty."

"I'd like to think that. But what I'd like to think can't change the facts. There are two bullet wounds in the body, two shots fired from the gun—same gun he had."

"It takes ballistics evidence to prove it."

"I know that. We have a pretty good ballistics technician in town—civilian named Durkin."

"When will he do his test firing?"

"Probably tonight. The family wants it wrapped up in a hurry."

"The family?"

"The widow."

"She the new county boss?"

Carmichael looked at me steadily and quietly. "I can take so much riding, Archer. Knock it off now, eh? You're freelance. I'm not. I work with what's available. So the Hellmans are the biggest taxpayers around. That doesn't mean they get special favors from me. I know them too well."

"Did you know the late Senator?"

"For twenty years, off and on. I wouldn't say I *knew* him. I had a worm's-eye view of him."

"How was that?"

"My dad trained his horses for a couple of years. It was during the Depression, and they paid him ranch-hand wages for skilled work. Dad bred his own horses in Wyoming before he lost his ranch. The living quarters the Senator gave us weren't fit for pigs." The memory crossed Carmichael's eyes like a shadow. "Don't ask me about the Hellmans, I'm prejudiced."

"A lot of people seem to be. Did the Senator have many enemies?"

"He had his share. He didn't put together twenty thousand acres by making like Santa Claus." The Deputy gave me a searching look. "What's on your mind, exactly?"

"I heard he died under suspicious circumstances."

"Some people thought so. I wasn't in on the case myself, Ostervelt handled it personally. Far as I know, he had a heart attack and died in the bathtub."

"Is that what the autopsy said?"

"There wasn't any. The old man had a heart history. He'd been under Dr. Grantland's care practically from day to day. It was the doctor's opinion the Senator died of heart failure. No autopsy necessary in a case like that."

"Who said it wasn't necessary?"

"The family, the Senator's doctor, and Ostervelt. Ostervelt is Coroner too—he wears two hats."

"What happened to the body?"

"The family had it cremated. I thought myself they were a little previous about it, but there was no indication of foul play. The old man died in a locked bathroom. They had to break in to get to him in the morning."

"Could you show me the bathroom?"

"Yeah, we can take a quick look if you want to."

He led me through the house to a large rear bedroom. The drawn blinds and the dust covers on the furniture gave it a ghostly air. The adjoining bathroom was lit by a single window high in the bleak white wall. It looked too small for a man to get through. The only other opening, apart from the door we'd come in by, was the door of a shallow closet in the opposite wall.

Carmichael stood by the six-foot tub. "The old man was lying in here when they found him."

"Who found him?"

"Carl and Jerry, I believe. Apparently he took a bath before he went to bed every night. They didn't find him till morning, and then they had to take the door off its hinges."

I examined the door. It was solid oak, three inches thick. The lock was heavy, of the old-fashioned sort that had to be turned with a four-inch key. The key was in the keyhole.

I turned it back and forth several times, then pulled it out and looked at it. Either the Senator had died alone, or I had a locked-room mystery to go with the other mysteries in the house. Not an insoluble locked-room mystery, though. When I got down on my knees and tried it, the key slid under the door with room to spare.

I looked up at Carmichael. "Was the key in the lock when they found him?"

"I wasn't there. Maybe Ostervelt can tell you."

We ran into Ostervelt in the front hallway—ran into him almost liter-

ally as he came out of the living room. He looked from Carmichael to me.

"What goes on?"

"We were looking over the Senator's bathroom," Carmichael said. "You remember the morning they found him, Chief. Was the key in the lock?"

"What lock?"

"The lock on the bathroom door."

"Who wants to know?"

"Mr. Archer here."

"You talking official business to strangers again?"

"I thought it was all right. Mr. Archer is employed by the Hellman family—"

"The hell he is." The Sheriff turned to me, his head and shoulders swinging like an old bull's. "Mrs. Hellman said you asked her for money."

"Zinnie said that?"

"You know who I mean. When she wouldn't kick in, you made a pass at her."

"Did she rip her dress open at the neck? They usually rip their dresses open at the neck."

"This is no joke, Mister. I could put you in jail."

"What are we waiting for? The suit for false arrest will make my fortune."

"Don't get flip with me. Mrs. Hellman wants you out of her house."

"Are you her official bouncer?"

Ostervelt's face seemed to swell like a red balloon. His hand went to his hip, came up holding his heavy Colt revolver. He laid it raking and burning across the side of my head. The deer-heads on the wall tilted their noses at me, as I went down.

Before I was back on my feet, Ostervelt raised the gun for another blow. Carmichael took hold of his arm and almost ascended with it. The old man was strong.

"Get away from me," he growled in blind anger. "I'll cut him to pieces."

"Take it easy, Chief. You want a lawsuit hung on you?"

"Mrs. Hellman said—"

"I don't care what she said. Zinnie's trying to stir up trouble. It's all she's ever been good for."

The Sheriff looked over his shoulder into the living room. His little eyes were dirty with dismay.

"Why would she say a thing like that?"

"She's an incendiary blonde. They say things like that. Don't ask me why."

Ostervelt put his gun away and went out, shaking his head. When the door had closed behind him, Carmichael said, "I'm sorry about what happened. The old boy isn't up to handling a case like this. He knows it, and it makes him mad. He's getting a little senile."

"Worked for him long?"

"Going on ten years, ever since I got out of the Army. Just for the record, I don't consider that I work for Ostervelt. My bosses are the people of this county. I'm trying to give them a little decent law enforcement for a change. Fortunately, Ostervelt's pushing retirement age."

I wondered if Carmichael hoped to succeed him. If he did, he could be useful to me. But Id have to handle him carefully. He wasn't stupid.

His sharp dark glance shifted to the side of my head. "Did you know that you've got a torn ear? You should see a doctor."

I told him I intended to.

Dr. Grantland's office occupied a pink stucco building on upper Main Street. The waiting room was full of new-looking furniture. A fairly new-looking young woman popped from behind a bleached mahogany counter and announced that the doctor was booked up for the rest of the afternoon. Perhaps, since I was an emergency case, he could give me a few minutes if I cared to wait.

I didn't have to wait long. Grantland came out through an inner door, preceded by an overdressed woman with frightened eyes. The professional smile on his face went out like an electric sign when he saw me. He waited to speak till his patient had gone.

"What do *you* want?"

"I need a cut sewn up." I showed him my bloody ear.

"Why come to me?"

"You're a doctor, aren't you? If you don't want to treat me, I can find another doctor."

He stood and looked at me, his fists slowly unclenching. "Come into the examination room. I don't do much in the surgical line, but I suppose I can fix you up."

I followed him down a corridor to a white-walled room gleaming with stainless steel and chrome. He placed me on a padded metal table and turned on a surgical light.

"You get yourself gun-whipped?"

"Slightly. Not every doctor would know the marks."

"I interned at Hollywood Receiving. What happened? Did you run into Carl Hellman?"

"This time it was Sheriff Ostervelt. He's very excitable, too."

Grantland made no comment. He went to work cleaning my ear with swabs dipped in alcohol. It hurt.

"I'm going to have to put in some clamps. A plastic surgeon could do a prettier job."

"What's your specialty, Doctor?"

"I'm an internist. I still have to pass my Boards, though."

"You treated Carl Hellman for an internal complaint?"

"I treated him for depression. I tried to get him to see a psychiatrist, but you can't force a patient to do that. I've had some psychiatric orientation, and I gave him as much support as I could."

"What causes his depression?"

"It's a long story. This is hardly the time or place." He inserted the last of the clamps in my ear, and covered it with an adhesive bandage. "That's all I can do for you now. I'll take these out in three or four days, if you're still in town."

"Or if you are."

"What on earth is that supposed to mean?"

I stood up and faced him across the table. "You saw a revolver in the Hellman greenhouse today. But you didn't mention that it had recently been in your possession."

Grantland opened his mouth to speak, then hesitated. His face tried several attitudes, finally settled on a frank and open look.

"I like to be sure of my facts before I sound off. I suppose it's my scientific training—"

"Just what are your facts?"

Grantland spread his hands disarmingly. "Apparently Carl lifted the gun out of my desk drawer. It belonged to him, you know."

"Has he been in your office today?"

"He came here first thing this morning. He wanted to tell me what he thought of me for having him committed."

"Was he violent?"

"Not with me. His main animus was against his brother. Naturally I tried to talk him out of that."

"Why didn't you hold on to him?"

"Don't think I didn't try to. I stepped into the dispensary for a minute to get him some thorazine. I thought it might calm him down. When I got back to the consulting room, he was gone."

"And he took the gun with him?"

"He must have. I didn't know it at the time. In fact, I'd forgotten the gun existed. I didn't think of it till I found it beside poor Jerry's body. Even then, I couldn't be sure it was the same revolver—I'm no expert on guns. So I waited until I got back here this afternoon and had a chance to check the drawer of my desk. When I found the gun gone, I got in touch with the Sheriff's department right away—much as I hated to do it."

"Why did you hate to do it?"

"I'm fond of the boy," Grantland said. "After all, he was my patient. It was painful to me, having to provide the information that proves he's a murderer."

"You think it's proved, do you?"

"Can you think of any other hypothesis?" Behind his show of emotion, Grantland was watching me like a chess opponent. "If you can, I'll be very glad to hear it."

I could think of one or two, but I kept them to myself. "What was Carl Hellman's revolver doing in your drawer?"

"I took it away from him seven or eight months ago. He was depressed, as I told you, and frankly I was concerned about the possibility of suicide. I suggested he bring in the gun and let me keep it for him. I realize now I should have put it in a safer place."

"Was it loaded?"

"I'm afraid so. The fact is, I would not know how to unload it. When he brought it in that day, I simply put it away and forgot about it."

"You say he was suicidal?"

"He talked that way. It was my professional duty to take no chances."

"But you didn't commit him until after his father's death."

"He didn't become legally committable till then. It was his father's death that knocked him off his base and into psychosis."

"It couldn't have been the other way around, could it?"

"I don't follow you."

"It's a simple enough idea, Doctor."

Grantland was silent for a long moment. His eyes seemed to be looking through me into the past.

"Did Carl go crazy and kill his father?" I said.

He answered in a low voice, barely moving his lips. "I can't respond to that question. It has to do with the relationship of doctor and patient."

"This isn't a court of law."

"Then don't try to cross-examine me. Now, if you don't mind, I have to see to my other patients."

I didn't trust Grantland, and I spent the rest of the afternoon watching his office from my parked car. Most of the patients who came and went were prosperous-looking middle-aged women, of no particular interest to me. The one notable exception occurred when I

was about ready to give up on the doctor.

Twilight had begun to thicken in the street, and homing cars passed in a continuous stream. A red Cadillac nosed out of the eastbound traffic, then parked at the curb in front of Grantland's building. A very thin young man got out of the driver's seat. He looked up and down the street before he entered the building, and I caught a glimpse of his face in the last light.

It gave me the kind of shock you might get from seeing the ghost of someone you'd once known. I'd known him ten years before, when he was a high school athlete, a big boy, good-looking, full of fermenting energy. The face I'd just seen—yellow skin stretched over skull, smokily lit by black unfocused eyes—could have belonged to that boy's grandfather. I knew him, though. It was Tom Rica.

He came out about twenty minutes later, climbed behind the wheel of his big car turned right at the first corner on shuddering tires. I followed him to the highway, where he turned south. Beyond the city limits the highway snaked up and along brown bluffs. The sea lay at their foot, like a reflection of the somber sky, still tinged by the sun.

Tom Rica drove erratically, slowing on the straightaways and speeding up on the curves, using two of the four lanes. About six miles out of town the Cadillac's brake lights blazed. The car turned in under a red neon sign at the entrance to a private parking lot. Buenavista Inn, the sign said. The inn lay below on the hillside, a pueblo affair with a dozen or more stucco cottages staggered along the terraces.

Tom parked among several other cars, and left his with its lights burning. I kept the other cars between me and him. I don't think he saw me, but he began to run jerkily toward the main building. The door opened before he reached it. A woman in a gold lamé gown stepped out onto the platform of light projected from the doorway. Her hair was gold, her face and shoulders and arms a darker gold. Even at a distance she gave the impression of shining hardness, as though she'd preserved the lines of her body by having it cast in metal. Her voice had a metallic carrying quality.

"Tommy!" she called. "Where you been?"

I couldn't hear his answer. He tried to slip past her through the open door. The action was a sad, knockkneed parody of the broken-field running he'd once been so good at. Her flashing body blocked him.

"Did you go to get a cap? Is that where you went?"

"Wouldn't you like to know." His voice was thin and dry, denatured.

"Answer me," She shook him. His sharp, tweed jacket flapped on his coat-hanger shoulders.

"Lay off me, Maude. I'm warning you, if you want me to stick around."

"Where would you go? What would you do without me?"

"I'll be riding high. Hear me?" His voice rose as his mood swung violently upward. "All these years I been studying the rackets, like an apprenticeship, see. I know where you hustlers make your stupid mistakes, and I'm not making any. I got a racket of my own now, and it's safe as houses."

"Houses with bars on the windows?" She released him and pushed

him against the frame of the door. "You stick your neck out again, and I can't cover for you."

"Nobody asked you to. I'm on my own. Who needs you?"

"You do, Tom, and you know it."

He turned his back on her and went inside. He moved loosely and lightly, as if he was supported by invisible strings. Maude noticed the lights of the Cadlliac, and went to turn them off. She passed within a few feet of where I stood in the shadow of a white-flowering oleander.

I went in after Tom, across the brightly-lit lobby to another door which let me into their private quarters. The living room was crowded with overstuffed furniture in a green and white jungle design from which eyes seemed to watch me. The bedroom, lit by pink-shaded lamps and upholstered in quilted satin, reminded me of the inside of a coffin.

Tom was sitting on the edge of the bed. He had his left shirt-sleeve rolled up and a hypodermic needle in his right hand. He was too busy looking for a vein to notice me. The veins he had already used and ruined writhed black up his arm from wrist to wasted biceps. Blue tattoo marks disguised the scars on his wrists.

I crossed the room and took the needle away from him. His face slanted up, set in hard wrinkles like a primitive mask used to conjure evil spirits. His eyes were black puddles of misery, but they recognized me.

"If it isn't Archer. God, man, you've aged."

"Ten years is a long time."

"Why not go away and make it twenty, do-gooder? Only give me my needle back first."

"Not a chance."

"Come on," he wheedled. "This stuff is weak. It don't even give me a lift."

"Then you don't have so far to fall. Where did you get it?"

"Would I tell you?"

"Maybe you don't have to. What's this new racket of yours that you were warbling about? Pushing reefers to school kids?"

His ego couldn't stand to be downgraded. The insult blew it up like a balloon. "You think I'm interested in peanuts? Before I'm through, I'll be buying and selling jerks like you."

"With Chinese dollars?"

"With good Ameican money. I got me a piece of the sweetest racket there is. It's like an annuity."

"If blackmail's the racket you mean, it's more like a death warrant. What have you got on Grantland?"

"Do I look crazy enough to tell you?"

"You told Carl Hellman."

He grinned wisely. "Maybe he thinks I did."

"What were you trying to do to Carl?"

"Just stir him up a little. I had to get out of the ward, and I couldn't make it alone."

"Why did you send him to me?"

"Get him off my hands. He was in my way, and Maude didn't want him with us."

"You must have had a better reason than that."

"Sure. I'm another do-gooder." His wise grin turned malign. "I heard you could use the business."

I stood over him, holding the needle out of his reach, run through by alternating currents of pity and anger. "If

I thought you set up that killing today—"

Tom raised his arms in a defensive gesture. You're way off the beam. I had nothing to do with it. Anyway, Carl didn't shoot his brother. He told me so himself."

"Has he been here?"

"Sure he was here. He wanted Maude to hide him out. She wouldn't touch him with gloves on."

"How long ago was this?"

"A couple of hours, maybe. He took off for town."

"He didn't shoot his brother, you say?"

"That's right, he told me that."

"Did you believe him?"

"I had to." Tom looked at me deadpan. "I did it myself, see—flew over there by helicopter. In my new supersonic helicopter with the synchronized death-ray gun."

"Turn off the stardrive, Tom. Tell me what really happened."

"Maybe I will, if you give me back my needle."

He looked up expectantly at the bright instrument in my fist and suddenly I was sick of the whole business. I threw down the needle and ground its wet fragments under my heel.

Tom looked at me incredulously. Fury shook him, too strong for his damaged nerves to carry. He beat his sharp knees with his fists and screeched names at me. In the intervals of his noise I heard other noises behind me. Maude was coming through the jungle-colored living room. A gun gleamed dully blue in her white hand.

"What did you do to him?"

"Took his needle away."

She looked at me like a lioness. "Come out of there, you, and leave my boy alone."

She pushed the gun into my breastbone. I caught her by the wrist and twisted it out of her hand. She leaned on the wall, holding her wrist. Her golden mask was twisted by pain.

"You're going to be sorry for this. Who is he, Tommy?"

"Private eye name of Archer," he said dully. "He broke my needle."

"I was doing him a favor."

"Do yourself one," she said. "Get out of my place if you don't want to end up in the county jail."

"You don't look like the law."

"No, but there's law in my hip pocket."

"You mean the Sheriff?"

"Out of here, wisenheimer!"

Her left hand came out stiff, its carmine talons pointed at my eyes. It was more of a threat than an attempt. Still, it made me despair of our relationship.

I drove back toward Purissima, keeping a not very hopeful lookout for Carl Hellman. Just ouside the city limits, where the highway dipped down from the bluffs toward the sea, I saw red pulsating lights at the roadside. Other lights were moving far down the beach.

Most of the cars on the shoulder were official, but Mildred Hellman's old black convertible was among them. I parked and crossed the road. At the head of the concrete steps which zigzagged down the bank, Mildred was arguing with a highway patrolman.

"I don't care if he is your husband," he said. "All the more reason why you should stay away."

"I'm not afraid of him. He'll listen to me." Her voice was high, out of control.

"Listen, Mrs. Hellman, I got my orders to keep people off the beach. That includes you." His light came up to my face as I approached. "Going somewhere?"

"Has Carl Hellman been seen here?"

"Yeah, some people on a beach picnic saw him."

Mildred turned to me. "Mr. Archer! Tell him, if they'll only let me talk to Carl—"

"But we haven't got him, ma'am." The patrolman's patience was wearing thin.

"The radio said you had."

"They jumped the gun, then. It's nearly an hour since he was sighted here, and we still haven't picked up his trail."

"Where did he go?"

The patrolman pointed along the shore toward the distant glow of the waterfront. The lights on the beach were receding in that direction. Mildred looked ready to cry.

"If you're a friend of hers," the patrolman said to me, "the best thing you can do is to take her home."

Mildred shook her head like a stubborn child. But when I took her arm she came along to my car. The long day of fearful waiting had beaten her down. She slumped against the back of the seat, inert as a propped-up doll.

When I started the engine, she came to life again. "I don't want to go home. My duty is with my husband."

I held her with one arm around her shoulders. "You're not doing him any good here. Carl may be on his way to your house now. He's looking for somewhere to hole up."

Her white face tilted. "How do you know that?"

"I just came from a place called the Buenavista Inn. It's run by a woman named Maude. Carl's fellow-escapee, Tom Rica, is what you might call a protégé of hers. Carl was there a little ahead of me."

"Is Carl mixed up with that woman?"

"He asked her to hide him. She wouldn't. You know her?"

"Certainly not, but I've heard of her. Her place is notorious."

"What about her boy friend? Did Carl ever mention Rica to you?"

"I knew they were patients in the same ward. Carl tried to help him when he first came in."

"Would he lie for Carl, do you think?"

"I don't know. Why?"

"Rica said that Carl talked to him and denied shooting his brother."

"Really? Carl didn't do it?"

She was soft and warm and tremulous in the hollow of my arm. I wanted to comfort her, tell her it was all a bad dream. I told her the truth instead.

"Rica's a heroin addict, and apparently a blackmailer. We can't put too much stock in anything he says."

"Is he trying to blackmail Carl?"

"No. His target seems to be Grantland."

"But what did Dr. Grantland do?"

"That's the question. Are you absolutely certain Carl had his gun when you saw him today?"

"He had a gun. I couldn't swear it was the same one." She twisted toward me, her breast soft and urgent

against me. "You don't think Dr. Grantland shot Jerry?"

"It's a possibility. I can think of a further possibility—that both of the deaths in your husband's family were part of a long-term plan to gain control of the ranch."

"Grantland's plan?"

"His and Zinnie's."

I could feel her breathing quicker against me. "I'd give anything in the world if that were true. It isn't, though. It can't be."

"You know something you're not telling me."

"Yes." She paused. "You asked me today if Carl killed his father and I wouldn't give you an answer."

"Why?"

"Because he did. He confessed it, immediately, the same day."

"Who told you that? Grantland?"

"Dr. Grantland confirmed it. He wasn't lying. Afterwards, Carl told me himself—how he broke down the bathroom door and hit his father over the head with a hammer."

"When did Carl tell you this?"

"The first time I went to see him in the hospital. Please don't make me talk about it any more. It was terrible."

"Poor kid."

I drew her head onto my shoulder. She closed her eyes. Tears glittered on her cheeks. I brushed them away with my hand.

She stiffened. "Don't. Don't touch me."

"Relax. This isn't a pass."

I didn't think it was. Possibly Mildred knew better. In a flurry of movement she pushed me away, reached for the door handle, and slipped out of the car. Then she was at the edge of the pavement, silhoutted by the lights of an approaching truck.

She walked head down into the truck's bright path. It bore down on her braying and squealing, as tall as a house. I saw its driver's lantern-slide face high above the road, and Mildred in the road in front of the giant tires.

They slid to a stop a few feet short of her. Mildred walked on to her own car as if she hadn't even noticed the truck. Her car made a sweeping turn in front of me.

She drove obliviously—like someone alone in black space. I decided that I'd better follow her home.

She made it all right, and when I reached her house Carmichael was talking to her on the sidewalk.

He lifted his hand to me. "I was just telling Mrs. Hellman, her husband seems to be headed in this direction. A waitress at the Red Barn Drive-In saw him. I'm putting an armed guard around the house."

"You don't have to do that for me," she said.

"Your mother asked for it—"

"She's been drinking all day. You shouldn't listen to her."

"I'm afraid I agree that it's a good idea."

"You think he's dangerous to his wife?" I said.

"We have to act on the assumption that he is. He may be trying to knock off his whole family, one by one."

"No!" Mildred cried. "He wouldn't!"

"I hate to have to say it, Mrs. Hellman." Carmichael's deep voice was hoarse with embarrassment. "But it's our job to protect the surviving members. Do you know where the rest of the family are?"

"Zinnie's probably at the ranch. I haven't been in touch with her."

"She isn't out there now. I checked."

"Then she may be at Mrs. Hutchinson's house—the woman who looks after Martha."

"Is the kid with her?"

"She's supposed to be." Mildred took hold of Carmichael's arm. "You surely don't think there's any danger to Martha?"

Carmichael didn't answer her. His face was as expressionless as bronze. "Where does the old lady live?"

"On Chestnut Street. I think the number is seventeen. Anyway, it's the last house between Elmwood and the highway."

"I know the block. It's right across the highway from the Red Barn."

I followed his official car to Chestnut Street. Mrs. Hutchinson lived in one of a row of small cottages which ended at the highway. The other side of the street was vacant ground overgrown with scrub oaks. A dry creek, brimming with darkness, cut along the back of the empty lots.

Beyond the continuous chain-lightning of the highway headlights, I could see the neon outline of the Red Barn Drive-In. A softer light shone through lace curtains in Mrs. Hutchinson's front window. When Carmichael knocked on the door, a heavy shadow moved across the light. The old woman opened the door cautiously and peered out.

"What do you want?"

"Is Martha with you?"

"Sure she is. I put her to bed in my room."

"Has anyone else been here?"

"The child's mother was in and out. She didn't waste much time on us, I guess she has better things—"

Carmichael broke in. "Do you know where she is now?"

The old woman shrugged. "She don't report to me. What's this all about, anyway?"

"I don't want to alarm you unnecessarily, but Hellman is still at large. He was last seen in this neighborhood, across the highway at the Red Barn Drive-In. Apparently he came under the highway through the culvert. I suggest you keep your doors and windows locked."

Her hand went to her throat, worrying the pouch under her chin. "What would he have against me?"

"It's the child we're concerned about, ma'am."

As if to underline Carmichael's warning, random voices rose from the darkness up the block. A dozen men carrying rifles and shotguns turned the corner and crossed to the vacant lots. They fanned out toward the creek bed, probing the tree-clotted darkness with their flashlights. I recognized Ostervelt's bulky shape among them.

"What are they doing?" Mrs. Hutchinson quavered.

"The Sheriff organized a posse, ma'am. I'll check back with you later."

Carmichael trotted across the street. Mrs. Hutchinson started to shut the door.

"Hold it a minute, Mrs. Hutchinson."

"What is it now?" The last few minutes had aged her visibly.

"Do you know where I can get in touch with Zinnie?"

"How would I know?"

"You work for her. You know who her friends are."

"Oh, yes, I know who her friends are."

"How long ago was she here?"

"A couple of hours, at least. It was right around Martha's suppertime."

"Did she come alone?"

"She was supposed to be alone."

"What does that mean?"

The old woman was slow in replying. "I've worked in big houses, and learned to hold my tongue. But there's a limit. When a brand-new widow goes out on the town the same night her husband was killed—well, that's my limit."

"Was Dr. Grantland with her?"

"He waited out in the car, as if I didn't know he was there." She sniffed in righteous indignation. "They've used me and the child for a front before now."

"A front for what?"

"A front for carrying on, that's what. I've seen the signs and portents, and she's completely gone on that man. I know for a fact she would have divorced her husband long ago, if it hadn't been for Martha. I suppose they'll be getting married any day now—now that there's nobody standing in their way."

She stopped suddenly, as if she'd just been struck by the full implication of what she'd been saying.

"Don't quote me, will you? I'm too old to get another job."

I crossed the street and met Carmichael at the edge of the vacant lots. The Sheriff and his posse were working their way up the creek, very slowly, like a small irregular army in the face of superior forces.

I said, "They're going over the ground with a fine-tooth comb."

"That makes sense. Hellman may be lying doggo right around here. Or he may be long gone by now."

"Where does the creek bed lead to?"

"It angles across town." Carmichael pointed east toward the ridge. "It cuts across the Hellman ranch, all the way to the mountains if you stay with it. Hellman may be heading for the hills. I only hope he doesn't kill anybody else on the way."

"Do you honestly think he's trying to wipe out his family?"

"I don't know what he's trying to do." Carmichael's voice was strained. "All I know is there's two of them gone already."

"You've changed your tune, haven't you? You thought this afternoon the Senator's death was natural, or at least accidental."

"That was the only version I'd heard. I've heard a different one since."

"From Ostervelt?"

"That's right. It was like pulling teeth to get it out of him. I guess he knows how it makes him look."

"Do you want to fill me in?"

Carmichael studied my face in the shifting light from the highway. "If I can trust you to keep it confidential between us. We don't want to do anything that will turn this into a lynching party. Ostervelt's asking for trouble as it is, turning a lot of amateur hunters loose."

"You're forgetting Hellman's my client."

"You should have picked yourself another client. Your boy killed his father and made a full confession of it next day."

"When did you get this information?"

"Tonight. Ostervelt's been sitting on it for six months—waiting for it to hatch into another bloody murder."

"News seems to travel slowly in your department."

"I know it better than you do, brother." Carmichael's tone was savage. "It was pure chance I got it at all. This doctor, Grantland, came into the office an hour or so ago. It was the Chief he really wanted to see. Ostervelt was out playing cowboys and Indians, so Grantland finally broke down and spilled his biscuits to me. He was in a telling mood, for some reason—he looked as if something had scared him pantless."

"The threat of blackmail, maybe?"

"You been talking to Grantland?"

"A little. Not enough, apparently. Go on."

"What it boiled down to was this: Carl Hellman confessed his father's murder to Grantland the morning after it happened. Grantland's a weak sister from way back, and he got the idea of trying to save Hellman from the death chamber. Apparently he leveled with the Sheriff, and persuaded him some way or other to let it go as a natural death."

"That's pretty irregular, isn't it?"

"Irregular? It's zigzag."

"Why would Ostervelt go along with something like that?"

"Ask Ostervelt. Don't ask me. Anyway, Grantland wanted me to tell him what to do, in the light of these new circumstances, et cetera, et cetera. I told him to sit on his story for at least twenty-four hours, until we have Carl Hellman in safe custody. Then he wanted to know if he could be prosecuted for his part in the mess. I told him to take it up with his damn lawyer." Carmichael smiled grimly. "Is somebody after him for money?"

"It looks like it, doesn't it?"

"Got a definite suspect in mind, or you just brain-storming?"

"Thinking out loud, to see if I still can." I was saving Tom Rica for my own later use. "The question that interests me more is why he might be blackmailed?"

"He sold out to the Hellmans, falsified his report on the Senator's death."

"Maybe he had a very good reason for doing that ' I said. "Maybe he killed the Senator himself."

"You're kidding, aren't you?"

"No, I'm not."

"He had no motive."

"No immediate motive that we know of. But don't forget he's a smart man, he can take a long-term view. He's very close to Zinnie Hellman. you must have noticed."

"What's she got to do with it?"

"She just fell heir to the Hellman estate. It's worth five million dollars, according to Mildred. If the murders are pinned on Carl, Zinnie stands to inherit all of it. Then all Grantland has to do is marry her."

"Wouldn't she have something to say about that?"

"She's probably saying it now. To Grantland. Do you know where he lives?"

"Seaview Avenue—number fourteen. His house is on the ridge, just off Main Street to the left." Carmichael looked at me narrowly. "If you know something that lets Hellman off the hook, you better spill it. I can have it on the radio in five minutes."

"I don't have anything that defi-

nite. I'm practically certain that he's been used as a patsy, but I can't prove it. Not yet. Has your man run his ballistics tests on the gun they found in the greenhouse?"

"Enough to establish that it fired the slugs in the body. And we know it's Hellman's gun."

"We also know it was in Grantland's possession, until today. It's possible it never left his possession."

"Grantland had it?"

"For the past seven or eight months. He told me that himself. He claimed Hellman lifted the gun from his office this morning, and that he reported it to the Sheriff later."

"If he did, I never heard of it." Carmichael lifted his arms in a jerky motion, then let them fall. "You can see what I'm up against in this investigation. The Chief's running around in circles, and nobody tells me anything. You'd think they were trying to freeze me out."

"Who?"

"Ostervelt and the Hellmans. I say it's time law enforcement in this county was taken out of politics. I thought it was getting ready to happen last Spring. The Grand Jury was going to investigate Ostervelt before he came up for re-election."

"Investigate him for what?"

"Taking graft," Carmichael said shortly. "That was the accusation, but nothing came of it. The Senator died, and Jerry quashed the investigation. Nothing ever happens in this county without the word from the Hellmans. It grinds hell out of me. This coverup of Hellman's confession is the last straw."

I still wasn't buying it outright. I didn't have time to say so. A man's cry rose sharp from the darkness up the creek. I couldn't make out what he said, but a sense of disaster came down on me like a cold shower.

The lights of the posse began to converge on a concrete bridge which carried the next cross-street over the creek. Carmichael and I were already running toward it.

Ostervelt and his men were clustered around a car below the end of the bridge. It was a new red station wagon, which had been driven off the road. It hung at an angle part way down the bank, in the woven shadow of a pepper tree.

Ostervelt backed away from the left window. In the wavering light from the torches, his face was hollow and greenish. "He got to her," he said huskily.

I took his place at the window. Zinnie was crumpled over the wheel as though she'd fallen asleep. Her sleep was very deep. Her blonde hair was matted with blood from the hole in the top of her skull.

"Take Carl Hellman dead or alive," Ostervelt said behind me. "This has got to be stopped."

His hunters growled assent, and fingered their guns.

(*continued on page 107*)

Mr. Schlock Homes outdoes himself in brilliant deduction in one of the author's most amusing parody-pastiches of The Master.

THE ADVENTURE OF THE DOUBLE-BOGEY MAN

by ROBERT L. FISH

A PERUSAL OF MY NOTES FOR THE year '42, made in September of that year and recounting the many cases in which I had engaged with my friend Mr. Schlock Homes, gave me as rude a shock as ever I have suffered. It was in February of '42 that I had begun the study of a new method of speed-writing, feeling that a facility in this science might well aid me in both quickly and accurately annotating our adventures. Unfortunately, a sharp increase in my medical practice, possibly caused by a section of slippery pavement near our rooms at 221B Bagel Street, left me little time for my studies, and I came back to my case-book to find I was unable to translate my own hieroglyphics. In desperation I took my Pittman notebook to an expert, but when he announced that it was all Gregg to him, I found myself without recourse.

Even Homes, with his vast background of cipherology and cryptology, was able to be of but small help. He did manage to decipher one title as The Sound of the Basketballs; but since we could recall no case involving sports that year, we were unable to go further. These adventures are therefore lost to posterity, and I bitterly hold myself to blame for their loss.

October, however, brought a case of such national importance that it dwarfed all work Homes had previously done that year; for beyond furnishing him with an opportunity once again to demonstrate his remarkable ability to analyze distortions in their proper perspective, it also gave him a chance to serve his country as few men have been able to serve her. In my notes, now meticulously kept in neat English, I find the case listed as The Adventure of the Double-Bogey Man.

I had returned from carefully sprinkling powdered wax on the offending section of pavement, in the hope that this might resolve its slippery condition, to find that in my absence Homes's brother Criscroft had arrived and was ensconced with my friend on the sofa before the bare fireplace. As I entered, they were engaged in a favorite game of theirs, and as always I stood back in reverent silence as

they matched their remarkable wits in analytical reasoning.

Their subject appeared to be an old-fashioned tintype of a mustached gentleman dressed in the clothing of yesteryear, stiffly seated in a bower of artificial flowers, his bowler held woodenly before him, and his frozen face reflecting the ordeal of the portraiture.

"An ex-student of the Icelandic languages, dedicated to the growing of rubber plants," hazarded Criscroft, eyeing the discoloured photograph closely.

"Colour-blind and left-handed," returned Homes languidly, as I held my breath in admiration.

"A one-time trampoline acrobat, adept at playing the twelve-toned gas-organ," observed Criscroft.

"A victim of the hashish habit," Homes said, smiling. "Went before the mast at an early age, and has travelled widely in Bournemouth".

"The son of a Northumbrian bell-ringer," offered Criscroft. Then, turning and noting my presence, he held up his hand. "But enough of this, Schlock. Watney has arrived and we can get down to the real reason for my visit. Put Father's picture away now, and let me tell you why I left the Home Office in such troubled times and hurried here as quickly as possible. We are in serious need of your help!"

Once I had placed drinks in their hands and Homes had lit a cubeb, Criscroft proceeded to lay his problem before us.

"As you are probably aware," he said, "we have recently allowed some of our former colonies to join us in confronting the present unpleasantness emanating from Berlin. The representative of the recent American colonies is a certain General Isaac Kennebunk, Esquire; and in confidence I tell you that it appears this gentleman will be selected to assume the duties of Chief of Staff of our combined Allied forces." He cleared his throat and leaned forward impressively ."With this fact in mind, you can readily understand our perturbation when I inform you that, as of yesterday, General Kennebunk is missing!"

"Missing?" I cried in alarm, springing to my feet. "Missing what?"

"General Kennebunk *himself* is missing," said Criscroft heavily. "Since yesterday morning, when he left a War Council meeting to return to his rooms, he has been neither seen nor heard of. Suffice to say that the General is knowledgeable of all our secret strategy. Should he have fallen into the hands of our enemies or their sympathizers, it could prove to be quite embarrassing for us."

"And you wish me to locate him," stated Homes positively, rubbing his hands together in that gesture that I well knew indicated both extreme interest and poor circulation.

"Precisely. Needless to say, as quickly as possible."

"Then permit me a few ques-

tions. First, where was the General in digs?"

"The War Department arranged a suite for him at an old inn, The Bedposts, in Bolling Alley."

"He stayed there alone?"

"Except for his military aide, a certain Major Anguish McAnguish, who temporarily was sharing his quarters."

"And the Major?"

"He has also not been seen since the disappearance, but as you can well imagine, our principal interest is in General Kennebunk."

"Naturally. And what steps have been taken so far?"

Criscroft arose and leaned against the chill fireplace, his face ashen with the strain of his great problem and overwhelming responsibility. "The War Department brought in the Military Police at once—in the person of a former police agent named Flaherty, whom I believe you know. As soon as the Home Office was notified, we insisted on taking the assignment out of his hands and contacting you. The War Department agreed enthusiastically. However, they still wish to retain Flaherty, although they admit you are the possessor of the sharpest analytical brain in England to-day."

"Flaherty will get them nowhere," replied Homes seriously, although it was plain to see that the compliment had pleased him. "I assume, then, that I have a free hand. The rooms are under guard?"

"I have seen to it that they were immediately sealed, and guards posted. Orders have been issued to allow only you and Watney permission to enter."

"Fine!" said Homes, rising and removing his dressing-gown. "In that case let us proceed there at once. One moment while I don suitable raiment, and we shall be on our way."

Criscroft's hansom deposited us at the mouth of Bolling Alley, and the Home Office specialist leaned down from his seat to grasp his brother's hand gratefully. Then, with a wave, he drove off and we turned down the narrow lane in the direction of the famous old inn.

Our credentials gave us immediate access to the floor that had housed the missing officer, and after ascertaining from the rigid soldier on duty that there had been no visitors, we unlocked the door and passed within. At first view there was certainly nothing to indicate the forcible removal of the General. The beds were neatly made up, the furniture properly placed and but recently dusted, and the late autumn sun passing through the white starched curtains gave the apartment a cheerful air.

Homes paused in the doorway a moment, his piercing eyes sweeping the scene closely; then, closing the door firmly behind us, he began his search.

The dresser drawers gave no clue of anything untoward. The article of clothing therein were neatly ar-

ranged and concealed nothing. Homes dropped to his knees to search beneath the bed, but other than some regulation army boots and a pair of what appeared to be spiked mountain-climbing shoes, the space was bare.

Stepping to the closet, Homes stared at the rows of uniforms neatly arranged upon the rack; then, with sudden resolve, he pushed them aside and probed beyond. I heard a low cry of triumph from my friend, and knew he had discovered his first clue.

With gleaming eyes, he withdrew some oddly shaped sticks, several oversized white pellets, and some tiny wooden pins. Handling these objects with great delicacy, he laid his find upon the bedspread and stepped back to contemplate them, showing inordinate interest.

"Homes!" I cried in amazement, reaching for these odd objects. "What can these be?"

"Take care!" he advised, grasping my arm and drawing me back. "It is more than possible that these are strange weapons, and it would not do to destroy ourselves before our investigation has fairly begun. Let us leave them for the moment and continue our search."

The very cleanliness of the room seemed to mitigate against finding more—the wastebasket was empty, the desk-top cleared of all but essentials. Opening the desk drawer, Homes withdrew a blank white writing pad, and was about to replace it when his keen eyes noted faint markings on its surface. Carrying it swiftly to the window, he held it horizontally at eye-level against the light.

"Quickly, Watney," he exclaimed in great excitement. "We have something! My bag!"

Dusting charcoal over the empty sheet, he blew it gently until it settled in the crevices left by the pressure of the quill upon the previous page, and a message appeared as if by magic. Homes placed it carefully upon the desk and I bent over his shoulder to read the missive with him.

"Mammy," it said (or Manny—the inscription was not quite clear), *"Only time for nine to-day; back up to fifty-six! Started off four, but I won't talk about the rest. The trouble is still my right hand, and the result is the old hook! Talk about the bogey man; the double-bogey man has me!"*

This perplexing message was simply signed with the initials of the missing colonial officer, I.K.,E. I raised my eyes from the strange paper to find Homes with such a fierce look of concentration upon his lean face that I refrained from speaking. At last he looked at me frowningly, his mind returning from the far places of his thoughts.

"We must return to Bagel Street at once, Watney!" he said, his voice taut with urgency. "I believe I begin to see a pattern in this, and if I am correct we must waste no time

if we are to save this General Kennebunk!"

"But, Homes," I cried, "do you mean that the answer lies in decoding this cryptic message?"

"This is no code, Watney, although there is no doubt that it contains a hidden message. Come, we have much to do!" Folding the paper with great care, he thrust it into his waistcoat pocket and turned to the door.

"But these objects," I said. "Shall I take them with us?"

"No," he replied, staring at them with great loathing. "They will always be here should we require them, but I believe I already know their foul purpose. Come!"

We locked the door behind us, handed the key to the guard, and hurried to the street. A passing cab picked us up at once, and throughout our journey, Homes leaned forward anxiously, as if in this manner he could hasten our passage. While the cab was slowing down before our quarters, Homes thrust the fare into the cabbie's hand and sprang to the pavement even before the horses had fairly stopped. I hurried up the stairs behind him, anxious to be of immediate assistance.

"First, Watney," he said, turning up the lamp and hurriedly pulling his chair close to the table, "if you would be so kind as to hand me the Debretts, we can get started!"

I placed the tome in his hand and he slid his strong finger down the alphabetical list rapidly. "McAnguish, McAnguish," he muttered as he noted each line. "Ah, here we are! Anguish McAnguish, 224 Edgeware Road, Hyde Park 6-24 . . . No, no, Watney! This is the telephone list! The Debretts, please!"

I replaced the volume, blushing slightly, and he fell to studying it while I watched his face for some clue to his thoughts. He scribbled some data on a pad and handed the book back. "And now the World's Atlas, if you please!" He looked up as he spoke, and noting the look of befuddlement on my face, smiled and spoke in a kindly tone.

"No, Watney, this time I am not attempting to mystify. In time you shall know all. It is simply that every minute may count, and there is no time at present for explanations. So if you will excuse me, I shall get on with my work!"

I waited as he flung the Atlas open, then seeing that he had already forgotten my presence, I quietly left and went to my room.

I awoke to find the first faint strands of dawn feathering the window-pane, and even as I wondered what had aroused me so early, I felt again the urgent pressure of Homes's hand upon my arm.

"Come, Watney," he said in a low voice, "our train leaves in thirty minutes. I have a cab waiting and you must hurry if we are not to miss our connection. Get dressed quickly, and I shall meet you below."

His footsteps diminished as he left the room, and I groped for my oxford bags, my mind awhirl, sleep fighting to resume control. I entered our sitting-room to find that Homes had already descended, and even as I picked up my overcoat, I noted that the table was still covered with many volumes from Homes's vast reference library, and that the lamp was still lighted. It was evident that my friend had spent the night at work. I was turning down the lamp when a faint cry from below caused me to slip quickly into my coat and hurry down the steps.

Homes was already seated in the cab, and even as I came running up he gave the driver instructions to start, his strong hand pulling me into the moving vehicle. "Forgive me, Watney," he chuckled, as we rattled off toward Euston Station. "The complete answer came to me but a short while ago, and I still had to telegraph Flaherty to meet us with some of his agents at the train. I also had to arrange our passage on the Ayr Express and see that a cab was waiting to take us to the station. I'm afraid that I left the problem of awakening you until the last."

"And the answer lies in Scotland?" I asked.

"It does indeed," replied my friend, smiling. Then, leaning forward, he cried, "Tuppence extra, driver, if we do not miss our train!"

We came clattering into Euston Station at a terrific clip, and Homes had me by the hand, dragging me from the moving vehicle while it was still moving smartly. We ran down the deserted platform, peering into the compartments of the steaming train, and then, as the cars began to move, Homes flung open a door and sprang aboard, pulling me behind him. I had scarcely time to catch my breath when we passed beneath the tunnel, and Homes then seated himself comfortably in the first smoking compartment we came upon.

"Flaherty and his men are aboard," he said, reaching into his pocket for his briar. "I noticed him in the car behind as we came along the platform. With any luck we should have this case finished by nightfall."

"But I do not understand any of this, Homes!" I cried perplexedly. "I have seen all that you have seen, and none of it makes any sense at all! Do you mean you have deduced the General's whereabouts, and the plot behind his disappearance, simply from the little data of which I am cognizant?"

"Little data?" he replied in honest surprise. "Actually, Watney, I have never had a case so replete with data. Allow me to demonstrate!"

He drew the folded paper containing the cryptic message from his pocket and placed it upon the small table beneath the window. I moved to face him, and he began his explanation.

"First, Watney," he said, smoothing the sheet so that I could once again read the scrawled words, "listen carefully to what the General says. He begins by saying 'only time for nine'—meaning quite clearly that he only has time for a few words. He follows this with 'up to fifty-six' and the words 'off four.' What can these words possibly indicate? Only one thing: directions! The most positive directions that exist, Watney—*latitude and longitude!* Up fifty-six. Off four. Obviously fifty-six degrees north latitude and four degrees west longitude!

"Do we have anything to support these deductions? What else does he say? He says, 'The trouble is my right hand.' And who is his right hand? Major Anguish McAnguish! And Debretts gives the home seat of the McAnguish family as Carnoustie in Scotland—*at exactly this latitude and longitude!*"

Homes leaned back, puffing furiously upon his briar. "Let us go a bit further," he said, as I sat wide-eyed at this brilliant exposition. "The General next states, 'The result is the old hook.' I do not know if you are familiar with the slang speech of America, Watney, but the 'old hook' means that he is being pressured into something which is, to say the least, distasteful to him. And he finishes by saying, 'The double-bogey man has me!' We all know what the bogey man is—one of the superstitions of our childhood. And the double-bogey man can only be twice as terrible in the imagination of this poor chap!

"On this basis, then, let us restate the message as the General might have written it had he not attempted to conceal his meaning from his enemies. He would have said: 'Just time for a short note. I must go back to Carnoustie, because McAnguish is blackmailing me. There I shall be forced to participate in some pagan rites which are too terrible even to discuss!' "

I sat up in alarm. "Pagan rites, Homes?"

"There can be no doubt—remember the bogey man, Watney! I do not know if you are familiar with Voodoo, or Macumba, or any of the other pagan religions based upon sorcery, but human sacrifice often plays a part, and often using the most primitive of weapons! You recall, I am sure, the war-clubs and the wooden darts which we discovered in the rooms of General Kennebunk, which are also, I might point out, the rooms of Major McAnguish!"

Homes leaned back once again and eyed me grimly. "Remember, Watney, our Aryan enemy has made Paganism its official religion. And Scotland has many Nationalists who are not out of sympathy with these enemies. There can be no doubt that somewhere on the heaths of Carnoustie this rite is either in progress or being prepared! I can only hope that we are in time to rescue General Kennebunk from

these fiends before it is too late—for it is quite evident who the victim of this sacrifice is to be!"

"How horrible, Homes! And for this reason you brought Flaherty and his men?"

"Precisely. There may well be fisticuffs, and besides, we have no official position in this, particularly in Scotland. However, grim as the situation may be, it is certain we shall be of small use if we do not rest a bit before our arrival. I would suggest twenty winks while we can, for we may be quite busy before the day is over."

I awoke to find Homes in conference with a heavy-set gentleman whose pocket sagged under the weight of a truncheon, and who could be none other than the police agent Flaherty.

"I understand, Mr. Homes," this person was saying respectfully. "It shall be as you say."

"You have a photograph of this colonial officer?"

"I do, Mr. Homes. He is a balding gentleman much given to wearing colourful knickerbockers and rather dashing shirts when off duty, and I am sure I shall have no trouble recognizing him."

"Good. Then we are ready. I have studied a one-inch map of the area and am convinced that there is but one heath sufficiently isolated as to be suitable for their nefarious purpose. The engineer of the train has agreed to stop close-by to allow us all to descend and deploy. Come, Watney, I feel the brakes being applied at this very moment!"

Seconds later we found ourselves beside the track while the express slowly gathered speed again. In addition to Homes and myself, Flaherty was accompanied by three large men, all similarly attired, and all weighted down by their truncheons. At a signal from Homes, we crossed the tracks and spread out in a widening curve, fanning across the heath.

The section of heath we fronted was well landscaped, with flags, probably marking watering holes, spaced about. We were advancing slowly when of a sudden there was a sharp whistle in our ears and a white stone flew past us to disappear in the distance.

"It's a trap, Homes!" I cried, flinging him into a near-by sand-filled depression and covering him with my body.

"I believe in Scotland they call these ditches 'bunkers'," he replied, rising and dusting himself off carefully. "Come, men, we must be close!"

He leaned over the edge of the depression, studying the landscape, Flaherty beside him. Suddenly the police agent stiffened, and peering into the distance, pointed his finger excitedly.

"It's him, Mr. Homes," he cried. "I don't know how you ever deduced it, but as always you were right! And he is surrounded by three others, all of whom are armed

with heavy sticks! But wait!" The police agent turned to Homes with a bewildered air. "He, too, is armed!"

"It is as I feared," said Homes, watching the four men approach. "Either hypnotism or drugs, both quite common in this type of affair. I fear in his present condition he may struggle, but at least we have discovered him before they can put their odious plan into practice. Come, men, let us surround them!"

"I'm sorry, Mr. Homes," said Flaherty, placing his hand on Homes's arm. "My instructions are very clear. You have found him, and a fine piece of work, but it is my duty to effect the rescue. You must go back to London at once."

"Nonsense!" Homes cried, incensed. "Come, men!"

"No, Mr. Homes," Flaherty replied quite firmly. "The instructions come from the Home Office itself. You are far too valuable to risk in an operation such as this. But fear not; I promise you I shall get him safely away from these culprits!"

"Do not fail then," Homes replied sternly. "Come, Watney, we have but forty minutes if we are to catch the next train south!" . . .

I had opened the morning journal and was engrossed in attempting to open my eggs and turn the pages simultaneously when Homes entered the breakfast room and seated himself opposite me.

"I believe you are wasting your time, Watney," he remarked genially. "I have already been informed by Criscroft that the General is back in London, and I seriously doubt that the censors would allow an account of yesterday's proceedings to reach the public columns."

"I am not so sure, Homes," I replied, noting a small article buried in one corner. "It is true that no great details of the affair appear, but it does say that because of a nerve-wracking event that took place yesterday, General Kennebunk is under doctor's orders to take a few days' rest."

"I can well imagine how nerve-wracking it must have been," said Homes, his eyes warm with quick sympathy. "However, I would judge that several days engaged in one of our pleasant English sports could well erase this terrible memory. I believe I shall suggest this to the Home Office. A letter to my brother Criscroft, if you please, Watney!"

Please see page 17, this issue, for Anniversary Issue announcement.

a new story by

EDITORS' FILE CARD

AUTHOR: **HENRY SLESAR**

TITLE: ***Museum Piece***

TYPE: Crime Story

LOCALE: United States

TIME: The turn of the century—and later

COMMENTS: *The reporter was looking for an unusual story. Well, Mr. Connally had it for him. A short shocker . . .*

THE REPORTER, WHO LIKED TO categorize, couldn't find the proper label for Mr. Connally. "Curator" didn't seem quite appropriate, so he wrote "Museum Director" in his notebook, and waited for Connally to answer.

"Our most unusual exhibit?" Connally rearranged the four strands of hair on his polished scalp. "Well, that would have to be the Raymond, I suppose. Not the most sensational, perhaps, but certainly the most unusual."

"Raymond?"

"You don't know the name? No, I guess you're not a student of this kind of thing." He chuckled. "But at the turn of the century the name had a certain notoriety. I can tell you the story, if you like."

"That's what I'm here for," the reporter said . . .

When beautiful Ada Krim emerged from the obscurity of the London Music Halls to the spotlight of the American stage, her successful career was capped by what seemed an even more successful marriage. In 1886 she became the bride of John Lloyd Raymond, a wealthy glass manufacturer. A year later their son Vincent was born, and Ada said farewell to the theater.

Unfortunately, parlor and nursery proved too small a stage for Ada's talents. She became bored and restless. She tried travel, extravagance, and then infidelity. The last proved fatal.

On the day of Vincent's eleventh birthday, John Raymond arrived home for an early celebration and discovered his wife's lover fleeing a rendezvous. Raymond's subsequent actions were reported on the front pages of every newspaper from New York to San Francisco. With a fire axe torn from the wall, he put his lovely wife back into the spotlight for one brief, gory moment.

John Raymond's punishment was swift. It was self-inflicted—he committed suicide shortly after the slaying. Vincent Raymond's punishment proved to be of longer duration. Until the age of twenty-one he was a ward of the state; from then on he devoted his life to a search for anonymity.

In March 1912 a man named Galinari made it his business to seek and find the lone survivor of the Raymond family tragedy. He discovered him in a shabby rooming house near the waterfront, where Vincent, who had artist's pretensions, was painting gloomy pictures of hollow-eyed women and sinking clipper ships. He had long since squandered what was left of the Raymond fortune, and Galinari easily managed the introduction by feigning interest in Vincent's work and offering to discuss it over a hot dinner. Vincent, a thin, haunted, hungry man, agreed.

It was then that Galinari put his cards on the table—one of them literally.

"As you can see," Galinari said, watching Vincent study the business card in his hand, "I, too am an artist, Mr. Raymond. My specialty is sculpture. But our talents differ in one respect. Yours is dependent on the quality of imagination, while mine is devoted is versimilitude. I sculpture only what is."

"I don't understand," Vincent said, tearing into the bread and meat. "What do you want from me?"

"The work I am contemplating may not be possible without you. In order to explain, however, I must speak of a subject that may be painful to you."

Vincent paused in his wolfish progress.

"A lot of subjects are painful to me, Mr. Galinari."

"This one, I think, has left the deepest wound."

"You mean—my parents."

Galinari sighed, and smoothed both ends of his stylish mustache. "I'm quite a few years older than you, Mr. Raymond, and have a clear memory of those terrible events. I'm old enough to remember your mother, too, as she appeared before her retirement from the stage. She was a beautiful woman, and I have a great desire to portray her as she was."

"You want to make a statue of my mother?"

"It's something I've wanted to do ever since the first moment I saw her on stage. Fortunately, there are many tintypes of her available, and

I shouldn't have any trouble with the likeness. To be truthful, I've almost completed that project . . ."

"I can't stop you from that," Vincent growled. "You needn't get my permission, Mr. Galinari. But if your conscience bothers you—" he waved a beef bone in the air—"you can order me another bottle of wine."

"I would gladly make it several, Mr. Raymond, if you would give me one more permission. To sculpture your father, too."

"My father?"

Galinari etched the tablecloth with his fork. "You might call it an obsession," he said apologetically. "But from the moment I knew that my work on Ada Krim's statue was nearing completion, I felt that I could not stop unless I had done the head of John Lloyd Raymond. Your father was a most interesting man, strong-willed, passionate—"

"You needn't describe him," Vincent said tensely. "And you needn't ask me anything about him. He's dead, Mr. Galinari, and I have no way to prevent you from sculpting him or painting him or anything else. But I'll tell you one thing. You won't get me to talk about him."

"No, no," Galinari said, "I wouldn't dream of it. But you see, I have a peculiar problem. While it was no trouble to find likenesses of Ada Krim, in the case of your father—"

"Yes?"

Galinari looked away in embarrassment. "I cannot find a photograph of your father anywhere, Mr. Raymond. I have searched, and come to a dead end. And what I was wondering—I know this is an imposition—but I was wondering if there was something in your possession—"

"You think I have pictures of—*him?*"

"It was only a hope. I know his memory is painful, but you were his son, and sometimes—well, there are souvenirs that one hates to discard."

Vincent was eating again, his eyes fixed on the plate before him. Galinari waited patiently.

"I would be willing to pay well for such a photograph, Mr. Raymond. That's all I wanted to say."

"I have pictures," Vincent said quietly. "You can have them for twenty dollars."

It was almost two months before Vincent Raymond thought of Galinari again. When he saw the name once more, it came on him as a rude shock. It was red-lettered on a poster urging attendance to an exthrills to all lovers of mayhem and murder.

Grand Opening!
GALINARI'S WAX MUSEUM
Vivid Recreations
Scenes of Crime, Passion and
Horror Never Before Witnessed
Admission 25¢

When the meaning of Galinari's deceit struck Vincent Raymond

with its full impact, he was, if anything, more affected than by the first crisis in his life. For fourteen years he had fought against cruel memory and unwanted public sympathy; in one stroke, Galinari, the genius of paraffin, had erased his meager victory.

Vincent's rage was terrible. He ripped the offending poster from the wall, and then, knowing that he would have to face the moment, searched through the shreds for the address of the wax museum.

On the afternoon of his first visit he found a fair-sized crowd clamoring good-naturedly for admission. The men laughed boisterously, the women tittered shyly and some were emitting tiny screams of anticipatory squeamishness. There were even a few children in the orderly line pushing its way toward the entrance, and Vincent trembled at the thought of what their eyes, and his, might see inside.

The interior of Galinari's waxworks swiftly silenced the gabble and laughter of the visitors. It was deep-carpeted and hushed, the dim lighting artful; in its pale yellow luminescence, the skillfully wrought figures behind the plush ropes seemed uncannily life-like.

There were Burke and Hare, frozen in the act of desecrating a grave and removing a horribly real corpse. In a Fifteenth Century torture chamber, a heretic was being broken on the rack while the Inquisitors looked on approvingly. A maid of Salem, her expression so pitiable that Vincent almost imagined the tears welling in her eyes, stood before the gallows awaiting the punishment of the witch. And in one corner, the subject of excited curiosity, Hawley Harvey Crippen, whose heinous crimes were still fresh in memory, was doing in Belle Ellmore.

"Look, mommy, look!" a child's voice cried, "the man with the axe!" And Vincent followed the small running feet toward the exhibit he had come to see.

BRUTAL SLAYING OF AN UNFAITHFUL WIFE said the placard, as Vincent's head reeled at the sight of the scene and the terrible, true words. *Brutal Slaying of an Unfaithful Wife. Ada Krim Raymond, Darling of the American Stage, Caught in a Lover's Tryst by her Husband, John Lloyd Raymond, who Dispatched her With One Blow of an Axe. September 6, 1898.*

Galinari was a genius—Vincent Raymond could attest to the fact. The contorted, wrathful face of the figure holding the axe was the face of his father and no other; the horrified image at his feet, crouched near an overturned chair, was Ada Krim. It was reality. It was truth. It was nightmare!

With a strangled sound, Vincent battered his way through the thickening crowd around the exhibit, heedless of their indignation. He stumbled into a knot of newcom-

ers at the door, and shouting for escape, pushed his way to the door and into the street.

"Madman, madman!" they hooted after him, and the barker at the entrance quickly used his opportunity to cite Vincent's frantic exit as proof of the thrills inside. "Not for the timid!" he cried. "Not for the timid!" and the crowds pushed even more eagerly to gain admittance.

No clocks could measure the time that Vincent walked the streets, trying to shake off the stupefying effect of what he had seen. When he finally came to his senses, he was surprised to see that night had fallen. He sat on a park bench, his head in his hands, and tried to restore order in his muddled brain.

When he was once again in control of his actions, he knew what he had to do. He returned to Galinari's Wax Museum.

The crowds had grown thinner by now—only a few stragglers remained to gawk at the crude posters outside of the museum. It was 8:30, and the museum closed at nine. The barker, a bull-chested man in a derby, was leaning on his podium and yawning when Vincent approached him.

"Mr. Galinari?" the barker replied. "Yes, sir, his office is in the rear of the musuem—the door marked Manager. Hold on," he growled, as Vincent started inside, "that'll be twenty-five cents."

Vincent's second walk through the museum was an unseeing one. He stared straight ahead and paused only when he faced the small, paneled door in the rear. He knocked and heard Galinari's voice bidding him enter.

Galinari remained admirably calm at the sight of his visitor. From behind the Victorian desk, he looked up, and the fine-nibbed pen he held poised over a ledger didn't quiver in the slightest. His only motion was to brush the end of his mustache gently, and then smile.

"Mr. Raymond!" he said pleasantly. "How nice of you to attend my opening. I was anxious for you to come and visit me some time."

Vincent slammed the door behind him.

"You liar!" he shouted. "You thief!"

"Thief?" Galinari blinked innocently. "I've stolen nothing, Mr. Raymond. I've imitated life, but stolen nothing. Please, won't you come in and sit down?"

"You lied to me," Vincent said, approaching the desk. "You pretended to be something you weren't. You never told me that you were going to do a—"

"I told you only the truth—that I wished to do a sculpture of your parents. I only neglected to specify the medium. Some artists work with clay and marble. I choose wax. Is that so wrong?"

"You know it's wrong!" Vincent was shouting again. "You've

made a public spectacle out of it!" He pounded the desk. "And now you're going to do something about it. You're going to get rid of that—thing out there!"

"Really, Mr. Raymond—"

Vincent lost control. His arms reached out and his hands plucked Galinari's lapels away from his well-cut suit. In his fury, Vincent's strength was so great that he almost lifted the smaller man over the desk. Galinari sputtered, and lost his urbane manner.

"Let go of me!" he cried. "You can't *force* me to do anything. It's my right, my right—"

"It's not your right!" Vincent raged. "You can't make a public display out of—that! I won't let you do it!"

"You can't stop me! Do you hear? There's no law that can make me stop!"

"There must be! There has to be—"

"Let me go, you—savage!"

Vincent let go, shoving Galinari back into his chair.

"I'll stop you," he said dangerously. "I don't need the law. I don't need anybody, Galinari."

He whirled and went to the door, leaving it open behind him. His march to the exhibit was purposeful; his stride was almost a headlong run. Galinari gasped and did nothing, giving Vincent the breathing space he required for the only act he knew was left to him.

By the time the museum master had gathered his wits and hurried after him, Vincent was at the scene. From the exhibit itself he chose his weapon—the fallen chair beside the wax figure of his victimized mother. He lifted it above his head.

"No!" Galinari screamed. "Raymond, don't!"

It was too late. The chair crashed against the head of John Lloyd Raymond, and the stiff wax crumpled beneath its impact. Again and again Vincent struck at the artificial figure, until the metal axe clanged to the floor of the exhibit and the shattered body toppled in ruins.

Then he raised the chair above the counterfeit of Ada Krim, his hand hesitating momentarily at destroying even the simulated face of the mother he had loved. The arms of Galinari, struggling to save the creatures of his art, reached out to halt him, but they had no effect.

"Stop it! Stop!" Galinari pleaded, but Vincent pushed him aside and struck at his mother's image on the floor, the waxen face yielding grotesquely to the force of his blows.

Then Galinari's arms were about his neck, trying to pull him away, and Vincent, his rage possessing him completely, dropped the chair. His hands reached instead for the museum master himself, and as they closed about the warm, real flesh of his throat, Vincent felt the first true satisfaction of his destructive impulse.

Tighter and tighter his fingers closed, cutting off the flow of air to Galinari's lungs. The sculptor's eyes, rounded first by anger and then by fear, lost interest in the sights of the world. The small body relaxed, and life seemed to run out of Galinari like molten wax . . .

"Well," said Connally to the reporter, "that's the way it happened, almost fifty years ago. Perhaps you'd like to see the Raymond exhibit for yourself?"

"But I thought you said that Vincent destroyed it?"

"Ah, so he did," the Museum Director said, walking the reporter to the site. "But this is the Raymond exhibit I was talking to you about."

The reporter looked beyond the velvet rope, and stared at the lifelike recreation of a wild-eyed young man throttling to death a small, dapper man with a stylish mustach. *Vincent Raymond,* the placard said, *April 24, 1912.*

Another Reader Service Appearing in "The World's Leading Mystery Magazine"

ELLERY QUEEN'S *Mystery Magazine*

Dec.-Jan. 1961 Releases

DIRECTORY OF MYSTERY & SUSPENSE PAPERBACKS

AUTHOR	TITLE	PUBLISHER	RETAIL PRICE	ON SALE DATE	ORIGINAL or REPRINT
Ard, William	AND SO TO BED	Monarch Books	35¢	January 6	O
Armstrong, Charlotte	THE UNSUSPECTED	Ace Books	50¢	January 10	R
Armstrong, Charlotte	INCIDENT AT A CORNER	Ace Books	50¢	January 10	R
Bonham, Frank	THE SKIN GAME	Gold Medal	35¢	December 28	O
Carr, John Dickson	MURDER OF SIR EDMUND GODFREY	Dolphin Books	95¢	January 19	R
Ethan, John B.	MURDER ON WALL STREET	Pocket Books	35¢	January 1	R
Frazer, Robert Caine	MARK KILBY TAKES A RISK	Pocket Books	35¢	January 1	O
Gardner, Erle Stanley	THE CASE OF THE SINGING SKIRT	Pocket Books	35¢	January 1	R
Gardner, Erle Stanley	THE CASE OF THE DANGEROUS DOWAGER	Pocket Books	35¢	January 1	R
Gardner, Erle Stanley	THE CASE OF THE GILDED LILY	Pocket Books	35¢	January 1	R
Gardner, Erle Stanley	THE CASE OF THE RESTLESS REDHEAD	Pocket Books	35¢	January 1	R
Gardner, Erle Stanley	THE CASE OF THE TERRIFIED TYPIST	Pocket Books	35¢	January 1	R
Halliday, Brett	SHE WOKE TO DARKNESS	Dell	35¢	January 25	R
Hely, Elizabeth	I'LL BE JUDGE, I'LL BE JURY	Dell	40¢	January 9	R
Hitchcock, Alfred	BAR THE DOORS	Dell	50¢	January 25	R
House, Brant (Editor)	CRIMES THAT SHOCKED AMERICA	Ace Books	50¢	January 10	R
Household, Geoffrey	WATCHER IN THE SHADOWS	Bantam Books	50¢	January 2	R
Hull, Helen	A TAPPING ON THE WALL	Popular Library	35¢	January 18	R
Kane, Frank	THE MOURNING AFTER	Dell	35¢	January 23	O
MacDonald, John D.	ONE MONDAY WE KILLED THEM ALL	Gold Medal	35¢	December 28	O
MacDonald, Philip	WARRANT FOR X	Dell	50¢	January 4	R
Marsh, Ngaio	DEATH AT THE BAR	Berkley	50¢	January 2	R
O'Farrell, William	GYPSY GO HOME	Gold Medal	35¢	December 28	O
Ridgway, Jason	HARDLY A MAN IS NOW ALIVE	Permabooks	35¢	January 5	O
Rohmer, Sax	THE HAND OF FU-MANCHU	Pyramid Books	40¢	January 15	R
Stout, Rex	TOO MANY CLIENTS	Bantam Books	40¢	January 2	R
Symons, Julian	PROGRESS OF A CRIME	Dolphin Books	95¢	January 19	R
Tey, Josephine	TO LOVE AND BE WISE	Berkley	50¢	January 2	Reissue

The titles appearing above are available at your newsstands or wherever paperbacks are sold. Do not order them through this magazine.

For some peculiar reason we have tended to commemorate the anniversary of Edgar Allan Poe's death, which occurred on October 7, 1849. Why this is so, we do not know. Was it, instinctively, because of Poe's nature, because of his deep and compulsive preoccupation with death? Whatever the reason, psychological or otherwise, we propose to counteract this ghoulish tendency by now observing the anniversary of Poe's birth, which occurred on January 18, 1809; and to honor this 153rd anniversary of Poe's natal date we give you a rather neglected example of the genius of the man who is acknowledged throughout the world to have been the Father of the Detective Story.

And why, may we ask, has this story never been listed among Poe's contributions to the mystery genre (which in a modern sense it can be said that Poe invented)? Surely this tale is full of frauds, bulging with buncos—indeed, a very compendium of crime; and you will find it remarkably pleasant reading despite its great age—for more than a century and a half has passed since Poe first "diddled" these words on foolscap . . .

DIDDLING

by EDGAR A. POE

SINCE THE WORLD BEGAN THERE have been two Jeremys. The one wrote a Jeremiad about usury, and was called Jeremy Bentham. He has been much admired by Mr. John Neal, and was a great man in a small way. The other gave name to the most important of the Exact Sciences, and was a great man in a *great* way—I may say, indeed, in the very greatest of ways.

Diddling—or the abstract idea conveyed by the verb to diddle—is sufficiently well understood. Yet the fact, the deed, the thing, *diddling,* is somewhat difficult to define. We may get, however, at a tolerably distinct conception of the matter in hand by defining—not the thing, diddling, in itself—but man, as an animal that diddles. Had Plato but hit upon this, he would have been spared the affront of the picked chicken.

Very pertinently it was demanded of Plato why a picked chicken, which was clearly a "biped without feathers," was not, according to his own definition, a man? But I am not to be bothered by any similar query. Man is an animal that diddles, and there is *no* animal that

diddles *but* man. It will take an entire hen-coop of picked chickens to get over that.

What constitutes the essence, the nare, the principle of diddling is, in fact, peculir to the class of creatures that wear coats and pantaloons. A crow thieves; a fox cheats; a weasel outwits; a man diddles. To diddle is his destiny. "Man was made to mourn," says the poet. But not so: he was made to diddle. This is his aim—his object—his *end*. And for this reason, when a man's diddled we say he's *"done."*

Diddling, rightly considered, is a compound of which the ingredients are minuteness, interest, perseverance, ingenuity, audacity, nonchalance, originality, impertinence, and grin.

Minuteness: Your diddler is minute. His operations are upon a small scale. His business is retail, for cash, or approved paper at sight. Should he ever be tempted into magnificent speculation, he then, at once, loses his distinctive features, and becomes what we term "financier." This latter word conveys the diddling idea in every respect except that of magnitude. A diddler may thus be regarded as a banker *in petto*—a "financial operation," as a diddle at Brobdingnag. The one is to the other, as Homer to "Flaccus"—as a mastodon to a mouse—as the tail of a comet to that of a pig.

Interest: Your diddler is guided by self-interest. He scorns to diddle for the mere *sake* of the diddle. He has an object in view—his pocket—and yours. He regards always the main chance. He looks to Number One. You are Number Two, and must look to yourself.

Perseverance: Your diddler perseveres. He is not readily discouraged. Should even the banks break, he cares nothing about it. He steadily pursues his end, and *Ut canis a corio nunquam absterrebitur uncto,* so he lets go of his game.

Ingenuity: Your diddler is ingenious. He has constructiveness large. He understands plot. He invents and circumvents. Were he not Alexander he would be Diogenes. Were he not a diddler, he would be a maker of patent rat traps or an angler for trout.

Audacity: Your diddler is audacious. He is a bold man. He carries the war into Africa. He conquers all by assault. He would not fear the daggers of Frey Herren. With a little more prudence Dick Turpin would have made a good diddler; with a trifle less blarney, Daniel O'Connell; with a pound or two more brains, Charles the Twelfth.

Nonchalance: Your diddler is nonchalant. He is not at all nervous. He never *had* any nerves. He is never seduced into a flurry. He is never put out—unless put out of doors. He is cool—cool as a cucumber. He is calm—"calm as a smile from Lady Bury." He is easy—easy as an old glove, or the damsels of ancient Baiae.

Originality: Your diddler is origi-

nal—most conscientiously so. His thoughts are his own. He would scorn to employ those of another. A stale trick is his aversion. He would return a purse, I am sure, upon discovering that he had obtained it by an unoriginal diddle.

Impertinence: Your diddler is impertinent. He swaggers. He sets his arms a-kimbo. He thrusts his hands in his trousers' pocket. He sneers in your face. He treads on your corns. He eats your dinner, he drinks your wine, he borrows your money, he pulls your nose, he kicks your poodle, and he kisses your wife.

Grin: Your *true* diddler winds up all with a grin. But this nobody sees but himself. He grins when his daily work is done—when his allotted labors are accomplished—at night in his own closet, and altogether for his own private entertainment. He goes home. He locks his door. He divests himself of his clothes. He puts out his candle. He gets into bed. He places his head upon the pillow. All this done, and your diddler *grins*. This is no hypothesis. It is a matter of course. I reason *a priori*, and a diddle would be *no* diddle without a grin.

The origin of the diddle is referable to the infancy of the Human Race. Perhaps the first diddler was Adam. At all events, we can trace the science back to a very remote period of antiquity. The moderns, however, have brought it to a perfection never dreamed of by our thick-headed progenitors. Without pausing to speak of the "old saws," therefore, I shall content myself with a compendious account of the more "modern instances."

A very good diddle is this. A housekeeper in want of a sofa, for instance, is seen to go in and out of several cabinet warehouses. At length she arrives at one offering an excellent variety. She is accosted, and invited to enter, by a polite and voluble individual at the door. She finds a sofa well adapted to her views, and upon inquiring the price, is surprised and delighted to hear a sum named at least twenty per cent. lower than her expectations. She hastens to make the purchase, gets a bill and receipt, leaves her address, with a request that the article be sent home as speedily as possible, and retires amid a profusion of bows from the shopkeeper.

The night arrives and no sofa. The next day passes, and still none. A servant is sent to make inquiry about the delay. The whole transaction is denied. No sofa has been sold—no money received—except by the diddler, who played shopkeeper for the nonce.

Our cabinet warehouses are left entirely unattended, and thus afford every facility for a trick of this kind. Visitors enter, look at furniture, and depart unheeded and unseen. Should anyone wish to purchase, or to inquire the price of an article, a bell is at hand, and this is considered amply sufficient.

Again, quite a respectable diddle is this. A well-dressed individual enters a shop, makes a purchase to the value of a dollar, finds, much to his vexation, that he has left his pocketbook in another coat; and so says to the shopkeeper, "My dear sir, just oblige me, will you, by sending the bundle home? But stay, I really believe that I have nothing less than a five dollar bill, even *there*. However, you can send four dollars in change *with* the bundle, you know."

"Very good, sir," replies the shopkeeper, who entertains, at once, a lofty opinion of the high-mindedness of his customer. "I know fellows," he says to himself, "who would just have put the goods under their arm and walked off with a promise to call and pay the dollar as they came by in the afternoon."

A boy is sent with the parcel and change. On the route, quite accidentally, he is met by the purchaser, who exclaims, "Ah! this is my bundle, I see—I thought you had been home with it, long ago. Well, go on! My wife, Mrs. Trotter, will give you the five dollars—I left instructions with her to that effect. The change you might as well give to *me*—I shall want some silver for the Post Office. Very good! One, two, three, four—quite right! Say to Mrs. Trotter that you met me, and be sure now and *do* not loiter on the way."

The boy doesn't loiter at all—but he is a very long time in getting back from his errand—for no lady of the precise name of Mrs. Trotter is to be discovered. He consoles himself, however, that he has not been such a fool as to leave the goods without the money, and reentering his shop with a self-satisfied air, feels sensibly hurt and indignant when his master asks him what has become of the change.

A very simple diddle, indeed, is this. The captain of a ship which is about to sail is presented by an official-looking person with an unusually moderate bill of city charges. Glad to get off so easily and confused by a hundred duties pressing upon him all at once, he discharges the claim forthwith. In about fifteen minutes another and less reasonable bill is handed him by one who soon makes it evident that the first collector was a diddler, and the original collection a diddle.

And here, too, is a somewhat similar thing. A steamboat is casting loose from the wharf. A traveler, portmanteau in hand, is discovered running toward the wharf at full speed. Suddenly he makes a dead halt, stoops, and picks up something from the ground in a very agitated manner. It is a pocketbook, and—"Has any gentleman lost a pocketbook?" he cries. No one can say that he has exactly lost a pocketbook; but a great excitement ensues when the treasure trove is found to be of value. The boat however, must not be detained.

"Time and tide wait for no man," says the captain.

"For God's sake, stay only a few

minutes," says the finder, "the true claimant will presently appear."

"Can't wait!" replies the man in authority. "Cast off there, d'ye hear?"

"What *am* I to do?" asks the finder, in great tribulation. "I am about to leave the country for some years, and I cannot conscientiously retain this large amount in my possession. I beg your pardon, sir," [here he addresses a gentleman on shore,] "but you have the air of an honest man. *Will* you confer upon me the favor of taking charge of this pocketbook—I *know* I can trust you—and of advertising it? The notes, you see, amount to a very considerable sum. The owner will, no doubt, insist upon rewarding you for your trouble—"

"*Me!*—no, *you!*—it was *you* who found the book."

"Well, if you *must* have it so—*I* will take a small reward—just to satisfy your scruples. Let me see—why these notes are all hundreds—bless my soul! a hundred is too much to take—fifty would be quite enough, I am sure—"

"Cast off there!" says the captain.

"But then I have no change for a hundred, and upon the whole *you* had better—"

"Cast off there!" says the captain.

"Never mind!" cries the gentleman on shore, who has been examining his own pocketbook, "never mind! *I* can fix it—here is a fifty on the Bank of North America—throw me the pocketbook."

And the over-conscientious finder takes the fifty with marked reluctance and throws the gentleman the pocketbook, as desired, while the steamboat fumes and fizzes on her way. In about half an hour after her departure, the "large amount" is seen to be a "counterfeit presentment," and the whole thing a capital diddle.

A bold diddle is this. A camp meeting, or something similar, is to be held at a certain spot which is accessible only by means of a free bridge. A diddle stations himself upon this bridge, respectfully informs all passersby of the new county law which establishes a toll of one cent for foot passengers, two for horses and donkeys, and so forth. Some grumble but all submit, and the diddler goes home a wealthier man by some fifty or sixty dollars well earned. This taking a toll from a great crowd of people is an excessively troublesome thing.

A neat diddle is this. A friend holds one of the diddler's promises to pay, filled up and signed in due form, upon the ordinary blanks printed in red ink. The diddler purchases one or two dozen of these blanks, and every day dips one of them in his soup, makes his dog jump for it, and finally gives it to him as a *bonne bouche*. The note arriving at maturity, the diddler, with the diddler's dog, calls upon the friend, and the promise to pay is made the topic of discussion.

The friend produces it from his

escritoire and is in the act of reaching it to the diddler when up jumps the diddler's dog and devours it forthwith. The diddler is not only surprised but vexed and incensed at the absurd behavior of his dog, and expresses his entire readiness to cancel the obligation at any moment when the evidence of the obligation shall be forthcoming.

A very minute diddle is this. A lady is insulted in the street by a diddler's accomplice. The diddler himself flies to her assistance, and giving his friend a comfortable thrashing, insists upon attending the lady to her own door. He bows, with his hand upon his heart, and most respectfully bids her adieu. She entreats him, as her deliverer, to walk in and be introduced to her big brother and her papa. With a sigh he declines to do so.

"Is there no way, then, sir," she murmurs, "in which I may be permitted to testify my gratitude?"

"Why, yes, madam, there is. Will you be kind enough to lend me a couple of shillings?"

In the first excitement of the moment the lady decides upon fainting outright. Upon second thought, however, she opens her purse strings and delivers the specie. Now this, I say, is a diddle minute—for one entire moiety of the sum borrowed has to be paid to the gentleman who had the trouble of performing the insult and who had then to stand still and be thrashed for performing it.

Rather a small, but still a scientific diddle is this. The diddler approaches the bar of a tavern and demands a couple of twists of tobacco. These are handed to him when, having slightly examined them, he says, "I don't much like this tobacco. Here, take it back, and give me a glass of brandy and water in its place."

The brandy and water is furnished and imbibed, and the diddler makes his way to the door. But the voice of the tavernkeeper arrests him.

"I believe, sir, you have forgotten to pay for your brandy and water."

"Pay for my brandy and water! Didn't I give you the tobacco for the brandy and water? What more would you have?"

"But, sir, if you please, I don't remember that you paid me for the tobacco."

"What do you mean by that, you scoundrel? Didn't I give you back your tobacco? Isn't *that* your tobacco lying *there?* Do you expect me to pay for what I did not take?"

"But, sir," says the publican, now rather at a loss what to say, "but sir—"

"But me no buts, sir," interrupts the diddler, apparently in very high dudgeon and slamming the door after him as he makes his escape. "But me no buts, sir, and none of your tricks upon travelers."

Here again is a very clever diddle of which the simplicity is not its least recommendation. A purse, or

pocketbook, being really lost, the loser inserts in *one* of the daily papers of a large city a fully descriptive advertisement.

Whereupon our diddler copies the *facts* of this advertisement, with a change of heading, of general phraseology, and *address*. The original, for instance, is long, and verbose, is headed "A Pocketbook Lost!" and requires the treasure, when found, to be left at No. 1 Tom Street. The copy is brief, and being headed with "Lost" only, indicates No. 2 Dick, or No. 3 Harry Street, as the locality in which the owner may be seen.

Moreover, it is inserted in at least five or six of the daily papers of the day, while in point of time it makes its appearance only a few hours after the original. Should it be read by the loser of the purse, he would hardly suspect it to have any reference to his own misfortune. But, of course, the chances are five or six to one, that the finder will repair to the address given by the diddler rather than to that pointed out by the rightful proprietor. The former pays the reward, pockets the treasure, and decamps.

Quite an analogous diddle is this. A lady of *ton* has dropped, somewhere in the street, a diamond ring of unusual value. For its recovery she offers some forty or fifty dollars reward—giving, in her advertisement, a minute description of the gem and its settings, and declaring that, on its restoration at No. So-and-so, in Such-and-such Avenue, the reward will be paid *instanter*, without a single question being asked.

During the lady's absence from home, a day or two afterward, a ring is heard at the door of No. So-and-so, in Such-and-such Avenue; a servant appears; the lady of the house is asked for and is declared to be out, at which astounding information the visitor expresses the most poignant regret. His business is of importance and concerns the lady herself. In fact, he had the good fortune to find her diamond ring. But perhaps it would be as well that he should call again.

"By no means!" says the servant; and "By no means!" says the lady's sister and the lady's sister-in-law, who are summoned forthwith. The ring is clamorously identified, the reward is paid, and the finder nearly thrust out of doors. The lady returns and expresses some little dissatisfaction with her sister and sister-in-law, because they happen to have paid forty or fifty dollars for a facsimile of her diamond ring—a facsimile made out of real pinchbeck and unquestionable paste.

But as there is really no end to diddling, so there would be none to this essay were I even to hint at half the variations of which this science is susceptible. I must bring this paper, perforce, to a conclusion, and this I cannot do better than by a summary notice of a very decent, but rather elaborate diddle, of

which our own city was made the theatre not very long ago, and which was subsequently repeated with success in other still more verdant localities of the Union.

A middle-aged gentleman arrives in town from parts unknown. He is remarkably precise, cautious, staid, and deliberate in his demeanor. His dress is scrupulously neat, but plain, unostentatious. He wears a white cravat, an ample waistcoat, made with an eye to comfort alone; thick-soled cosy-looking shoes, and pantaloons without straps. He has the whole air, in fact, of your well-to-do, sober-sided, exact, and respectable "man of business"—one of the stern and outwardly hard, internally soft, sort of people that we see in the crack high comedies—fellows whose words are so many bonds, and who are noted for giving away guineas in charity with the one hand, while, in the way of mere bargain, they exact the uttermost fraction of a farthing with the other.

He makes much ado before he can get suited with a boarding-house. He dislikes children. He has been accustomed to quiet. His habits are methodical—and then he would prefer getting into a private and respectable small family, piously inclined. Terms, however, are no object—only he must insist upon settling his bill on the first of every month (it is now the second) and begs his landlady, when he finally obtains one to his mind, *not* on any account to forget his instructions upon this point—but to send in a bill, *and* receipt, precisely at ten o'clock, on the *first* day of every month.

These arrangements made, our man of business rents an office in a reputable rather than a fashionable quarter of the town. There is nothing he more despises than pretense. "Where there is much show," he says, "there is seldom anything very solid behind"—an observation which so profoundly impresses his landlady's fancy that she makes a pencil memorandum of it forthwith in her great family Bible, on the broad margin of the Proverbs of Solomon.

The next step is to advertise, after some such fashion as this, in the principal business sixpennies of the city—the pennies are eschewed as not "respectable"—and as demanding payment for all advertisements in advance. Our man of business holds it as a point of his faith that work should never be paid for until done.

"WANTED.—The advertisers being about to commence extensive business operations in this city, will require the services of three or four intelligent and competent clerks to whom a liberal salary will be paid. The very best recommendations, not so much for capacity as for integrity, will be expected. Indeed, as the duties to be performed involve high responsibilities, and large amounts of money must necessarily pass through the hands of those en-

gaged, it is deemed advisable to demand a deposit of fifty dollars from each clerk employed. No person need apply, therefore, who is not prepared to leave this sum in the possession of the advertisers and who cannot furnish the most satisfactory testimonials of morality. Young gentlemen piously inclined will be preferred. Application should be made between the hours of ten and eleven A.M., and four and five P.M., of Messrs. Bogs, Hogs, Logs, Frogs & Co., 110 Dog St.

By the thirty-first day of the month this advertisement has brought to the office of Messrs. Bogs, Hogs, Logs, Frogs, and Company some fifteen or twenty young gentlemen piously inclined. But our man of business is in no hurry to conclude a contract with any—no man of business is *ever* precipitate—and it is not until the most rigid catechism in respect to the piety of each young gentleman's inclination that his services are engaged and his fifty dollars receipted for, *just* by way of proper precaution, on the part of the respectable firm of Bogs, Hogs, Logs, Frogs, and Company. On the morning of the first day of the next month the landlady does *not* present her bill, according to promise—a piece of neglect for which the comfortable head of the house ending in *ogs* would no doubt have chided her severely, could he have been prevailed upon to remain in town a day or two for that purpose.

As it is, the constables have had a sad time of it, running hither and thither, and all they can do is to declare the man of business most emphatically a "hen knee-high"—by which some persons imagine them to imply that, in fact, he is n.e.i.—by which again the very classical phrase *non est inventus* is supposed to be understood. In the meantime the young gentlemen, one and all, are somewhat less piously inclined than before, while the landlady purchases a shilling's worth of the best India rubber and very carefully obliterates the pencil memorandum that some fool has made in her great family Bible, on the broad margin of the Proverbs of Solomon.

BRING THE KILLER TO JUSTICE

by ROSS MACDONALD

(*continued from page 80*)

Grantland's house was a modern redwood built on cantilevers on the rim of a small canyon. His Jaguar was in the slanting driveway. A yellow ribbon of light fell across it from the partly open front door. Just inside the door a man's feet were visible, toes down. My heart skipped a beat when they moved. I soft-shoed up to the door, kicked it wide open, and went in.

Grantland was on his knees with a red-stained cloth in his hand. He whirled like an animal attacked from the rear.

"Get out of here," he said between his teeth.

I closed the door behind me. The hallway smelled like a gas station. A gallon can of gasoline and a parcel wrapped in newspaper stood against the wall. Wet spots on the pale carpet showed where Grantland had been scrubbing.

He was still on his knees, in an attitude of queer humiliation. I motioned him to his feet and shook him down. He was unarmed.

"Did she bleed a lot?" I said.

"I don't know what you're talking about."

"It's Zinnie's blood, isn't it?"

Grantland stood silent with his chin down, his arms folded across his chest, like a man on a cold night.

"You puzzle me, Grantland. I can't figure out why you killed her. Do you want to give me a little help on that?"

"I didn't kill her. I loved her. I intended to marry her."

"Sure you did. You fell in love with her as soon as she got within one death of five million dollars. Only now she's one death past it, no good for you, no good to anybody."

"Do you have to rub my nose in it?" His voice was dull with the afterboredom of shock.

"It's her blood you were trying to wipe up. Isn't it?"

He nodded mutely, miserably.

"What did you hit her with?"

He stood silent, but his eye strayed briefly to the newspaper parcel. I picked it up and ripped it open. It contained a hatchet with a bloody blade.

"Is this yours, Grantland?"

"Yes, but I didn't do it. I wasn't even here when it happened."

"She was killed in this house, then?"

"Yes. She came here with me early in the evening. She was afraid to go home to the ranch. I had an emergency call, and I had to leave her alone. When I returned, she was lying dead in the hallway, right here in the hallway." He pointed down at the floor with an unsteady hand. "She had a horrible lesion, a massive depressed fracture in her skull. I'm afraid it shook my sanity for a time. I didn't know what I was doing."

"What did you do?"

"All I could think of was getting rid of the body, getting rid of the blood. It was my house, it was my hatchet—"

"And your girl."

"Yes." He met my gaze for a sec-

ond, and I saw the loss and sorrow in his eyes. "Zinnie was my girl. I'm not ashamed of it. But I knew if her body was found here I'd be blamed. My practice would be ruined. I was frantic. I carried her out to her car and drove it down to the lower part of town. What harm did it do her? She was dead."

"It could do Carl Hellman a lot of harm. As you intended it too."

"No." Grantland's head jerked up, as if a moral noose had tightened around his neck. "I didn't think of the effect on Carl. You don't understand the pressure I was under."

"Maybe I don't. Would I understand better if you told me who your emergency caller was?"

"Do we have to go into that?"

"I suggest it was a man named Tom Rica. It was his second visit to you today. Rica is a drug addict, as you know. You gave him a needle when he came to your office, the first time."

"He has his own needle. I gave him a little Demerol."

"Why would you do that?"

"I have a legal right to prescribe drugs. It was my opinion that Rica needed something to calm him down."

"Come off it, Doctor. You gave Rica the drug because you were afraid of him. I want to know what you were afraid of."

"I don't know how to explain."

"Give it a try."

"I'm not answerable to you. I refuse to talk." But he was too full of trouble to hold it in. "I'm a weak person, I guess. I've done some foolish things in my life. They all seemed to come home to roost tonight."

"You'd better talk them out, and fast. Carl Hellman could be lynched on your account. Did you shoot his brother today?"

"God, no!"

"Did you give Carl the gun in the hope that he would shoot him?"

"I admit that thought crossed my mind. It's why I was so overwhelmed when I found Zinnie. But I didn't give him the gun. He took it without my knowledge, I swear."

"Then what did Rica have on you?"

"I made a dreadful mistake six months ago, when Senator Hellman died. Carl told me he had done it—hit his father with a hammer and let him drown. I was foolish enough to believe him, and foolish enough to try to save him from the consequences. He was obviously disturbed. I saw no point in putting him through a murder trial. I argued my view with Jerry and the Sheriff, and they came around to my way of looking at it. Jerry had his reasons for it—family pride and prestige—"

"I can understand that. But what reasons did you have, Doctor?"

"Carl was my patient."

"Get off the high horse. You're not that much of an altruist."

"All right, if you have to have it. I wanted to marry Zinnie. Jerry wouldn't give her a divorce. I thought, if I could be useful to him—well—"

"You could bring pressure on him?"

"Something like that," he said feebly.

"And Rica knew about this?"

"He had a distorted version. It was close enough to the truth to make me vulnerable. Rica believed that it was Jerry who killed his father, and that I hushed it up."

"Where did he get hold of that story?"

"He mentioned a woman named Maude. She runs some sort of disreputable hotel, or motel, south of town. Rica claims she has close contacts with the Sheriff's office."

"Did Ostervelt originate the story?"

"I thought of that. In fact, I went to see him as soon as Rica left here. He'd threatened to go to the Sheriff, and I decided I better get there first. Ostervelt wasn't available, but I talked with one of his deputies—"

"Carmichael told me. Did you tell him that Carl had murdered his father?"

"Yes, I did. I still believed it at the time."

"But you don't any more?"

"I found out my mistake after I talked to Carmichael. I ran into Dr. Brockley in the Courthouse. Brockley came up from the state hospital to see if he could do anything for Carl. He said that Carl was innocent of his father's death. I should have let things take their natural cause. Carl would have been cleared by a trial."

"On grounds of insanity, you mean?"

"On grounds of fact. His confession was false—I have Brockley's word for it. Besides, it didn't jibe with the physical evidence. Do you realize what that means? I let my patient take the blame for something he didn't do, and let the actual murderer go scot-free."

"Are you sure the Senator was murdered?"

"He must have been. He hadn't been struck over the head with a hammer, as Carl claimed, but there were minor contusions on his neck and arms. Somebody gained access to his bathroom somehow, and held him under water until he drowned."

"Why would Carl confess to something he didn't do?"

"It's a fairly common thing among mental patients. They seem to want to punish themselves. Carl wanted to punish himself for his father-killing fantasies. Every boy has these Oedipus fantasies to some degree. They seldom come out so strongly except in psychotic breatkthrough, when the barrier between fantasy and reality is destroyed. Carl suffered such a breakthrough the morning he and his brother found their father dead. The night before, when they were arguing, he'd probably had some homicidal impulses. When his father was actually killed, Carl felt like a murderer. His confession was an attempt to explain his terrible guilt fantasies, and somehow deal with them."

"Do you believe all this?"

"I have to. Brockley talked it through with Carl and brought him out of it. It fits in with what I know about the pattern of Carl's illness. It goes back to a childhood shock—the shock of his mother's death, and subsequent distortion of reality. His mother was killed when her horse was frightened by a firecracker. Carl believed that he was responsible."

"Wasn't he?"

"Brockley doubts that he was. Carl dosen't remember himself. He was only four years old at the time. Where would he get fireworks, or know how to light them? The chances are it was done by somebody else, one of the ranchhands perhaps."

"Or Jerry?"

"I doubt that. It doesn't matter, anyway. The point is that Carl blamed himself, and it set the pattern for this later confession."

"Getting back to that," I said, "why would the Sheriff cooperate in covering up a murder confession?"

"Mainly because Jerry wanted him to. He had an election coming up, and he needed Jerry's support. His office had been under heavy fire. There'd been a lot of talk in the county of payoffs and other political corruption."

"Isn't that what Carl and his father had their argument about?"

"Yes. I was in on the tail end of it. Carl wanted him to stop supporting Ostervelt. When his father refused to listen, Carl got furious. We had to call in the Sheriff's men to get him under control."

"Was Ostervelt on the ranch that night?"

"No, he sent a couple of deputies, Carmichael and another man. If he was out there himself, I didn't see him."

Like an exclamation point at the end of the sentence, a shot rang out somewhere below the house. Grantland started as if the bullet had struck him. We went out the back way, into the small walled garden which hung above the canyon.

There were lights and voices far below where the dry creek bed meandered. Nearer, among the scrub oaks, I heard a man blundering up the slope.

Grantland turned on an outside light. Carl Hellman dragged himself over the low stone wall and came toward us on his hands and knees. He left a track of blood, as black as oil drippings, on the Arizona flagstones. His light-stubbled head hung down between his shoulders. His breathing was loud as a hunted animals.

His arms gave way and he fell on his face. For a sick and empty moment I thought that he was dead, that it had been all for nothing. But he stirred when I touched him, and tried to sit up. Grantland and I supported him between us.

"They shot me," he said.

Grantland tore off Carl's wet and ruined shirt. Blood was pumping from a hole in his side. He spoke indistinctly, "They think I killed Jerry. I didn't. I threw the gun away."

"Where, Carl?"

"In the trees. Mildred told me—get rid of it." A froth of blood was forming on his lips.

"Lie down. Don't try to talk now." Grantland stripped off his own shirt and folded it into a pack which he pressed against the wound. "Hold this, Archer. I'll call an ambulance."

The members of the posse straggled up the slope and over the wall. Carmichael was in the lead. Ostervelt came last. He was red and sweating. Something like buck fever glowed in his faded eyes as he said, "I thought I nicked him."

"You did more than nick him," I said. "Too bad it's the wrong man."

"Who says so?"

"Hellman says so. He threw the gun away in the orange grove. Somebody else picked it up."

"You can't believe him. He's a psycho."

The Sheriff tapped the side of his head and looked around significantly. Carl struggled under my hands. The men closed in around him, as if he were still a threat so long as there was life in him. Grantland came out of the house with a leather bag.

"I've sent for an ambulance. There isn't much I can do for a lung wound here."

He took my place beside Carl, removed the sodden emergency pack from the wound, and applied a clean one.

"Do you think he'll live?" I said.

"He's a durable boy. He ought to live, if people stop using him for target practice."

"For God's sake," Ostervelt growled, "I only did my duty. He's a homicidal maniac, been dangerous all his life. He was dangerous long before he got out of knee-pants. I was Coroner when his poor mother was killed, and I know what I'm talking about. He tossed a firecracker that made her horse run away. It busted her neck for her."

"No!" Carl struggled free from Grantland and managed to sit up. His face was ghastly. His mouth spilled words and bright blood. "I didn't throw it. It was Cowboy. Mummy fell under the hoofs. She went all limp."

His eyes rolled blindly in his head and he went limp. Grantland eased him backward onto the flagstones.

"He's babbling." Ostervelt turned to the men around him, raising his voice like a politician whose integrity has been questioned. "You know what he did to his brother Jerry. You saw what he did to Jerry's wife before we tracked him up here."

Grantland stood up. His face was ugly with conflict. Then the conflict seemed to resolve itself in his eyes.

"He isn't guilty, Sheriff. I'd stake my reputation on it. It may not be worth much when I tell you what I have to tell you. Zinnie was killed here in my house. I don't believe Carl was anywhere near here until the last few minutes."

A man in a plaid windbreaker spoke up. "That's right. I flushed him out of the creek bed halfway across town."

"If she was killed here," Ostervelt said, "how did her body get down by the highway?"

"I put it there," Grantland said in a wretched voice. "I didn't kill her, but I thought I'd be blamed for it. I lost my nerve."

A siren moaned somewhere below, rising in pitch and volume as it climbed the ridge.

A resident surgeon from the hospital rode in the ambulance with Carl. Grantland and I followed in my car.

"I'm glad you spoke up," I told him. "I didn't want to have to do your talking for you."

He sat quiet for a while. I didn't envy him his thoughts. Finally he said, "It was a rotten thing to do to Zinnie."

"It didn't hurt her. It shouldn't hurt Carl now. You're the one that's hurt."

"Do you know what the penalty is for what I did?"

"You ought to get off with a suspended sentence."

"It hardly matters one way or the other. Just when things were working out for me and Zinnie, or seemed to be, it all came to an end at once."

"Who killed her, Grantland?"

"I don't know, honestly. When I try to think about it, my mind goes round in circles. What do you think?"

"I try to follow a rule of economy. We have three murders to explain. Until I have the evidence to the contrary, I assume they were all done by the same person. If Carl's innocent of his father's death—"

"He is! I'm certain of it, and so is Brockley."

"Then he's probably completely innocent, and circumstances have been manipulated to make him look guilty of the others. You heard him say he threw the gun away after talking to Mildred?"

"I heard him."

"It raises some interesting possibilities. These deaths leave Carl and Mildred, and the child Martha, as heirs to the entire estate."

"Good Lord, you can't suspect Mildred. Even if she were capable—morally and physically capable of the murders—she'd never try to blame them on her husband. She's devoted to Carl."

"Perhaps she is. She isn't devoted to his family, though. She hated Jerry, and thought he'd cheated her. There was bad blood between her and Zinnie." I slowed down and let the ambulance lose me. "Did Mildred know that Zinnie was at your house tonight?"

"I don't see how. Zinnie wouldn't be likely to tell her."

"What about you?"

"Naturally I didn't mention it to anyone. But wait a minute—Tom Rica saw her there. Could he have come back and killed her?"

"That I doubt. It's possible he passed the word to somebody who did."

"Who do you have in mind?"

"Nobody in particular." But I was thinking that Tom's connection with Maude gave him a direct line into the Sheriff's office. Even without that, the Sheriff had ways of keeping track of people.

We rode in silence till the hospital came in sight, a stucco cube pierced with random lights. It was getting late, and I was very tired.

"At least there's some improvement in the situation," Grantland said. "Carl remembered his mother's death. Pressure sometimes does that—forces a change for the better."

"Is it for the better?"

"Very much so, I'd say. These traumatic experiences have to be brought up into the light. Incidentally, I had the right idea of what happened. It must have been one of the ranchhands who scared his mother's horse. Carl referred to him as 'Cowboy'."

"Why would Carl forget it?"

"The man responsible for the runaway probably frightened him into keeping quiet—frightened him so thoroughly that he pushed it entirely out of his memory."

"I'd like to meet that man."

I dropped Grantland at the ambulance entrance and drove back across town to Mrs. Gley's house.

'Mrs. Gley opened the door herself. She took a moment to recognize me. "Mr. March? Mildred isn't here. She just left a minute ago."

"Did she say where she was going?"

"Eddy Carmichael's driving her to the hospital. That husband of hers got himself shot. Maybe that's what you want to see her about?"

"One of the things."

"She said she wouldn't be long, if you want to wait inside."

She stood back to let me enter, and stumbled on her heels against the door. Recovering her balance, she led me through the curtained archway into the front sitting-room. An empty water glass and a half-empty bottle of whiskey stood on a coffeetable beside the mohair sofa.

"Can I pour you a drinky, Mr. March?"

"Archer. Thanks, I can use one."

Mrs. Gley left the room and came back with a water glass which she filled for me. She filled her own glass and carried it to the sofa. Under the fringed floor lamp which stood behind it, she looked like the wreck of dreams.

I raised my glass. "Good luck."

She took a stiff swallow, made a face. "We could do with a little good luck in this house. When I think of all the grief Mildred brought into it, marrying that boy. It's an awful thing to say—I wouldn't say it if I was stone-cold sober—but I almost wish he *would* die. At least it would give my girl a chance for something better."

"Is that what Mildred wants?"

"She doesn't know *what* she wants. She never did know what's good for her. I told her, when they sent him away, she owed it to herself to get a divorce. She's only twenty-three, she's still pretty. I happen to know there's fine young men who'd ask for nothing better than marrying Mildred. Maybe now she'll listen to me. She can't stay married to a murderer."

"You say Deputy Carmichael came to pick her up?"

"Thash right." The slur in her speech was getting worse. "He'll take good care of her."

"Is he one of the men that's interested in Mildred?"

"You bet he is. Eddy's been stuck on her for years. Jush ask a mother." She smiled muzzily and took another swallow which drained her glass.

"Isn't he an old friend of Carl's, too?" I asked her.

"I wouldn't shay that. I guess they knew each other when they were kids on the ranch. Eddy's father used to break in the Senator's horses for him, back in the old days when he was breeding Palominos. Come to think of it, I guess Eddy taught Carl to ride."

"Is that why Carl called him 'Cowboy'?"

"I didn't know that. In these parts anybody from Wyoming is a cowboy. Anyway, I wish Mildred would make up her mind about him. You can't expect a man to wait forever—not an up-and-coming young man like Eddy Carmichael. He's slated to be our next Sheriff, you know."

I had my doubts of that, but I kept them to myself. Mrs. Gley was in no condition to hear straight talk. She seemed to be having trouble holding up her head. Suddenly, like someone shot by an invisible bullet, she fell softly sideways and passed out. Her harsh red hair spilled over the end of the sofa. The lamp shone cruelly into her closed face.

I put a cushion under her head, straightened out her legs, and turned off the lamp. A crueller light was burning behind my eyes. I sat in the dark room beside the snoring woman, and gradually absorbed my whiskey and my pain . . .

I heard the car door closing, their footsteps on the walk and then on the veranda. Mildred's seemed to drag, as if she sensed what was waiting on the other side of the door. Before the door opened, I was standing against the wall in the shadow of the curtains.

I saw their bodies come together close. One of Carmichael's hands held her by the waist. His sharp brown face buried itself like a weapon in her neck. I could hear his breathing.

Mildred tried to twist away from

him. "Please. Not here. I think Mother's still up."

"So what? She knows about us."

"She does not! Anyway, it's finished."

"It's only starting. You can't back out now. You don't want to. Even if you did want to, I wouldn't let you."

His hand cupped the back of her head and forced her face up to his. She seemed to hang limp in his arms. When his mouth released hers, she said, "Please don't, Eddy. You can't *make* things work out. You can't force life, and people."

"Can't I? You don't know how I operate. I plan a long way ahead for something I want. And then I call it, and sooner or later it comes—the way you came. When you threw me over for him, I made a contract with myself that I was going to get you back. So now I've got you."

"I'm still married to Carl."

"Temporarily, you are. It's time for you to cut your losses on him, think of the future."

"I have no future without him. I don't want any."

"Don't give me that. He isn't going to live. You can write that down in your little black book and memorize it." Carmichael's voice was flat and savage.

Hers was almost pleading. "But the doctor thinks he can save him. You heard him say so yourself."

"Doctors don't know everything. It isn't just a medical problem."

"You can't mean they'd send him to the gas chamber? You wouldn't let them do that." Mildred spoke with a kind of desperate coquetry.

"He won't get the death penalty. No local jury would recommend it. They'll probably send him to the hospital for the criminally insane. And that's where I come in. One of my jobs is delivering county prisoners to the state institutions."

"I'm afraid I don't follow you." But the undertone of fear in her voice suggested that she did.

"Just leave it to me. All you have to do is trust me, and wait. I'll get that ranch for you."

"I don't want it. Anyway, I have no right to it. Carl can't inherit property from someone he killed."

"Why not? There's no legal proof he killed his father, no legal record of it. There never will be. It's a closed case. I'll keep it a closed case. Which means that Carl can inherit half the estate, at least. Which means that your life is just beginning, and I'm a part of it, built right into it."

"You want the ranch very badly."

She was still in his arms, and he didn't notice the distance in her voice.

"I want the ranch, and I want you. I want everything I can get. Everything. When I was ten years old, I promised myself I'd own those acres some day, and live in that big house. It's a package deal—you and the ranch."

He spoke with staccato urgency, but there was a dreamlike quality in what he said. Big dreams had taken over his mind, until he was out of touch with the human norm. "We can live like a king and queen in this county. I'll run against Ostervelt and retire him. With five million bucks to work with, there's nothing we can't do."

"Aren't you forgetting Carl?"

"I don't forget anything. If I know him, and I think I do, he'll try to escape on the way to the hospital. I'm a better shot than Ostervelt ever was."

"What about Martha?" Her voice was high and thin.

"We'll be her legal guardians—it's it's easy to arrange. Once I'm Sheriff-Coroner I can arrange just about anything. If the kid fell off a horse and broke her neck, that would be just too bad. But not for us."

There was a glacial silence. Carmichael was still holding her, still hugging his dream. Neither of them moved, but he must have felt a change.

"What's the matter?"

Mildred opened her mouth as if she were going to scream, but no sound came from her. Carmichael's brown profile seemed to lose flesh. He'd gone too far, and he was beginning to realize it.

Mildred wet her lips with her tongue. "You lied to me about protecting Carl. You murdered his father yourself."

"Shut it off, you crazy little fool. You're in this with me."

"I'm not. I didn't know—"

His right hand closed on her face, across her mouth, the thumb sinking into the hollow of her cheek. She beat at him with her small futile fists.

It had gone far enough. I moved in behind him, took the gun from his holster, swung the barrel at the base of his skull. He was already turning, and took the blow on the right shoulder. The gun was heavy, a .45-calibre revolver. Carmichael's right arm dangled loose. He moved crabwise toward the front door.

"Stand still. I'll shoot to kill." My voice was hard.

He froze against the wall. His face was bare as bone, a brown skull from which the flesh had dissolved.

"He killed them all," Mildred said in a tearing whisper.

"Don't listen to her. She'd say anything to get her husband off the hook."

"And you'd do anything to get him on. Why did you hate him so much, Carmichael?"

"He envied Carl," Mildred said, "ever since they were children on the ranch. Carl had everything, and he had nothing. He wanted to take it all away from Carl and his family."

"She's making this up."

"No, I'm not. You told me how you felt one night when you'd been drinking. You said a lot of things—how you had to take orders from Carl when he was six years younger—"

"Shut up, you!" His voice was high and ragged. He brought it under control and turned to me. "I'm an officer of the law. You wouldn't take her word against mine."

"Wouldn't I? You wear the uniform, but you've been using it to break the law. I suppose it started with minor stuff like taking a cut from the Buenavista Inn."

"Talk away. You'll never prove it."

So it was true. "You convinced a lot of people that Ostervelt was the rotten apple in the barrel. You probably convinced Carl of that. But his father wasn't so easily taken in. Maybe he asked you some questions the night you killed him?"

"I didn't kill him. And I don't have to stand here and listen to this——"

"It won't take long, Carmichael. You killed him, and I'll tell you how you did it. You hid in the closet in the Senator's bathroom, waited for him to get into his nightly tub. You slipped out behind him and held him down in the water until he drowned. You let

yourself out, locked the door from the outside, pushed the key back under the door."

"Why would I do a thing like that? I had no motive." But his words were self-condemning.

"I think you saw the possibilities, if you knocked off the old man and got Carl blamed for it."

"Yes," Mildred said. "The very day my husband was committed, he came to me and told me Carl had confessed. He said he would protect Carl from the consequences if I would let him make love to me. He was crazy about me, he said. I pretended to like him, too. I didn't know what else to do. I believed he had the power to bring Carl to trial, perhaps put him in the gas chamber."

"Like hell you were pretending," Carmichael said.

"I was. I hated every minute of you."

I said, "You're a dreamer, Carmichael. Dreamers are easy to con. They con themselves. You thought she loved you. You thought you could wipe out the rest of the family, make an heiress out of her, and marry five million dollars. The only hitch was, your fall guy was safe in the hospital. You had to get him out of there before you could kill the others.

"The solution turned up a week or two ago, when Tom Rica was arrested for narcotics addiction. Before Tom went in, you fed him a story about Jerry killing his father and Dr. Grantland covering up for him. Probably, with your opportunities, you planted other stories. This is the one we know about, because it got to Carl and produced results.

"The results were more than you bargained for. Tom Rica got some ideas of his own. He saw an opening for blackmail, but he was afraid to tackle it all by himself. He brought me into the case, to make it hotter for Grantland and the Hellmans, make them easier to shake down.

"You put on a pretty good act for me, because you saw that I was a threat to your plan. Perhaps I shouldn't say you had a plan. You worked it out by ear as you went along. If Carl killed Jerry for you, that would be perfect. He didn't, but you got a break which almost made up for that. When Carl threw the gun away, he played into your hand without knowing it.

"You were right behind him. You picked up his gun, circled back to the greenhouse, and shot Jerry with it. After that, you had to wait all day until Carl was close enough to Zinnie to take the blame for her death. You finally got the word that he was seen crossing the highway. Tom Rica told you where Zinnie was, if you didn't know it already. You went to Grantland's house and killed her with his hatchet. That provided you with a secondary patsy just in case one was needed. Then you came back here. You fooled us into thinking you were worried about Zinnie's safety, but what you really wanted was to get at Martha."

"Yes," Mildred said with a kind of awe. "He intended to kill Martha, too."

"I wouldn't hurt a little kid," Carmichael muttered.

"I heard you say you would. You're out of contact—mass murderers get that way. You've been killing people for a long time now. You were only ten when Carl's mother was killed."

He looked at me in queer surprise, his eyes changing like smoke.

"Eddy?" Mildred cried. "You did that, too?"

He wouldn't meet her eyes. He spoke in the guttural tone of a man in pain. "I didn't mean to do it. It was an accident."

"It may have been," I said. "When you threw the firecracker at Mrs. Hellman's horse, you probably didn't know what you meant to do. But you made a crime out of it when you convinced Carl and his family that he had caused the runaway. The crime was against Carl's mind—"

And his own mind, I was going to say, but Mildred broke in: "Carl believed it was his fault. He's always blamed himself for his mother's death."

"Not any more. He broke through to the truth tonight."

I'd taken my eyes from Carmichael. He moved on me suddenly and got a hand on the gun. We wrestled for it, shoulder to shoulder, while time seemed to stop. But his luck had run out. I twisted the long barrel out of his grip and fired at him point-blank. He went to his knees with his hands clutching his chest, trying to hold in his life. Then he fell forward, and lay prone and still.

I had shot to kill, just as I had promised. Carmichael's trial for murder would have destroyed Mildred. This way, she and Carl still had a chance.

Mildred leaned with her forehead against the wall. Her hand jerked spasmodically at the curtains, like somebody signaling a train to stop.

"It was partly my fault. I pretended to love him. I told him anything he wanted to hear. I was so afraid for Carl. I was so afraid."

"You don't have to be afraid any more," I said.

Answer to riddle story on page 51

FAIR GAME

by JUAN PAGE

"Knight takes queen, and mate in three," crowed the old man, removing the black queen from the chessboard. "If you weren't so impulsive, you could probably learn to give me a pretty fair game."

EDITORS' NOTE: *Why not turn back to page 51 and reread the riddle—it is only a single page—and see how fairly Juan Page played the game. We counted at least seven clues!*

For the fullest enjoyment of this story please be sure to read

AUTHOR'S OWN FOREWORD

It is an historical fact that on the evening of May 10, 1849 twenty-two people were killed in a riot at the Astor Place Opera House in New York City. The tragedy was the culmination of the bitter rivalry and personal quarreling between W. C. Macready, the brilliant and powerful English actor, and Edwin Forrest, the great American tragedian. The quarrel dated back over a number of years. It had been much aired in the press, and nationalistic prejudices had been stirred. Sides had been taken along social lines, the rank and file and the Bowery Boys having made a hero of Forrest. Just three days before the riot, Forrest's followers had broken up Macready's performance of "Macbeth" by the traditional methods of hissing and egg-throwing, with the addition of certain refinements such as the throwing of chairs and the release of a deluge of asafetida from the balconies.

Macready announced the end of his engagement and prepared to return to England; but a group of leading citizens, headed by the famous author, Washington Irving, published an appeal to him to carry out his original plan and to rely on the "good sportsmanship" of his audiences for the avoidance of further demonstrations. Macready agreed, and undertook to play "Macbeth" again on the night of May 10, 1849. The death of twenty-two persons and injuries to hundreds of others was to be the outcome of that decision.

So reports historian Allan Nevins.

What is not a part of history is the account of a diabolical murder plot set up for that same tragic night. The records of that plot are in the dusty files of the legal firm of Brooke & Sons, a landmark in lower Manhattan for the last 150 years. . . .

HOVER THROUGH THE FOG

by HUGH PENTECOST

JOHN BROOKE FELT A TWINGE OF envy for the man who sat across the dark walnut desk in his book-lined law offices. John was the third Brooke to head the respected law firm founded by his grandfather. The business of Brooke & Sons was largely concerned with the

management of estates and trusts. It was a firm steeped in tradition, and even the daily office routine never varied by a hair.

John Brooke, having become head of the firm when he was just past thirty—his father having died unexpectedly of a heart attack in the reading room of his club—found himself restive under the fixed precedures that were expected of him. Andrew Vail, involved in the ritual of lighting a thin Cuban cigar, represented all the opposites to conservative tradition.

Andrew Vail was ash-blond, in sharp contrast to John Brooke's dark dignity. His eyes were a bright, twinkling blue, accustomed to viewing the world with constant amusement and perhaps a touch of irony. He had the reputation for speaking quickly, impulsively, and often without thought of other people's feelings or of social consequences. His clothes were expensive, made by the best tailor in New York, but they flirted with the gaudy—for example, the fawn-colored vest he was wearing this morning.

Andrew Vail's mother had been a Thayer, and the Thayers were top-drawer in the New York social picture, long-time friends and clients of the Brooke family. But Louise Thayer had rocked the social firmament into which she had been born by eloping with Malcolm Vail, a handsome young actor of modest reputation. Andrew was their son, orphaned in his late teens when Louise and Malcolm were burned to death in a hotel fire in Birmingham, England, where Malcolm was playing in a repertory company.

Andrew Vail came back to New York to find himself out of favor with the Thayer family. Old Wilson Thayer, worth many millions, had never forgiven his daughter for indulging in a happy marriage. Old Wilson permitted his grandson a ten-minute interview during which he presented him with the munificent sum of $500 and told him that from then on Andrew was on his own.

Andrew had adopted the Greeley slogan and gone West. In the 1840s the West was the land of opportunity. In ten years' time Andrew had returned to New York. A gold mine somewhere in Colorado had paid off and young Andrew Vail was not only accumulating wealth from out of the earth, but he was the owner of two prosperous, if small, railroads and a rapidly growing steel mill. In 1849 Andrew could have bought out old Wilson Thayer and hardly felt the pinch.

It is quite possible that John Brooke's father would have refused to act as legal counsel for Andrew Vail because of the firm's long friendship with Wilson Thayer. But John had no such social scruples. He liked Andrew. He admired the aggressive determination and the gambling spirit which had made Andrew a very rich man in the short space of a decade. And he en-

vied Andrew the exciting and adventurous life he had led.

He envied him, that is, until a few moments after Andrew got his Cuban cigar burning evenly.

"You know, John," Andrew said, a flicker of amusement in his bright blue eyes, "beyond the fact that you are the best estate lawyer in the city—and an exquisite gentleman, at least externally—I hardly know you at all."

"What do you need to know?" John asked, smiling.

"The fact that I don't know you, really know you," Andrew said, "is a plus factor in a way. You don't talk about yourself—or anyone else."

"Lawyers, like priests and doctors, should not be talkative men," John said.

"What I don't know," Andrew said, and the twinkle seemed to fade from his eyes, "is whether, under that polished exterior of yours, you are a prude."

"I like to think not," John said.

"I have my fingers crossed," Andrew said, "because I'm here to change my will, and because in doing so I will be forced to reveal certain facts which would distress a prude."

"I'm your lawyer," John said. "Drawing wills is my business. Unless you ask for advice I won't give it—except, of course, in purely legal matters."

"I have to risk it," Andrew said. He blew a thin spiral of smoke toward the ceiling. "I want to leave all my holdings—cash, all my property, everything—in an unbreakable trust to Cynthia Stiles. Mrs. Ogden Stiles."

It was a jolt, but John Brooke's expression didn't alter. Perhaps the son of an actor appreciated that.

"I see," John said, making some meaningless scribble on the pad in front of him. Cynthia Stiles was the beautiful young wife of old Ogden Stiles the banker, a great power in the financial world.

"I am aware," Andrew Vail said, studying the end of his cigar, "that it will take some time to arrange for such a trust. Therefore, in the meantime—today—I want you to liquidate five hundred thousand dollars worth of my securities, and I want the cash set aside to be paid to Mrs. Stiles in case of my death without any strings attached. I want that done today, you understand. I want to sign the necessary authorization for you to make the payment to her before I leave this office."

"It can be done," John said steadily. He hesitated. "Is—is this some kind of blackmail, Andrew?"

Andrew gave a great snort of laughter. "Blackmail! My dear fellow, I'm in love with Cynthia Stiles. She's my whole life, my whole world."

"I see," John said, his voice expressionless. "The liquidation of assets to accumulate this huge amount of cash will be costly to you, Andrew—the market isn't favorable at the moment. The trust can be

drawn up in a couple of days. Surely nothing is likely to happen to you in that short time?"

"On the contrary," Andrew said, "I expect to be murdered."

That cracked John's impassivity. "What kind of nonsense is that?" he said sharply. "We're not living in the dark ages, Andrew. This is 1849!"

As Andrew Vail talked, it became clear to John Brooke that the story was not one of cheap and tawdry intrigue. Andrew had first met Cynthia Stiles, then Cynthia Moulton, nine years ago on that trek westward with what remained of Wilson Thayer's $500 in his pocket and with literally no prospects. The Moultons were a Chicago family of extremely modest means. Cynthia's father was a schoolteacher and she the oldest of six girls.

Andrew, stopping to look over the chances in Chicago, had answered an advertisement for a room to rent and found himself boarding with the Moultons. He and Cynthia had ignited like a Roman candle almost from the first day. Cynthia's parents liked him. They would not have objected to a marriage if there had been any economic possibility for it. But Andrew had nothing to offer, and the Moultons could not help. It was this need for immediate financial stability that sent Andrew on to Colorado. He and Cynthia parted, promised to each other no matter how long they would have to wait.

They wrote to each other often. Things were not yet happening for Andrew. He was stuck where he was when the news came—a mixture of good and bad news—that Mr. Moulton had been offered a professorship at Columbia College in New York City. The whole family was moving East. As far as Andrew was concerned, New York was no farther away from him than Chicago.

The letters continued. Mr. Moulton was doing well at Columbia. He had been much helped by Mr. Ogden Stiles, a prominent banker and trustee of the college.

Then came the blow. Ogden Stiles, almost sixty, had asked for Cynthia's hand in marriage. She was just twenty-one. She was deeply in love with Andrew. It was then that the true view of Ogden Stiles's character became apparent. Either Cynthia would marry him or Mr. Moulton would lose his post at the college, and be very unlikely to find another one anywhere else.

A despairing letter reached Andrew. Unless something could be done to make certain of her father's security, she would have no choice. Her father, her mother, her five sisters were dependent on her decision.

Andrew was helpless. He swallowed his pride and wrote to old Wilson Thayer for help—money, or assistance to the Moultons. Wilson Thayer did not even answer. He clearly felt the $500 he had

given Andrew two years before had discharged his full obligation to his grandson.

And so Cynthia was married to Ogden Stiles and launched into the social whirl of New York. There was very little gossip about the discrepancy in age between the bride and the bridegroom. Ogden Stiles was far too powerful for anyone to risk gossiping about him. And he was known to be an unforgiving and relentless man.

"Less than a year after their marriage I struck it," Andrew Vail said, his voice harsh. "It was too late, of course. I came East, with some sort of wild idea that Cynthia would walk out on Stiles. I could take care of her family now. I didn't give a damn about scandal. I went barging into her house with a figurative white charger waiting outside the door to carry her away. I should have known better. One look at her told me that she still loved me—and that having given her vows to Stiles she would stand by them. Something else I should have known: he was having her watched, day and night. From that moment on she has not had a moment's peace or physical safety. The man's a sadist, a devil. I had to return to the West again and it was five years before I came back here permanently. I kept a promise I'd made her. I didn't try to see her privately. But at the opera—at one or two balls . . ."

He put the stub of his cigar in the ashtray on John's desk. "You've seen her, John. Tragically beautiful. Beauty and the Beast." Andrew drew a deep breath. "About a week ago I was lunching at the Brevoort. Just as I was leaving, I came face to face with Cynthia who was coming in. It was impossible not to speak to her. It was quite formal, neither of us saying what was in our hearts. Then, suddenly, he was there behind her. You know him—bald as an egg, a mouth like a knife slit. I have never seen such cold fury in any man's eyes.

"'You will please go on to our table, Cynthia,' was all he said. But I had the curious sensation of knowing that I was the object of a murderous hatred."

"And that's what you base your fears on?" John asked.

Andrew shook his head. His mouth was grim. "Yesterday afternoon Cynthia came to my house."

"Surely if she knew he was having her watched—"

"It didn't matter. He'd ordered her to come."

"What!"

"With a message," Andrew said grimly. "It was a simple message. He wanted me to know that he was going to murder me. He would, he had told her, do it in such a way that it would seem to be an accident. Only she would know—and I, in my last moments."

"The man's out of his mind!" John said. "Have you been to the police?"

"Why?" Andrew said. "A threat brought by his wife. He'd deny it, of course. He'd accuse us of having an affair behind his back."

"Which you haven't."

"Yesterday," Andrew said, "I held her in my arms and told her I loved her. Frankly I don't ever expect to see her again."

"You're going to take it lying down?"

"Certainly not. But what am I to do—lock myself in my house till Ogden Stiles dies, which may be another twenty years? No. He'll strike out of the darkness somewhere, and I'll have to hope I'll be lucky—luckier than it seems likely I can be."

"You could go back West to your business interests," John said. "Stiles isn't a young man. And perhaps if you were away from New York—"

"In the West," Andrew said, "I wouldn't have a chance. Stiles could buy someone for an absurdly small sum to gun me down. No, my best chance is here, going about my life as naturally as I can—waiting and watching."

"You could hire someone to guard you," John said.

"Against what? And when?" Andrew said.

John wrote some notes on his pad. "I am drawing up an authorization to have securities in the amount of a half million dollars liquidated and the cash paid to Brooke and Sons. You will then execute an authorization to have that money paid to Mrs. Stiles in case anything happens to you. That will leave the matter strictly between us, Andrew, without even a clerk being aware of your motives." He reached behind his desk, gave the brocaded bell-pull a tug, and in a few moments passed over his notes to an elderly clerk.

"If anyone but you had told me this story, Andrew, I'd find it hard to believe," John said, when he and Andrew were alone again. "It's hard to accept the fact that a man of Stiles' standing would carry out such a threat."

"Take a good look at him sometime," Andrew said grimly. Then he smiled. "Well, I can only go on as normally as possible. Tonight, for example, I'm going to the Astor Place Opera House to watch W. C. Macready perform in *Macbeth.*"

John raised an expressive eyebrow. "You seem to be on the hunt for violence, Andrew."

"You believe Mr. Irving's appeal won't carry weight?" Andrew asked. "I've been asked to help support him."

John shrugged. "There are placards about town, I understand, announcing that the British crew of the Cunarder *America* have threatened to back Macready with arms, if necessary. The Bowery Boys won't stand for that. And I understand the Mayor has been asked to order out the militia."

"I'd enjoy a good fight," Andrew

said, laughing. "It might help me let off a little steam, even though it's not in the direction of Ogden Stiles."

John Brooke found it hard to concentrate on his work after the papers had been signed and Andrew Vail had left his office. It was an improbable business, he told himself. He could imagine Ogden Stiles's state of mind. Rage at the possible threat to the security of his home, doubting his wife's loyalty even though she had given him no cause, fear of becoming a cuckold and a public laughing-stock. All this could so easily turn into a concentrated fury aimed at Andrew Vail. But *murder?* Surely this was simply a wild threat designed to make Andrew uneasy, perhaps to drive him out of the city.

Following an invariable habit, John Brooke arrived at his club at one o'clock for lunch, irritable over a less productive morning than usual. Somehow "the usual" seemed to increase his irritation. He went to the bar where he always had a dry sherry and a few words with any friends who might be present. Although it was only the 10th of May, Alvin, the bartender, had some fresh mint in a glass on the bar.

John ordered a mint julep. He was just lifting the frosted glass to his lips when he spotted Ogden Stiles at the far end of the bar. The old man, with his shiny bald head and deep-set burning eyes, was looking straight at John. When John nodded politely, the old man's thin lips moved in a derisive smile.

John wanted no contact with Stiles at that moment, but as he looked away he saw Stiles start toward him. He took a deep swallow of his drink and braced himself.

Stiles's grating voice forced him to turn. He saw little beads of perspiration on Stiles's bald head.

"I rather imagine that you've drawn a new will this morning," Stiles said. "I happen to know that Andrew Vail was closeted with you for some time."

"You can't really expect me to discuss the affairs of my clients, Mr. Stiles," John said.

"I only wanted to assure you," Stiles said, his death's-head grin widening, "that however farfetched Mr. Vail's story may have seemed to you it is quite true."

"That you *have* threatened to murder him?" John asked, suddenly very angry.

"My wife conveyed such a message to him," Stiles said. "You are a lawyer, Brooke. Do you believe any jury would convict me of crime if I killed Andrew Vail?"

"I understood it was to appear an accident," John said.

"So it will," Stiles said. "I trust your legal staff is making haste with the new will. There is very little time."

"Suppose I were to go to the police with this whole matter?"

Ogden Stiles laughed. A nerve twitched in his bony cheek. "You would only succeed in destroying the few shreds of reputation my wife has left."

John fought to control his voice. "I promise you, Stiles, that if anything happens to Andrew Vail I will devote all my time and resources to pinning the crime on you."

The sunken eyes looked like hot coals. "Once Andrew Vail is dead that will be a matter of supreme indifference to me. You will be able to prove nothing, Brooke. I might even find myself in a position to bring an action against you for slander."

"Why have you told me all this?" John asked.

"Because you and my wife and Vail are the only persons who know the truth, Brooke. I want you all to savor the full bouquet."

The old man gave an ironic bow and walked back to the far end of the bar. John Brooke felt a cold chill trickle along his spine. It was no joke, no bluff. He was suddenly completely convinced.

Back in his office, John paced back and forth on the thick rug. Andrew Vail was marked for death—an apparently accidental death. It would not be improvised—Ogden Stiles had a plan. He would not shoot Andrew publicly on Fifth Avenue. How then? Could he count on Andrew being run down by a team of horses? Too uncertain. Poison? It might be traced, no matter how cautious the procedure. An apparently accidental fire in which Andrew might be trapped? A fall from a high place? But how could Andrew, now forewarned, be led into such traps?

Of one thing John was certain. Ogden Stiles would do the deed himself. He would do it and he would want Andrew to know at the last moment that he, Stiles, was the killer. Ambush from a dark alley would not look like accident. How, then? *How?*

Shortly after three o'clock John Brooke abandoned his pacing, left his office, and hailing a hansom cab, gave the driver instructions to drive him to the Ogden Stiles's home on Gramercy Park. There was just one person who might be able and willing to give him a clue to the devious workings of Ogden Stiles's mind.

The Stiles living-room was stiffly reminiscent of a dozen other houses of the period—carpets garlanded with cabbage roses, rosewood consoles, an arched fireplace with a black marble mantel, and immense glass-fronted bookcases of mahogany.

John Brooke bowed as Cynthia Stiles, pale and obviously fighting for control over some inner disturbance, came into the room.

"Forgive me, Mrs. Stiles, for presuming on our very casual acquaintance to call so informally."

"I'm sure it's my husband you wish to see, Mr. Brooke. He's not at home, and won't be until time to dress for dinner," she said. Her voice was low, attractive despite her distress.

"On the contrary," John said. "It's you I wish to see, Mrs. Stiles. As you may know, I am Andrew Vail's lawyer."

She reached out a hand to the back of a chair to steady herself.

"Andrew visited me at my office this morning to make certain changes in his will," John said. "Since he had only recently made a new will he felt bound to explain to me why he felt the changes to be urgent. To save time, Mrs. Stiles—he told me of your husband's threat to take his life."

"You believed it?" she asked.

"I was not convinced when I talked with Andrew. I thought he might be overanxious. But I had the misfortune to encounter your husband at lunchtime. He left no doubts in my mind."

Cynthia Stiles sank into the chair beside which she had been standing. For a few moments she raised her hands to her face. Then she looked up at John, her dark eyes twin pools of tragedy.

"He'll do it," she said.

"We must, of course, try to prevent it," John said, sounding falsely brisk. "Have you any idea what your husband's plan is, Mrs. Stiles?"

"No! Do you think I wouldn't have told Andrew if I had?"

"I'm sure you would. Andrew refuses to go to the police. He feels they would laugh at him, and I'm bound to agree. Your husband would simply put off his plan for a while, and you would be subjected to the worst kind of gossip and notoriety."

"It wouldn't matter if I only knew what to do," she said. "I live from hour to hour in the most dreadful state of anxiety. I actually look forward to tonight, for at least I know Andrew will be safe for a few hours."

"Tonight?"

"My husband is taking me to see Mr. Macready's performance of *Macbeth,*" Cynthia Stiles said.

John stared at her, his mouth gone dry. "The Astor Place Opera House?"

"Yes."

"Are you aware that Andrew will be there at the request of Mr. Washington Irving?"

She turned so pale he thought she was going to faint. "Ogden must know that!"

"It's in the afternoon papers," John said. He was frowning. "I'll try to prevent Andrew from going. But in case I'm unable to reach him—do you know where your seats are located?"

"My husband has the tickets," Cynthia said in a whisper.

"I'll be there," John said. "If you get any inkling as to your husband's plans you must risk getting word to me, Mrs. Stiles. I'll man-

age to get close to you somehow in the crowd."

"Oh, my God!" she cried out bitterly, and burst into tears.

John's club was only a few blocks from the Stiles' home. He went there, hoping to find Andrew, who was also a member. If Andrew were not there, John planned to send a written message to Andrew's rooms urging him not to attend the Macready performance.

He had only just left his hat and stick in the coat room when he was approached by George Fabian, a friend and member.

"You're a member of the house committee, John," Fabian said. "I think some sort of disciplinary action should be taken against Ogden Stiles."

"Oh! Why?" John felt his nerves tingling.

"Take a look in the bar and see whom Stiles has had the gall to bring here as his guest!"

John and Fabian went to the arched doorway leading to the grill room. At a far table he saw Ogden Stiles and with him the notorious Pat McCaffery, a huge Irishman with a shock of red hair, a cigar stuck in one corner of a crookedly smiling mouth. McCaffery was a low-grade politician, one of the leaders of the Bowery Boys, a tough gang of hoodlums who made this great city an unsafe place to live in at times.

"Any member who would bring such a man into this club—" Fabian was saying at John's elbow.

John scarcely heard him. McCaffery's Bowery Boys were strong supporters of Edwin Forrest, the American actor, and if W. C. Macready was due to have any trouble that night at Astor Place, McCaffery might very well be at the bottom of that trouble.

"I happen to know," Fabian said, "that McCaffery's political organization keeps its funds in Ogden's bank. But that's no excuse for introducing McCaffery to a gentlemen's club."

By seven o'clock that evening John had received no answer to the warning note he had sent to Andrew Vail's rooms. There was no way to locate him. At eight o'clock John, dressed in evening clothes, with opera hat and cloak and his stick with the silver knob, arrived at the theatre. He was carried there in one of Brown's coupes. The driver refused to take him closer than a block from the theatre.

"There's bound to be trouble, Mr. Brooke," the old coachman said. "The Bowery Boys are all through the area and the Mayor's called out the militia. I wouldn't go to that play tonight if I was offered a King's ransom."

The theatre was jammed, its atmosphere electric with tension. Standing at the back of the orchestra seats, John searched for Andrew and the Stileses. Andrew's

ash-blond head should have been easy to spot. But it was the Stileses he saw first.

They had come in behind him and were being led down the aisle by an usher. Cynthia Stiles was almost as pale as the white dress she wore, covered by a wine-colored mantle. Her hands were gloved, and in them she carried a bouquet of lilies-of-the-valley. Just as she started down the aisle she saw John. She shook her head almost imperceptibly. Ogden Stiles, in full evening regalia, walked grimly erect, looking straight ahead.

It was only when the Stileses were seated that John spotted Andrew's blond head two rows farther down and across the aisle from his enemy.

John started to move but the crowd at the back of the house was thick and before he could reach the open aisle, the house lights began to dim and suddenly there was a clap of stage thunder and the flicker of lightning. The three witches hovered around their cauldron.

"When shall we three meet again
In thunder, lightning, or in rain?"
"When the hurlyburly's done;
When the battle's lost and won."
"That will be ere the set of sun."
"Where the place?"
"Upon the heath."
"There to meet with Macbeth."
"I come, Graymalkin!"
"Paddock calls."
"Anon."
"Fair is foul, and foul is fair:
Hover through the fog and filthy air."

On and on went the words, to an audience so still that John Brooke was acutely conscious of his own heavy breathing. He kept edging his way toward the aisle. The witches were gone, and now the nobles talked. And then the witches came back. And then from the wings came Macbeth and Banquo —and with them bedlam.

Macready's very first line was smothered in a roar of catcalls, boos, and shouts of anger. From the balcony came eggs and fruit, folding chairs, and the foul smell of asafetida. A chair fell into the orchestra seats, a woman screamed.

Men and women, like cattle stampeding, fought their way up the aisles and over the back of the seats. The curtain fell, obliterating the stage and protecting Macready. The house lights came up.

John, caught in the first wave, was smashed back against the rear wall. He tried to fight himself clear with his stick, using the heavy silver knob as a weapon.

From outside the theatre came a burst of rifle fire. Glass shattered as bricks, thrown from the street, came hurtling through windows and doors.

John, fighting against the tide, saw Ogden Stiles gripping Cyn-

thia's arm firmly. Before they reached the back of the house they cut through a row of abandoned seats toward the side doors.

And just behind them was Andrew Vail. He had obviously seen Cynthia and was bent on protecting her.

John burst through the circle of humanity crowding toward the center doors and made for the side aisle. He managed to reach the side door almost as Stiles and Cynthia got there.

"I gave orders for the carriage to wait at the end of the alley, my dear," John heard Ogden say. "In case of trouble." He turned and looked straight at Andrew Vail who was only a few feet away. He still held fast to Cynthia's arm. Then, when he could have reached out and touched Vail, he gave his wife a little push toward the door. "Hurry, Cynthia!" he cried. "Robinson will be at the end of the alley with the brougham."

Cynthia pushed open the door and started out.

"Don't go out there, Madam! You'll be caught in a cross fire," a man shouted.

She was already out on the steps, and Stiles was watching her, the death's-head smile twisting his lips.

"Cynthia!" Andrew Vail shouted. He sprang past Stiles toward the exit.

John Brooke plunged forward, his stick raised. He brought it down on Andrew's head and Andrew fell to his hands and knees. John leaped across him and out the door. He caught Cynthia Stiles by the shoulder and pushed her back toward the door. He turned, shielding her with his body, and found himself face to face with Ogden Stiles.

"Damn you for meddling in my affairs," Stiles shouted over the screams and gun fire. "Damn you!"

From the frilled sleeve of Stiles's coat came a small, pearl-handled revolver.

John gave Cynthia a hard shove that sent her sprawling into the theatre, to fall almost beside Andrew who, on his hands and knees, was shaking his head, trying to clear it. John's stick rose and fell, catching Ogden Stiles across the forearm of his gun hand. The old man screamed out in pain and went toppling down the steps into the alley. Instantly there was a fusillade of gunfire from both ends of the alley.

The old man seemed suspended in space for a moment, jiggling up and down like a marionette on strings. Then he crumpled into a grotesque heap in the filth of the alley, his elegant evening clothes riddled with bullets, his shirt front red.

The man who had shouted the warning was now beside John Brooke, pulling him back into the theatre. He was a captain of militia.

"I don't understand it," he kept

saying. "Why would Mr. Stiles use *that* door? He warned us the Bowery Boys would be in ambush out there—he had special information. We had militiamen stationed outside, waiting for the Bowery Boys to make a move. Stiles knew that! He must have lost his head completely."

The militia captain turned to look at Cynthia. It was hard to tell whether she was helping Andrew or Andrew was helping her.

It had been planned as an accident: Cynthia sent out into the ambush before Andrew's eyes, Andrew rushing to her aid, both of them to be caught in the crossfire, and—if it had worked—Stiles weeping out his grief in public.

"A tragic accident," John Brooke said grimly to the militia captain.

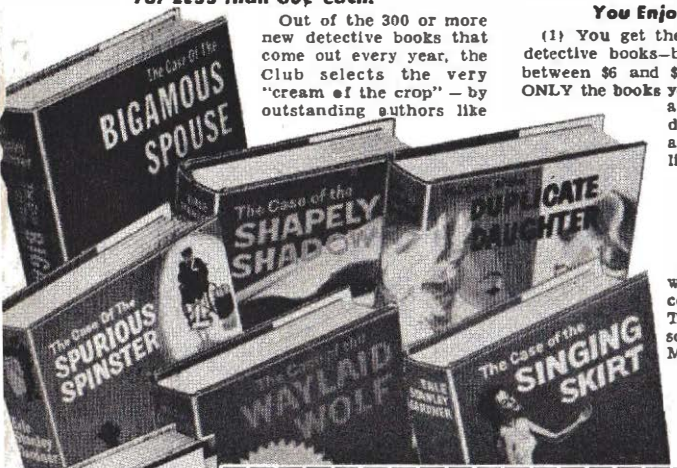
(Continued from other side)

For Only $1.00 You Get $24.50 Worth of Mysteries At Once!

IF YOU "eat up" good mysteries, here's a real FEAST for you! Now you can get SEVEN of Erle Stanley Gardner's top-flight Perry Mason bafflers — six full-length, hard-cover books PLUS another handsome library volume containing the 7th, and latest, Perry Mason adventure and TWO MORE top-notch mystery hits! These NINE exciting mystery stories are worth $24.50 in publishers' editions—but they're YOURS for only $1.00 on this sensational introductory offer!

We make this liberal offer to introduce you to the many advantages of membership in the Detective Book Club.

The Best NEW Mysteries — for LESS than 80¢ each!



Out of the 300 or more new detective books that come out every year, the Club selects the very "cream of the crop" — by outstanding authors like Erle Stanley Gardner, Agatha Christie, A. A. Fair, Mignon G. Eberhart, and John Creasey. All THESE and many other famous authors have had their books selected by the Club. Many are members themselves!

Club selections are ALL newly published books. As a member, you get THREE of them complete in one handsomely bound triple-volume (an $8.85 to $9.40 value in publishers' editions) for ONLY $2.29.

Take ONLY The Books You Want

You do NOT have to take a volume every month. You receive a free copy of the Club's "Preview" which will fully describe all coming selections and you may reject any volume before or after receiving it. NO money in advance; NO membership fees. You may cancel membership any time.

You Enjoy These Five Advantages

(1) You get the cream of the finest BRAND-NEW detective books—by the best authors. (2) You save between $6 and $7 off the usual cost. (3) You take ONLY the books you want. (4) The volumes are fresh and clean — delivered right to your door. (5) They are so well printed and bound that they grow into a library you'll be proud to own.

SEND NO MONEY

Mail Coupon for ALL SEVEN Volumes

Simply mail coupon promptly and we will send you at once the SEVEN complete Perry Mason stories—PLUS TWO MORE exciting mysteries described on other side. But don't delay Mail the valuable coupon NOW to:

THE DETECTIVE BOOK CLUB
Roslyn, L.I., New York

MAIL THIS POSTCARD NOW FOR YOUR NINE MYSTERIES

•

NO POSTAGE NEEDED

SEND NO MONEY — JUST MAIL COUPON

79-237

THE DETECTIVE BOOK CLUB YM
Roslyn, L.I., New York

Please enroll me as a member and send me the SIX full-size, hard-bound editions of Perry Mason thrillers, PLUS the brand-new 3-in-One-volume Club selection containing my SEVENTH "Perry Mason" and 2 other great mystery stories. I may keep all SEVEN books for only $1.00 (plus a few cents mailing charge) on this sensational introductory offer. If not completely satisfied after one week's examination, I may return all the books and owe nothing.

I am not obligated to take any specific number of books, and I am to receive advance "Previews" of all future selections. Also, I may reject any volume before or after I receive it, and I may cancel my membership whenever I wish. I need send no money now, but for each future Club triple-volume I keep I will send you the low price of $2.29 (plus a few cents mailing charge) as complete payment within a week. *(Books shipped in U.S.A. only.)*

Mr. }
Mrs } .....
Miss }
(PLEASE PRINT PLAINLY)

Address.....

City.....Zone.....State.....

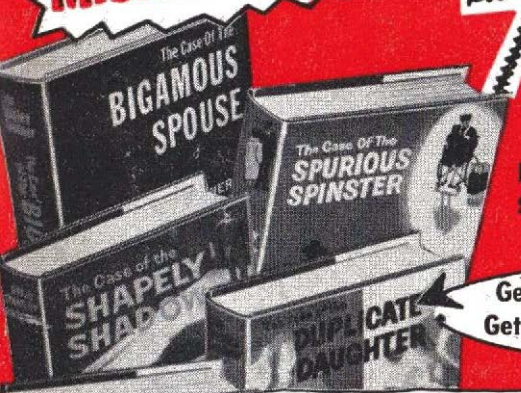
Attention MYSTERY FANS!

NOW FOR ONLY $1.00 GET THESE TO NEW MEMBERS

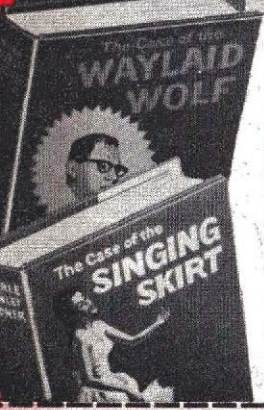
7 Perry Mason MYSTERIES

by ERLE STANLEY GARDNER

World's No. 1 Mystery Writer



Get SIX in These Full-Size Individual Books!
Get Your 7th in This Big "3-in-One" Volume!



Follow PERRY MASON As He Tackles These Thrilling Cases

1 The Case of the BIGAMOUS SPOUSE
Stunning Gwynn Elsten begs Perry to help her. Then SHE's arrested for *First Degree MURDER!*

2 The Case of the SPURIOUS SPINSTER
Two spinsters disappear. Perry's GOT to find one of them — before the *other* one gets killed!

3 The Case of the SHAPELY SHADOW
The judge wants a mistrial. But Perry DOESN'T — even though it would SAVE his client!

4 The Case of the DUPLICATE DAUGHTER
Perry's star witness *refuses to talk.* But the *D.A.'s* star witness will HAVE to! It's Perry!

5 The Case of the WAYLAID WOLF
Arlene Ferris insists she didn't kill "Wolf" Lamont. But the evidence says she's going to prison — or *die!*

6 The Case of the SINGING SKIRT
A gambling hostess gets Perry into real hot water — accused as *an accessory to MURDER!*

ALL FULL-SIZE FULL-LENGTH HARD-COVER BOOKS

Perry's Latest!

The Case of the RELUCTANT MODEL
by Erle Stanley Gardner
Is the rich playboy's masterpiece a fraud? The ONE person who *knows* gets shot full of holes — and Perry has to save a gorgeous model from death!

Plus

TWO MORE Top-Flight Mystery Thrillers!

CERTAIN SLEEP
by Helen Reilly
Did death come *accidentally* to the beautiful heiress? Everything says "Yes"—except for *one little detail!*

THE EYE OF THE NEEDLE
by Thomas Walsh
Father McDonald is SURE his brother didn't kill his wife. But only a real JOLT can solve *this* case!

SEE OTHER SIDE

Postage Will be Paid by Addressee

No Postage Stamp Necessary If Mailed in the United States

BUSINESS REPLY MAIL

FIRST CLASS PERMIT No. 47 — ROSLYN, N. Y.

The Detective Book Club
Roslyn, L. I.
New York