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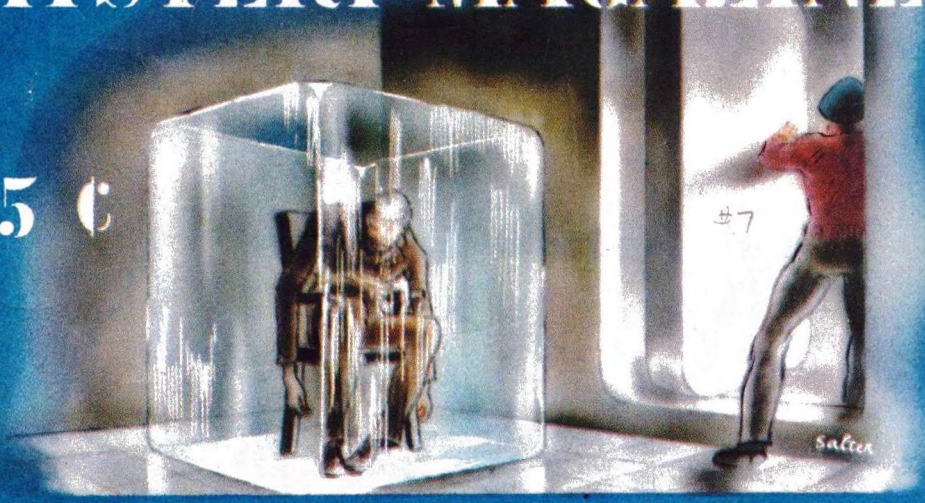

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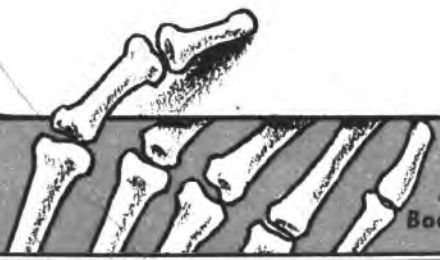

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ELLERY QUEEN

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Here, ladies and gentlemen, is the first Georges Simenon short story of detection ever to be published in America — indeed, in the English language anywhere. It occurs only in French. We asked Mr. Anthony Boucher, himself a distinguished author of mystery stories, to translate the popular M. Simenon's story from the original; and he has done so superbly. . . . "The Case of Arnold Schuttringer" is one of the thirteen short stories about M. Froget, examining magistrate, in Simenon's "Les 13 Coupables." Mr. Boucher says of him: "M. Froget, with his cold precision, his infinite patience, and his ten-sous notebook with its red-ink epilogues, is for me one of the great short-story detectives." We believe you will agree.

THE CASE OF ARNOLD SCHUTTRINGER

by GEORGES SIMENON

(Translated from the original French by Anthony Boucher)

THE examining magistrate M. Froget sat behind his desk in a most uncomfortable-looking attitude, one shoulder higher than the other, his head hunched forward.

As always, he was all black and white — the white of his skin, of his hair, and of his meticulously ironed linen; the black of his formally cut suit.

It must be admitted that he appeared rather dated. People often wondered if he had not yet reached the age limit; he had seemed sixty for a good five years now.

I have been a guest in his home on the Champ du Mars, and I should like to attempt a personal impression. No man has ever more thoroughly crushed me, more completely undermined my opinion of myself, than M. Froget.

I would tell him a story. He would look at me in a manner that one might take for encouraging. I would finish. I would wait for a remark, a comment, a smile.

He would contemplate me as he might contemplate a landscape or Exhibit A, and at last he would let out a very small sigh. I swear it's enough to make you humble for the rest of your days. Nothing but a sigh! A bit of air! And the free translation would run, "So you went to all this trouble to tell me that!"

Just so now he contemplated the prisoner, Arnold Schuttringer.

"First of all, monsieur le juge, I wish to state — "

"Nothing! You will answer my questions."

M. Froget uttered these words with a terrible calm. Throughout the questioning he was to remain motionless, his left shoulder hunched higher than his right. His forehead rested on his hand. It was a white hand, almost like wax.

Arnold Schuttringer never took his large bulging eyes off the magistrate. They inspired dislike, those eyes, even a strange revulsion.

Age, thirty. Height, one meter eighty centimeters. Too well fed, or more exactly, bloated. The lips were characteristic. Their edges were thick and firm. They looked like fruit ripe to bursting.

There was nonetheless something unhealthy about the flesh of his face. It was too white, in spite of the red on the cheeks, which suggested make-up.

Hair blond, cut very short. Sparse eyebrows. A gray suit tailored too tight, fitting closely all over and making his muscles stand out as though padded.

M. Froget spoke, leaning over his papers. He sounded as though he read a meticulously studied lesson.

"You were born at Zurich, were you not, of a German father and an Austrian mother? Do not stop me unless I make a mistake. At first you studied chemistry at the University of Nuremberg. At twenty-three you changed your mind and began the medical course at Bonn. Why did you suddenly decide to continue your studies at Paris?"

"Because at Bonn, which is exclusively a university town, it was hard to earn my living while I studied."

"Your parents never sent you money?"

"My father died ten years ago. My mother is governess with an English family; she earns only enough to keep herself."

"What made you decide to take up medicine?"

"Personal taste."

"You have stated in previous depositions that you did not intend to practise."

"Quite correct. I'm a laboratory man."

"And you volunteered to do preparation for the amphitheater. In other words, it is you who cut up the bodies to be dissected."

"Still correct."

"For two years you have been employed in the Pharmacie Centrale in the Place Blanche. You start work at eight in the evening and leave at eight in the morning. It is an all-night drugstore. You rarely appear in the shop

itself. You use a small office with a couch. When an urgent prescription is handed in, the sales clerk wakes you and you fill it in the laboratory. Why should the proprietor of the drugstore have employed you rather than a licensed pharmacist and a Frenchman?"

"Because I was willing to take half the regular salary. For that consideration, it was understood that I could study while I was on duty and use the lab for my own experiments."

"From eight to eight, you were alone on the premises with Mme. Joly, whose place was in the shop. Around one in the morning, she would prepare coffee for you and serve it in your office. You were her lover."

"So they say."

"One of the cleaning women arrived early one morning and surprised you *in flagrante.*"

"If you insist."

"Mme. Joly was thirty-five. Her husband was and still is surveyor for an architect. He is a man of violent disposition. He was very jealous and had for some time suspected the truth. In the last few weeks he has several times appeared unexpectedly at night. Is this correct?"

"So you say."

"At other times Mme. Joly has seen him in the street, spying about. He has told his colleagues that eventually the affair must end by the death of both of you."

"I know nothing of that."

"The night of the fourth to fifth, you and Mme. Joly were on duty as usual. From evening to morning, there were exactly thirteen customers. The cash register bears witness to that. Twice you were called to fill prescriptions. At eleven-thirty Joly, who had been to the movies, came to see his wife and noticed you through the open door of the office. He did not speak to you. At two in the morning, a dancer from a cabaret in the Rue Pigalle appeared and waited for several minutes alone in the shop. She states that the shop girl, when she finally arrived, was disheveled and highly flushed."

Schuttringer drew his fleshy lips into a scornful smile. "Is that all?" he asked.

"Usually Mme. Joly left around seven, so that she would be home before her husband awoke. You would stay there alone for a quarter of an hour until the cleaning women came. On the fifth, Mme. Joly waited for the day staff and did not leave the drugstore until eight o'clock. You were lying

down in the office. When someone opened the door, you pretended to rouse yourself from a deep sleep."

"I appreciate that 'pretended'!" Schuttringer was sarcastic. "I suppose you have established that fact by strict scientific method?"

"When the day staff arrived, Mme. Joly was already wearing her street coat. She left on foot, headed for the Place Clichy where she regularly took the streetcar. You waited for your employer. After exchanging a few words with him, you went to your room in the Rue Monsieur-le-Prince, and then to the dissecting room."

It was all flat monotony. No emotion. No sensation of combat. On the one hand M. Froget coldly reciting his lesson. On the other Schuttringer never taking his large suspicious eyes off the magistrate.

"At nine, M. Joly came to the drugstore. His wife had not come home, and he demanded your address. The proprietor, thinking him too excited, did not dare give it to him. Despairingly, the surveyor spent the morning hunting for you all over the medical college. A laboratory assistant warned you in time, and you left by a side door, warning him not to give out your address. You admit this?"

Schuttringer shrugged his shoulders.

"At five in the afternoon, the drugstore received an unexpected order and one of the clerks had to go down into the basement. Not finding what he wanted, he went on into the 'reserve,' a basement compartment smaller than the others where they keep dangerous items, particularly acids. Behind a pile of candy boxes, he saw some sacks that were out of place. He went to pick them up and let out a cry of pain. The sacking was soaked with vitriol. A little later, after an alarm had been given, they found under the sacks the body of a woman, cut into three pieces, and already badly eaten away by sulphuric acid.

"You know the results of the autopsy. Death less than twenty-four hours previously. The scraps of clothing that were left tallied with the clothes which Mme. Joly had worn the preceding night. Same age. Same height. Same figure. M. Joly identified the remains. He accused you without hesitation, and if the police had not protected you, he would have killed you when you were confronted with him."

"The drugstore has only one entrance, hasn't it?" said Arnold Schuttringer slowly. "Allow me to point out to you, moreover, that I had no motive for killing Mme. Joly. There's one thing, among various others, that

your investigation hasn't brought out: From her percentage on the sales, she gave me about two hundred francs a month." He said this calmly. Not a trace of embarrassment or self-reproach.

As though he had not heard these last remarks, M. Froget replied, "True, there is only one door. And from eight o'clock in the morning on, there was always someone in the drugstore. Besides, we have reconstructed your actions on the fifth, and it is established that you did not return to the Place Blanche."

"Which proves — " the prisoner began. He was becoming aggressive.

But at the answer, cold and strong as falling hail, he lost his assurance.

"Which proves nothing!"

* * *

No words could do justice to the detachment of M. Froget.

Most examining magistrates pile up question upon question, deafening the prisoner until he finally blurts forth some phrase that constitutes a confession.

M. Froget, on the contrary, left the prisoner time to reflect, and even time to reflect too much. His silences lasted many minutes, his questions hardly as many seconds.

This five-minute silence seemed like an intermission. And when the curtain went up again, Arnold Schuttringer was less sure of himself.

M. Froget's attitude had likewise changed. His voice was more biting. His hands held an ivory paper-cutter which he kept bending so far that the other mechanically watched for the moment when it would snap.

"You will please reply 'yes' or 'no' to the remaining questions. At Bonn you were involved in a scandal which has never been cleared up and which cost the lives of a young man of seventeen and a girl of sixteen. Is this true?"

"One fourth of the faculty were likewise involved. There were doubtless good reasons for hushing up the affair."

"You stated several months ago to a girl newly employed in the drugstore that a woman who had once known you could not do without you."

Schuttringer blushed imperceptibly and tried to smile, but achieved only a strained grimace.

"Mme. Joly has boasted that thanks to you she learned to take cocaine."

"There are thirty or forty thousand of us here in Paris who — "

"I am not questioning your morals, only your actions. Did you serve one or more customers on the night of the fourth to fifth?"

"I filled two prescriptions."

"Did you go into the shop proper?"

"No!"

"Then you did not ring up any sales? And all figures on the cash register were recorded by Mme. Joly?"

Schuttringer was silent — puzzled, defiant, vaguely disquieted.

"Thirteen sales gave a registered total of ninety-six francs, twenty-five centimes. Two of these sales were the prescriptions which you filled. Ten others represent sales across the counter. The thirteenth . . ."

There was a silence. Schuttringer did not move. He frowned, and his eyes bulged more than ever. You could see that he was vainly trying to understand.

"The thirteenth item registered is five francs, seventy-five centimes. This sum, according to the formal testimony of the proprietor, can refer only to a box of absorbent cotton B. There is no other merchandise in the shop that costs five seventy-five."

Another silence. M. Froget moved his papers about.

"Did you sell any absorbent cotton?"

"I never set foot in the shop."

"Not one box of cotton left the shelves that night. This is all the easier to check because a carton was opened the day before, and all the boxes are still there."

"Which proves . . . ?"

"That on the morning of the fifth there was five seventy-five too much in the cash register. That is all. Five francs, seventy-five centimes which had been rung up on the machine, which had been put in the cash drawer, but which did not represent any sale of merchandise."

Schuttringer shifted about on his chair.

M. Froget's voice was dry, his attitude so stern and cutting that the prisoner lost all assurance.

"The body could not have reached the basement without your knowledge and consent. Only one door, as you yourself emphasized. During the day, many people constantly in the shop which one would have to cross. At night, only you and Mme. Joly, who belongs to you body and soul.

"Therefore, crime or complicity on your part. At any rate, a strong presumption thereof."

The rest was short. M. Froget recognized that his adversary was intel-

ligent enough to lose no link of an extremely condensed chain of reasoning.

"On the fifth, Mme. Joly waits for the day staff before leaving. This is still under the heading of presumptions. She waits only because she needs to be seen. Or rather, you need to have her seen. After that, it will seem mathematically impossible to convict you.

"The crime has already been committed. The body is in the basement, soaked in vitriol. On the evening of that same day, the experts place the time of death as almost twenty-four hours previously.

"Conclusion: The body is not that of Mme. Joly.

"Five seventy-five too much in the cash register. Now neither you nor your mistress had any reason to go putting money in there, simply to create a confusing anomaly.

"*There had been a purchase. But the article was not taken out of the shop.*

"It must be the absorbent cotton. A young woman comes into the shop, receives her merchandise, and pays for it. She is then lured into the back room, killed, cut apart, and stowed away in the basement under sacks soaked in acid.

"But Mme. Joly makes the slip of putting the cotton back on the shelf, that cotton which has been bought but which still has not left the shop, because the purchaser herself has not left.

"Which might be called a mechanical proof."

With a vulgar gesture Schuttringer rubbed his hand along his thick and greasy neck and said, "Some head you've got there! You must be proud."

But M. Froget was no longer listening. He was writing in his ten-sous notebook, with a pen so fine that, guided by any hand other than his, it might have torn the paper:

"Joly, jealous, had become dangerous. Hard to kill him without risks. And the lovers, for obscure reasons, need each other.

"So instead Mme. Joly shall apparently die. They wait until, when they are alone at night, a customer turns up whose appearance corresponds more or less with hers. Murder. Change of clothing. Vitriol.

"At eight Mme. Joly waits for the day staff *in her street coat*, to hide the dress that is not hers.

"She disappears and waits for her lover at some prearranged rendezvous."

Across these lines I have read a note written later in red ink:

"Died at Salpêtrière Hospital of general paresis, a year after acquittal for lack of criminal responsibility."

Mr. Albert Campion, the "Universal Uncle and amateur of crime," interprets a strange clue in what might be called "The Case of Cagliostro II." This story has never before been published in the United States.

THE DEFINITE ARTICLE

by MARGERY ALLINGHAM

"MY DEAR MAN," said old Lady Laradine, her remarkable voice penetrating the roar of the Bond Street traffic with easy mastery, "don't think you're going to get away from me once I've settled down to a gossip. Come back here at once. Dorothea has got her girl safely engaged to Lord Pettering, I see. You know him, don't you? Tell me, do you approve?"

Mr. Albert Campion bent his lean back once more and peered again into the tonneau of the elderly Daimler, where the redoubtable old lady sat enthroned.

His pale, somewhat vacant face, at which so many criminals had laughed too soon, wore a patient but harassed expression as his fifth attempt to escape was again frustrated.

"Forgive me, but you're holding up the traffic rather seriously, you know," he ventured mildly. "There's a bus having apoplexy just behind you, and I see a traffic policeman gazing over here with unhealthy interest. Does it matter?"

The old lady swung round to peer out of the window above her head with an agility which was typical of her.

"Yes, I dislike the police," she said briskly. "They have a mania for motor-cars. Get in."

Mr. Campion drew back involuntarily.

"Oh no, really," he murmured. "I — I'm late for an appointment now. Delightful seeing you. Good-bye."

The car door swinging suddenly open on top of him silenced his excuses. "Where is this appointment?" The old voice was commanding.

"Scotland Yard," said Campion with what he took to be a flash of inspiration. "Terribly important."

"Get in then, idiot," shouted the old lady. "Bullard!" she screamed to the

chauffeur. "Scotland Yard! — and drive as fast as you like. It's official business."

A moment later Mr. Campion, who had no desire to go to the headquarters of the Criminal Investigation Department anyway, found himself sitting meekly beside his kidnapper as the big car slid quietly out into Piccadilly.

Lady Laradine regarded him with the affectionate pride of an angler for a landed fish.

"There," she said. "Now tell me! your friend Lord Pettering is hysterically in love with Dorothea's girl Roberta, isn't he? How did he get that abominable uncle of his to agree to the match?"

Mr. Campion blinked.

"Tommy Pettering?" he repeated with irritating stupidity. "Has he an uncle?"

Lady Laradine made a menacing noise in her throat.

"Don't you dare to take that line with me, young man," she said, prodding his knee with a finger which felt as though it had a thimble upon it. "You know as well as I do that Pettering's mother is determined he shall have a career in the Foreign Office and that old Braithwaite, her brother, who is in the Cabinet, is only willing to arrange everything if he's allowed to keep the whole family under his thumb. Young Master Thomas has to get his uncle's permission before he sells a plater, much less gets himself engaged. How did the boy talk his uncle round? You must know."

Mr. Campion was aware of her small faded brown eyes watching him with a shrewdness which was unnerving, and he stuck resolutely to his usual policy, saying nothing that could possibly be taken down and used against him.

"I imagine the request was purely formal," he murmured cautiously. "I don't know Miss Roberta Pendleton-Blake. There's nothing against her, is there?"

"Against Roberta? Of course not!" the old woman snapped at him. "Dorothea is one of my best friends. But the money in that family did come from frozen meat in the last generation and everybody thought that the old uncle, Braithwaite, would put his stupid feet down on that account. So he would have done, of course, if there'd been any breath of scandal. The F.O. is so pristine, isn't it? But I suppose the meat is something they can bring themselves to forget and forgive. Still, I believe it was touch and go. Tell

me, do you like Roberta? She's my godchild, but you can say what you like."

Mr. Campion patiently repeated his previous announcement that he had not met the Pendleton-Blakes. Lady Laradine was shocked.

"Oh, my dear, you must," she said. "I'll see you're invited to the dance Dorothea is giving for the girl next week. Mind you come. They're charming, all absolutely charming, even the husband — but he's dead, of course. Dorothea is a sweet creature. So original. She uses all the ideas I give her for her parties. I've told her she must have the Psychometrist at the next dance. That's something new to amuse people. It's so interesting, I think, to have something to do, besides watching the younger people dance. It gives one something to talk about afterwards. You really must meet Dorothea. Oh, how disappointing, here we are."

Her flow of chatter died abruptly as the Daimler turned on to the Embankment, and her passenger sprang out with uncharacteristic haste. He did not get clean away, however.

"I'll wait for you," said Lady Laradine, her hand on his coat. "I want to hear all the news."

Mr. Campion, who had considered crossing the road, picking up a cab and driving peacefully back to Bond Street, was aghast.

"That would be too kind," he said with earnest conviction. "I'm afraid I may be hours, literally. Thank you so very much. Good-bye."

"Good-bye then," said her ladyship regretfully. "I shall look out for you at Dorothea's next week."

Mr. Campion smiled a trifle wanly and walked towards the entrance. Since there was nothing for it but a visit to his old friend Superintendent Oates, or undignified concealment behind a gate pillar until the Daimler should elect to depart, he sighed and, waving to the inquisitive figure in the back of the car, he gave his name to the man on the door and sent up his card.

The superintendent embarrassed him considerably by receiving him at once, having taken his unheralded arrival as a sign of great urgency.

"What's up?" he demanded. "I've never known you blow in here without making an appointment. Something serious?"

Inwardly Mr. Campion cursed all strong-minded old ladies, and after a while he mentioned the fact aloud.

Oates began to laugh. He was a thin grey man with light intelligent eyes

and a certain natural mournfulness of expression.

"That's fine," he said with relish. "This is just the place for a nice rest in the middle of the morning. Put your feet up. Don't mind me."

Mr. Campion took a silver case from his pocket and drew out a cigarette, which he laid upon the desk with quiet dignity. "Get this analyzed for me, old boy, will you?" he said earnestly.

The policeman's smile faded and he prodded the cylinder gently with a broad forefinger. "Which is it?" he demanded. "Drugs or explosives?"

"Heaven knows," said his visitor seriously.

"Really? Where did you get it?" Oates was as alert as a terrier.

Mr. Campion surveyed him affectionately. "I bought it in an open shop right in your own district. Think that over."

Oates sniffed at the cigarette suspiciously. "Righto," he said, "I'll send it down. What are your grounds for doubting it?"

"Three extra in a packet and they taste like hell," explained his visitor affably. "They're a new brand, advertised all over the place."

The superintendent regarded him coldly for a moment or two and finally lit the exhibit, which he puffed contentedly.

"All right," he said ominously, "all right, my lad. If you're looking for something to employ your time I'll see what I can do for you. Sit down. I've got something in your line. This'll just about suit you. Somebody wants a miracle. I thought of you when I got the inquiry."

His guest looked suitably chastened and would have drifted towards the door, but Oates's ferocious good humour increased.

"Sit down," he repeated, taking up a sheaf of official papers. "Here's the dope. This is what comes of persuading foreigners to say 'Your police are wonderful.' They're beginning to take it literally, the lunatics. This is an inquiry from the U. S. The Federal Police are looking for a Society blackmailer who, so they say, always spends October in England. They can't give us any more than that on him. They simply say they'd be obliged if we apprehended him. Obliged isn't the word. They mean staggered."

Seated on the hard visitor's chair, Mr. Campion did his best to look intelligent, and his pale eyes were amused and friendly behind his horn-rimmed spectacles.

"He's male, is he?" he said. "That's a step. I mean it reduces it from all the population of America to half the population of America, doesn't it?"

Oates turned over the blue sheets in his hand.

"Yes, they seem fairly certain of that," he said without smiling. "But you see what I mean when I say the description is slight. This is the story, as far as I can make it out. Late last year there was a fatal accident to the young wife of one of those fabulously wealthy financial men they breed over there. She fell off the roof of a skyscraper, and no one seemed to know why. There was no suggestion of foul play, but the question of suicide was raised. The husband, poor chap, was far too broken up at first to go into the thing thoroughly, but afterwards he seems to have pulled himself together and made several interesting discoveries.

"The first thing he noticed was that the girl died without a halfpenny in her private account, and that there were records of large, ever-increasing sums withdrawn from it to explain this.

"This money had been paid out from the bank in cash and naturally he began to think of blackmail."

He paused and Campion nodded.

"The girl," Oates continued, "was very young, not at all the type to have a dangerous secret, and the whole notion seemed incredible to the husband until he cross-questioned the coloured maid who had come up from his wife's home with her on her marriage. From her he got an interesting story.

"It appeared that the young wife had kept some letters, a sentimental memento of a boy-and-girl love affair which had fizzled out before the older man put in an appearance. The maid thought that someone had got hold of these and convinced the wife that her husband would read a great deal more into them than ever they had originally contained. To prevent this eventuality the poor wretched child ruined herself financially, worked herself into a state of nervous collapse, and finally threw herself off the roof. You know how these things sometimes happen, Campion."

The elegant personage in the horn-rimmed spectacles did not speak at once. It was an ugly little story, and one which he had heard too often in his career to doubt. Like the superintendent, he knew only too well that the clever blackmailer who picks the right type of victim seldom has to find anything that is really reprehensible on which to base his threats.

"Too bad," he said seriously. "Didn't they get any line on the chap at all?"

Stanislaus Oates made a few vulgar and not altogether relevant remarks which seemed to relieve his feelings.

"I told you," he said finally. "Why don't you listen? They haven't got a

sausage, not a whiff, not a faint delicate aroma floating out from the window of a passing car. They don't know anything. And they have the calm impudence to write and say 'We hear your Force is wonderful. How about sending this lad along in a plain van?' "

"Yes, I know." Mr. Campion spoke soothingly. "But they must have something to go on. Otherwise why apply to you? Why not go to the Chinese or to the Nevada Sheriff?"

Oates grunted.

"They think they've got two clues," he admitted. "They concede that they're slight. I like that word of theirs, 'concede.' They're both based on something the dead girl said to the maid. The first one is a remark she made late in the summer of last year, when she first showed signs of worry. 'It'll be all right in October,' she said. 'He goes to England in October.' She wouldn't explain herself and seemed to regret the admission of trouble as soon as she had made it. That's the first.

"The second is just demented. Apparently, on the morning of the 'accident,' she was sitting up in bed and she said to the maid, who seems to have been a reliable witness, 'It's no good, Dorothy, it's no good. It's written in ink. He saw it in ink.' And then she went out on the roof."

He paused and shrugged his shoulders.

"There you are," he said. "There's the lot, and I hope it means more to you than it does to me. Written in ink, indeed! What was written in ink? And why was it more important than if it had been written in pencil? Or cross-stitch, for that matter?"

Mr. Campion sat looking thoughtfully at the toes of his shoes for some moments.

"This girl who died," he inquired at last, "what sort of life did she lead? Was she likely to come into contact with shady characters?"

"No, that's the odd part about it." Oates studied the blue sheaf again. "She was one of New York's pampered babies. Looked after as if she was royalty or something. She never went out unescorted and never visited anywhere but in the most exclusive circles. Whoever got hold of her must have had peculiar facilities for getting into the best houses. I think the whole story is scatty. I shall write and tell 'em so, in a nice way, of course, when you've broken a tooth or two on the problem."

"Me?" Mr. Campion seemed startled, and the superintendent was amused.

"I'll tell 'em I've put a Society expert on the job," he said, grinning. "That'll please 'em and keep 'em quiet for a bit. There you are. You came in here looking for something to do and now you've got it. There's a little miracle for you. Pull that off. Written in ink my foot!"

"In ink?" repeated Mr. Campion with sudden interest as a chance remark he had heard earlier that morning returned to him with sudden significance. "I wonder . . ."

Oates regarded him sympathetically.

"You're getting swelled head," he said kindly. "It often happens to amateurs. You're beginning to think you're gifted with supernatural powers. This'll do you good. It's impossible. If you had all the luck in the world it'd still be impossible."

Mr. Campion collected his hat and gloves and wandered to the door.

"I'll let you know if I spot him," he said.

"Do," said Oates cheerfully. "And send me a wreath at the same time. I'll need it."

His visitor looked pained. "Do I get a reward if I bring him in?" he inquired.

"You get an illuminated address of five thousand words, written in my own hand and coloured," said the superintendent heartily.

Mr. Campion seemed both pleased and surprised.

"I shall like that," he said.

He went quietly out of the building, and that evening did what was in the circumstances a very extraordinary thing. After certain elementary researches he wrote a careful and slightly effusive note to old Lady Laradine and begged her not to forget her promise to get him an invitation to the dance in honour of Miss Roberta Pendleton-Blake.

He paid for this fit of apparent lunacy a few days later when he sat beside that paralysing old lady in the corner of a ballroom which was not so much decorated as obliterated with heavily scented flowers and watched a vast throng of young people moving in mass formation on a glistening floor.

Lady Laradine was at the top of her form. She had spent the earlier part of the evening in a black velvet tent in an ante-room of the big Clarges Street house consulting the latest Society entertainer, and was bursting with her experiences.

"My dear," she was saying happily, "my dear, the creature is too astonishing. Dorothea was *inspired* to engage him. I told her she would be.

Look at Roberta and young Pettering dancing together over there . . . aren't they charming? I'm so glad the uncle was reasonable. Dorothea tells me she cried with relief when she heard that the wretched man had consented. Dear me, let me see, where was I?"

Mr. Campion had not the faintest idea and was on the verge of forgetting himself sufficiently to say so when she recollected unassisted.

"Of course," she said, "the fortune-teller. Quite an astounding person. A psychometrist. Fortunately I'm never indiscreet, but really some of the things he told me about people I know . . ."

Her resonant voice rose and fell, and it occurred to her patient audience that she must have told the seer quite as much as ever he told her. Her flow of chatter was quite remarkable.

"He took my ring and put it in an envelope," she hurried on. "I put the envelope under the crystal and then he looked in and told me the most astonishing things about my mother. Wasn't that amazing?"

"A ring?" inquired Mr. Campion, pricking up his ears.

The old lady looked at him as if she thought he were deficient.

"I don't believe you've been listening," she said unjustly. "I've been explaining to you for the last half hour that Cagliostro is amazing. You give him something that belonged to someone dead, or elsewhere anyway, and he tells you all about them."

"Cagliostro?" repeated Mr. Campion, temporarily out of his depth.

Lady Laradine threw up her small yellow hands in exasperation.

"Bless the man, he's delirious!" she said. "Cagliostro the Second is the fortune-teller, animal. The psychometrist. The man I've been telling you about. He's in a black velvet tent somewhere in the house. Go and see him yourself. I can't be bothered with you if you don't use your mind at all. All you young men ought to take up Yoga. It clears the brain. Come and see me and I'll put you on to a very good man."

Mr. Campion rose. His ears were singing, but his eyes were alert and interested. "I'll go and find him at once," he said. "I like fortune-tellers."

The suddenness of his dash for freedom routed the old lady, and he was half-way down the room and out of earshot before she collected sufficient breath to call him back.

Mr. Campion went off on his quest with that hidden, almost absent-minded, purposefulness which was his most misleading characteristic. He paused in the doorway to exchange a word with Tommy Pettering and be

presented to the entirely delightful Roberta, chatted carelessly with two or three acquaintances, put himself in the good graces of his hostess with a a few intelligent compliments, and wandered out into the main body of the house practically by accident.

It took him some time to find the psychometrist and his velvet tent, indeed he became definitely lost in the house at one period before that and came to a full stop in a dark corridor on the floor below the ballroom.

He was standing on the threshold of a small room furnished as a woman's study. The place was dimly lighted and the slender walnut furniture made graceful shadows on the silk-panelled walls. But it was not at these that the tall man with the diffident manner remained to stare with speculative interest.

Kneeling before a bureau on the other side of the room was a girl in a green chiffon dress. The first thing Campion noticed about her was her extreme youth, and the second the astonishing fact that she was forcing the catch of a drawer with a brass paperknife.

He then saw that her hair was curled on the top of a small and shapely head and that her green dress floated about a slender, childish figure.

As he watched her she slid the drawer open an inch or so and inserted a little inquiring hand.

Mr. Campion, deeming that the moment had come, coughed apologetically.

The girl in the green dress stiffened and there was a moment of painful silence. Campion had some experience of the hardened criminal and he thought he had never witnessed such an exhibition of calm nerve. Before she even looked round she opened the drawer a little further and, with a nonchalance that had guilt stamped all over it, drew out a small flat packet which she wrapped in her georgette handkerchief. Then she turned and rose quietly to her feet.

Mr. Campion found himself looking into a small, intelligent face which would blossom into radiant beauty in a year or so. At the moment he judged her to be seventeen at most. She was very red and her grey-green eyes were angry and alarmed, but her dignity was tremendous.

Her remark was as bald as it was unexpected, and it had a strong element of truth in it which silenced him altogether.

"It's nothing to do with you," she said and darted past him before he could stop her, leaving him staring in blank astonishment at her tiny whirl-

wind figure disappearing into the darkness of the passage.

Mr. Campion pulled himself together and went quietly up to the ballroom. He was mildly startled. Young ladies who open bureau drawers with paperknives and run off with mysterious packages wrapped in green georgette handkerchiefs constitute a responsibility which cannot be altogether ignored.

He had plenty of fish to fry of his own, however, for he had not braved an evening in the same house with Lady Laradine for nothing. He looked in at the ballroom again and reflected that every woman he had ever met at a dinner table seemed to be present with her daughter, but of the little girl in the green dress there was no trace at all.

Lady Laradine saw him from the other side of the room and bore down upon him like a very small ship in very full sail and he ducked into the first doorway to avoid her, thereby discovering the thing he had sought so unobtrusively for the past hour.

A black velvet tent hung with gilt fringe and topped by a directoire eagle rose up, dark and impressive, in the centre of the high-ceilinged Georgian room. He wandered over to it and raised the flap.

The scene within was much as he had expected, and the sight of it gave him a thrill of satisfaction. One point in particular interested him immensely. A strong overhead light shone down upon a small ebony table which supported a red satin hand-cushion and a black crystal ball.

The man who smiled at him over an unimpeachable shirt-front was unusual. This Cagliostro was not the sleek huckster with the twinkle and the swagger which the credulous public has come to expect in its seers, but a surprisingly large man with thin fluffy hair and prominent cold light eyes. His smile was secretive and not at all pleasant. He did not speak, but indicated the consultant's chair very slowly with a sweeping movement of a great fin-like hand.

Mr. Campion would have accepted the invitation but he was frustrated. Lady Laradine pounced upon him from behind.

"Oh, *there* you are," she said irritably. "Well, I hope you've been hearing something entertaining for it's more than I have. Has anybody *any* conversation at all these days? What did Cagliostro tell you?"

Mr. Campion was explaining meekly that he had had as yet no time to consult the psychometrist when he caught sight over his captor's shoulders of a slender little figure in a green dress. There was quite a little crowd in the

ante-room and she did not notice him, but made straight for the tent and passed inside.

"Really!" Lady Laradine, who had known by instinct the precise moment when his attention had wandered and had spun round herself, was now looking at him with impolite amusement.

"My dear boy, a *child?*" she burst out in her tremendous voice. "Well, it's an extraordinary thing to me, but I've noticed it over and over again. You clever men are absolutely devastated by immaturity, aren't you? Still, seventeen. . . . Dear boy, is it wise?"

"Do you know who she is?" Campion got the inquiry in edgeways.

"Who she is?" echoed the old lady, her eyes crinkling. "My good man, you don't mean to say you haven't even met? But how touchingly romantic! I thought you young people managed things very differently these days. Still, this is charming. Tell me more. You just looked at each other, I suppose? Dear me, this takes me back to the 'nineties."

Campion regarded her helplessly. She was like some elderly yellow kitten, he thought suddenly, all fluff and wide smile.

"Who is she?" he repeatedly doggedly.

"Why, the child, of course," said Lady Laradine infuriatingly. "Little What's-her-name. Jennifer, isn't it? To be presented next year when there won't be such a crush. You know perfectly well who I mean. Don't stand there looking like a fish. Roberta's sister, Dorothea's youngest daughter. So pretty. Like some sort of flower, don't you think?"

"A daughter?" said Campion flatly. "She lives here, then?"

"Of course she does. Where should she live but with her mother?" Her ladyship's eyebrows seemed in danger of disappearing altogether. "A child of seventeen living alone? Whatever next! She's a charming little thing, although I've never had any patience with schoolchildren myself. Still, she's far too young for you. Put it out of your mind. Let me see, what was I going to tell you?"

This was a secret Mr. Campion never learnt. Lady Laradine, who had hitherto accredited him with excellent manners, was deeply disappointed in him. He stared blankly at her for a moment and then, turning away abruptly, strode across the room, passing behind the tent, to the door half-hidden behind it which led out into the house.

Lady Laradine saw the top of the door open and close and assumed that her victim had passed through it, which was just the kind of silly mistake

which long experience had taught Mr. Campion that most people were wont to make.

The long evening went on according to the programme the hostess had arranged, but there were certain additions to it which were not on her schedule at all. At half-past one in the morning a weary and somewhat stiff Mr. Campion made his way gingerly out of the concealing folds at the back of the psychometrist's tent and, slipping into the house, walked quietly down to the little study where he had first met the girl in green.

He went inside and sat down in a wing-chair in the darkest corner. Presently he heard her coming as he knew she would. Her dress brushed the step and he heard her quick intake of breath as she closed the door behind her and, crossing into his line of vision, flung herself down on her knees before the bureau drawer.

"I say," said Mr. Campion, "I suppose you know what you're doing with that chap downstairs? I don't trust him myself."

This time his interruption was greeted with interest if not respect. Jennifer Pendleton-Blake screamed and swung round, her eyes terrified. Even so, however, her words were unexpected.

"What do you know?" she demanded.

"Quite a lot." Mr. Campion rose stiffly to his feet. "I've been standing on one foot, half smothered by dusty black velvet, for an hour and a half."

The girl gaped at him and he had the grace to look ashamed.

"I've been listening," he said. "What did you give that fellow to — er — 'psychomet'? I couldn't see. Letters?"

She nodded miserably. Mr. Campion coughed.

"I don't want to seem unduly inquisitive," he said, "but I'm out to help in any way I can. Who were they from?"

Jennifer Pendleton-Blake turned back to the drawer and turned over its contents. The nape of her neck was pink and her shoulders were quivering.

"I don't know," she said helplessly. "That's just it, *I don't know!*"

Mr. Campion knelt down on the floor beside her and looked into the drawer, which contained as fine a collection of sentimental relics as ever he had set eyes upon. There were several little bundles of letters tied up with different coloured ribbons, a choice selection of dead flowers, a university scarf or two, and quite a quantity of chocolate box lids.

He glanced at the seventeen-year-old at his side and surprised her looking half her age. Inspiration came to him.

"Jennifer," he said sternly, "these are not yours."

She turned to him and her lips trembled.

"No," she whispered.

"Whose are they? Roberta's?"

"Yes."

Mr. Campion lent her the handkerchief out of his breast pocket.

"Let's discuss this," he said cheerfully. "I think I'm getting the hang of it. I'll tell you the story as I see it and you correct me when I go off the rails."

Miss Pendleton-Blake rewarded him with a pathetic acquiescing sniff.

"I don't know who you are," she said, "but you seem all right. Anyway, things can't be worse."

Mr. Campion ignored the somewhat dubious compliment.

"When a young woman feels she's grown up, but has only just arrived at that eminence, she often finds herself at a temporary disadvantage," he began with a certain amount of oracular tact. "I mean, for instance, when she is faced with the exacting problem of finding something really interesting to take to a psychometrist I can sympathize with her difficulty."

The young lady looked at him gratefully.

"That was just it," she said. "I hadn't anything belonging to anyone whom I really wanted to know something about and I did feel a bit out of it, young and flat, you know. I'm not even presented yet. So I suddenly thought of Roberta's drawer up here, where I knew she kept all Tommy's letters. I thought I'd just get them, hear the low-down on Tommy and put them back. I didn't dream the fortune-teller would be such a beast."

"He wouldn't give them back to you?"

"Why, no. It was most peculiar." Jennifer's face was the complete picture of youthful reproach. "I put the packet in an envelope and sealed it, as he told me to. He stuck the envelope under the crystal. He told me a lot of silly stuff that obviously wasn't true and then he gave me what I naturally thought was the envelope back. I didn't examine it there, but when I got up here again I found it was only this."

She opened her green handkerchief and produced a wad of neatly folded newsprint.

Mr. Campion regarded the package gravely and with distaste.

"You went back to him, naturally?" he said. "I heard the whole of that interview. You had to wait your turn to see him, of course. It must have been a trying experience."

"It was filthy," said Jennifer violently. "Did you hear him laugh at me and say I'd made a mistake? Then he congratulated me on my sister's engagement and said he'd be seeing me again. He meant me to realize that he knew all about everything, you see. It wasn't until just now, though, that I realized the frightful thing. Those letters weren't Tommy's. They must have been Bobby Dacre's, or one of her other silly undergrads. They're always writing stupid letters to her because she's so frightfully pretty. Cagliostro must have looked at the letters I gave him and saw that they were written to her and not signed by Tommy, who, as everybody knows, is her fiancé. Now he'll keep them and make a row. What shall I do?"

Mr. Campion grinned.

"Hold on a minute," he said. "He can't do much, you know, not in this case, although I *can* conceive a situation in which his little conjuring trick might prove decidedly awkward. Who cares who has been writing to Roberta? Not Tommy."

"Oh, no, not Tommy." Jennifer was contemptuous. "But it might be frightfully awkward if he went to Tommy's perfectly revolting uncle. He's a horror. He's just straining at the leash to make an objection to the engagement. Everybody knows that. If this filthy fortune-teller so much as approached him he'd make it an excuse. Besides, you know how frightfully prurient everybody over forty is."

"Are they?" said Mr. Campion, feeling the dangerous age was uncomfortably close.

"Oh, yes!" said Miss Pendleton-Blake.

"What shall I do?" she added after a pause. "Try and buy them back before he goes?"

Mr. Campion regarded her with affection.

"You're what my more vulgar friends would call a proper little mug, aren't you?" he said. "Our pal Cagliostro isn't so dumb. He certainly knows how to pick his clients. Now look here, we will do that. We'll do just what you say. We'll try to buy them back. But we'll need witnesses and, as we don't want publicity, we'll want the right witnesses. Oates will have to leave his bed, and it serves him right. Look here, can we be certain of keeping Cagliostro here another hour?"

Jennifer glanced up at the sunburst clock over the mantelshelf.

"Oh, no," she said. "He's due to leave in ten minutes or so now. Perhaps he'll just take the money quietly and give them back."

"In view of a rather horrid little tale I heard the other day I think he'll take the money and *not* give them back," he said. "And if we don't have the right kind of witness there may be a row, which is not what we want at all."

The girl in the green frock shivered.

"Who's going to keep him here, then?" she said. "You don't know these entertainers. They'll never stay a second after their time is up. Is it so terribly important?"

"Terribly," said Mr. Campion.

"Then we're sunk." There was a wail in the young voice. "Nothing on heaven or earth can detain people like that."

A beautiful idea came to Mr. Campion.

"I know someone who could detain anything," he murmured, and went off in search of Lady Laradine.

At four o'clock in the morning Superintendent Oates sat in a small room on the first floor of Mrs. Pendleton-Blake's house and regarded Mr. Campion with a certain thoughtfulness. He was contented to know that in a cab speeding through the quiet streets Cagliostro the Second sat sullen and resigned between two unsympathetic and sleepy police officers.

Opposite the superintendent stood Mr. Campion, looking very wide-awake and wearing an almost intelligent expression. Jennifer Pendleton-Blake was clinging to his arm, her eyes dancing.

"It *might* be him," said the superintendent grudgingly and ungrammatically. "His papers do show that he only came over from the States at the beginning of the month. Anyway, it was the fairest cop I ever saw. He played straight into our hands. Never having met this little lady before, he felt he was quite safe from any trap, I suppose. He was more astounded than afraid when we walked in on him. Well, we'll keep the publicity right down; it's easy in this sort of case. You played your part very cleverly, Miss."

Jennifer smiled.

"He was exhausted when I got to him," she said frankly. "Edith Laradine had been with him for a whole hour, you know. She did the really clever thing by keeping him here. She's wonderful."

The superintendent cocked an eye towards the door.

Through the heavy panels and down two flights of stairs the steady murmur of Lady Laradine's remarkable voice reached them faintly as she recounted her experience to her friend and hostess. Oates listened for a

moment and shook his head like an airedale.

"Yes," he said heavily. "Yes, indeed. She is. Wonderful is the word."

Jennifer laughed.

"You were pretty clever, weren't you, bless you," she said, glancing up at Mr. Campion.

"Him?" said the superintendent. "*Him?*"

Mr. Campion remained affable and blandly uninformative until, good nights having been said, they taxied back to Campion's flat together for a nightcap. Then the superintendent's dignity gave out sufficiently to permit him to ask a direct question.

"Simple, my dear chap," he said. "Your police experts *are* wonderful."

Oates made an unofficial remark.

"You come off it," he said after a bit. "You know and I know that the chances are a hundred to one on this Cagliostro fellow being the same man I was telling you about last week. We shan't be able to prove it, I don't suppose, but it's clear enough. How did you do it? Luck again?"

"Luck?" protested Mr. Campion in pained astonishment. "My good policeman, when you actually meet brilliant detective work don't let its unfamiliarity blind you to its merit. Luck indeed! It was pure deduction and intelligent investigation, backed up by old-fashioned listening at doors."

"Yes, I know all that." Oates was irritated in spite of his satisfaction. "Once you decided to watch your man, the thing was child's play. You spotted his game at once. It was a clever one, mind you. He must have made a point of keeping all letters handed in to him and taking a look at them, giving back the uninteresting ones as soon as his client spotted his 'mistake,' as he called it. He had a dozen of those little fake packets ready, all shapes and sizes. You spotted that trick all right because you actually saw, or rather heard, him doing it, but what on earth made you suddenly decide to watch a man who was simply entertaining at some wretched party at which you happened to be?"

"I didn't happen to be at the party," objected Mr. Campion with feeling. "I went there deliberately and at tremendous personal sacrifice in order to find him. I was looking for him."

"Why?"

"Because you told me to, my dear chap." Mr. Campion leaned back in the taxicab and spoke with weary patience. "Cagliostro is the only Society fortune-teller to visit these shores regularly every October. As soon as you

told me that story the other day it was obvious that he was the man you wanted, providing your tale had any foundation in fact. I wanted to find out if it had, so I went and had a look at Cagliostro at work. Is that clear?"

"Yes," said Oates hastily. "Yes, old man. Don't get excited. Yes, I see that. But why a fortune-teller? I didn't mention a fortune-teller. The idea never entered my head."

Mr. Campion seemed to be at a loss, but suddenly he smiled.

"Oh, *that*," he said. "Of course. I forgot. You didn't see the significance of the maid's story, did you? She insisted that her mistress had definitely said 'It's no use. It's written in ink. He saw it in ink.' Now is it clear?"

The superintendent swore.

"You make me tired," he said. "I've never heard such nonsense in my life. That statement was plain idiotic."

Campion nodded. "I know," he said. "It was. But the maid wasn't idiotic. The maid was a sensible girl, a good witness; you said so yourself. That's why it occurred to me that she must have made a simple, ordinary little mistake, the kind of mistake a sensible person might make. Don't you see, Oates, what her mistress really said was 'He saw it in *the* ink. It is written in *the* ink.' "

Oates was silent. "Even so I don't see — " he began.

Mr. Campion chuckled in the darkness.

"You don't patronize fortune-tellers. If you did you'd know that, while some of them look at cards or peer into crystals, others read secrets mirrored in a pool of black ink. When you told me that story I thought of fortune-tellers, and when I looked into Cagliostro's tent this evening the first thing I saw was a *black* crystal. Then I knew I was on the right tack. The unpleasant little trick he tried to play on that adorable guffin Jennifer put him slap into my hands. There you are, sir, it's in the bag. When do I get my illuminated address?"

"Eh?" said Oates, and after a second or so of consideration began to laugh. "I'll hand it to you," he said. "You get all the luck, but you have a sort of flair, I'll admit. You'll have to excuse the five thousand words."

Mr. Campion handed him his cigarette case.

"Not at all," he said firmly. "I want my reward. Either the address or you take Lady Laradine round the Black Museum for me.

Oates accepted the cigarette.

"I'll do the homework," he said resignedly. "After all, life's short."

Frederick Nebel is one of the living masters of the hard-boiled-detective branch of mystery literature. His "Too Young to Die" concerns that doughty old warrior against crime, Cap Steve MacBride, and his doughty staff, and Kennedy, MacBride's brilliant but sometimes unsteady friend of the local press . . . characters intimately known to many thousands. We are pleased to welcome MacBride, et al., to "Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine." If you know them already, you will greet them as old friends. If you do not, the pleasure is predictably yours.

TOO YOUNG TO DIE

by FREDERICK NEBEL

THE house dick, Lackman, came out of 909, closed the door quickly but with a reverent quietness, and then stood for an instant getting out a breath that must have gagged him for several moments. Buttoning his coat, he headed for the elevators.

He was a medium-sized man, almost uniformly gray — hair, skin, clothes — and he would have gone unnoticed in a crowd, even in a small crowd. He was neat but not neater than the average man, and hurrying now, he kept hiking his elbows up behind him while his forearms moved backward and forward like the side rods on a locomotive.

The corridor turned sharp right, and a little beyond, Lackman came to the elevator bank, caught an empty downbound car. The operator looked anxiously at him, seemed several times on the point of asking a question but in the end did not. The bronze door oozed open and Lackman strode into the suave tranquillity of the lobby. A couple of clerks at the desk craned their necks, followed him with quizzical stares.

He pushed open the heavy swing door at the main entrance and went out to stand beneath the glass marquee. The entrance was on a private half-moon-shaped driveway, and between the driveway and the public boulevard was a billowing mass of shrubbery, white-cloaked now with snow. The snow, very dry, fell in large, leisurely flakes, landing silently but sighing faintly as it came down out of the dark.

The huge doorman cleared his throat and began: "You look like you seen a ghost, you look like."

Lackman said with a kind of anguished bitterness: "I wish to hell it was a ghost instead of —"

He stopped short as he saw a long curtained touring car whip into the driveway. It took the turn of the driveway swiftly, leaning a bit, and then brakes, sharply applied to wheels with skid-chains, brought the car to a definite, violent stop. Behind, a flivver coupé, squealing, whanged its front bumper into the rear bumper of the touring car. A loud oath was heard within the coupé and then Baumlein, the medical office man, hopped out as Kennedy drifted languidly from the touring car.

Baumlein cried: "You nuts, you nuts, you! What you doing, trying out new brakes or something?"

"Hey, Finnegan," Kennedy called to the touring car's chauffeur, "you trying out new brakes?"

"Yowssuh!"

"Finnegan says," Kennedy told Baumlein, "yowssuh."

"Look at my bumper!" Baumlein yelled. "Look at it!"

"You look at it. What's the sense of both of us looking at it? Consider —"

MacBride stepped down from the touring car and elbowed Kennedy aside. Moriarity and Cohen followed and Moriarity said: "You know, if this keeps up there'll be good sleigh-riding. I ain't been sleigh-riding since I was so" — he held out his hand, palm down — "high."

"Look at my bumper!" Baumlein cried.

MacBride, the collar of his overcoat turned up, went straight towards Lackman while Kennedy and Moriarity and Cohen went into a huddle over the bumper.

"Gawd! MacBride," Lackman said in a thick, hushed voice, "it kind of got me for a minute —" He gulped. "Just lost my kid last —"

MacBride took his arm. "Come on."

They were half-way across the lobby before MacBride realized that his entourage was not with him. He stopped, turned, curled his lip. "Wait a minute," he said. He headed for the entrance with one eye dangerously asquint. He found his entourage grouped around the broken bumper in animated conversation.

"Muggs," he said, dragging out the word wearily.

They turned.

MacBride said: "I suppose I ought to remind you that we're here on a murder case. Maybe you haven't been told."

Baumlein grabbed his bag out of the coupé and with a hurt, resentful look at MacBride went bobbing into the lobby. MacBride herded the others

in. They entered the elevator and on the ride up there was a self-conscious silence, while MacBride, still a little angry, eyed each man in turn with a dark, exasperated stare. Lackman led them to 909, his elbows working.

The cop on the beat was standing in the apartment foyer. He touched his nightstick to the visor of his cap. A short stocky woman, oldish, with iron gray hair puffed at the ears, sat on a high-backed chair and stared at the foyer wall with glazed, transfixed eyes.

Lackman whispered to MacBride: "The mother."

MacBride looked down at her, his eyes clouding.

Baumlein, impatient, said: "Well, where is it, where is it?" in a querulous voice, and the cop on the beat pointed lazily with his nightstick. Baumlein bustled irritably into the living-room.

The skipper swung his stare away from the woman sitting on the chair. His long, bony face had a hard cast, but in his eyes there was a transitory brooding look. Saying nothing, he went on into the living-room and saw Baumlein at the farther end, kneeling beside a body. MacBride jammed his arms akimbo, stood where he was, gnawing on a corner of his lip; and after a moment Kennedy dawdled up beside him and let a mildly appreciative eye wander haphazardly about the sumptuous room.

"Done," he said absently, "in excellent taste."

MacBride bent a dark, disapproving eye on him.

"The room, I mean," Kennedy explained. He made a delicate, undulating movement with the fingers of one hand. "I like the chaste motif. They're going in strong for pastels these days. Have you noticed?"

The skipper growled out of the side of his mouth: "Lay off, lay off."

Kennedy meditated for a moment, then proceeded: "The chaste motif goes very well with the personality of our late" — he sprayed fingers towards the body — "Lily Carewe. Poor, dear Lily Carewe —"

"Lay off, lay off," the skipper muttered way under his breath.

Moriarity came in snapping gum with his teeth and Cohen took a seat on a smart divan, helped himself to a cork-tipped cigarette and lit up.

Baumlein snapped shut his black bag, rose and came back across the room. "Strangled, of course," he said. "About two hours ago."

"Anything peculiar about it?" MacBride asked.

"There's a mild abrasion on her chest, as though the guy that did it got her down and knelt on her chest while he let her have the old gag act."

"That's all, huh?"

Moriarity went over to the body and then came back saying: "Hell, she must have been beautiful."

"She was."

They all turned and looked at Lackman. His face was unusually gray, drained of all color, and there was a choked look in his eyes, a kind of weary anguish about his mouth.

Lily Carewe's long blonde hair lay in waves on the carpet. Her peignoir was of a fragile blue color, her legs were long and beautiful, slender.

"She certainly was beautiful," Kennedy droned. "She knocked down two grand a week on the radio, singing lullabies. You've got to be good to do that. She was on the air three times a week and all the kids went nuts about her, and not only the kids. They say she had the kind of a voice that made you feel you wanted to be a kid again. And they say she was as good as her songs, living the simple life with her mother. Well, that's life: here today, gone tomorrow."

Lackman muttered: "She was too damned young to die."

"Nineteen," Kennedy said, plucking a grape from a fruit bowl.

MacBride went across the room, unbuttoning his overcoat. He knelt down, stared bitterly at the dead girl. He had seen a lot, too much, of life and death and mostly death, and since it was mostly death, he was often angered by the seeming futility of his job. He hated to see the young die, and it especially moved him when the young was so beautiful as Lily Carewe. Gray had come into his tough black hair, bits of it, here and there.

"Well," Baumlein called petulantly across the room, "I'm on my way."

MacBride rose, crossed to him and said: "Okey."

"And about that bumper: it's my own car and you guys are going to get me a new bumper."

Kennedy drawled: "Of such small incidents are nicknames born, and henceforth you shall be known as 'Bumper' Baumlein. Good old Bumper Baumlein."

Baumlein colored. "As for you — phooey!" He spun on his heel and went out.

MacBride wandered into the apartment foyer, leaned against the wall and looked down at the blank-eyed woman. She sat with her hands locked in her lap. She looked very plain, almost old-fashioned.

MacBride said: "Mrs. Carewe, . . ."

She did not look up at him. Her eyes seemed unalterably fastened on the blank foyer wall, but presently she said: "Yes?"

"I've got a kid too. I can understand this kind of thing, and I'm sorrier than I can tell you, and if I start asking questions right off the bat — well, it's because that's my business." He looked at his watch. "It's half-past eleven now. When did you find your daughter?"

"About half an hour ago."

"You live here — I mean, in this apartment?"

"In a room adjoining it — the other side of the bathroom."

"There was a struggle — must have been. Did you hear it?"

"No." It seemed impossible to shake her out of her trance. "I heard nothing. I was going to bed — about to — and I came in to see if Lily's headache was better. That's what I found. I — I called the desk and they sent up the house doctor and Mr. Lackman came up too."

Lackman said in his constricted voice: "Mrs. Carewe was walking around in circles. The doctor had to give her something."

MacBride addressed the woman: "Was anybody in your daughter's apartment this evening?"

"I don't know. I went to my room about eight. There may have been, but I don't know."

"She have any men friends?"

"She" — the woman nodded, inhaling — "knew a few men."

Kennedy said from the living-room entry: "There are some pipe ashes in one of the trays, skipper. The ads say, though, always trust a man who smokes a pipe, so that's out. It wasn't a pipe-smoker."

The woman's eyes widened at this levity.

"Don't mind him," MacBride said. "He reads the humor magazines all the time. . . . Lackman, ask the elevator boys if they saw a guy leave this floor at about — well, between nine and ten. I mean, a guy that looked excited or something."

Lackman went out and MacBride took a meditative tour of the living-room. Near the body, he bent down to pick up a small particle that reflected the glow of one of the floor lamps. It looked, in the palm of his hand, like a small filing, a mere sliver. He picked up a blank envelope from the secretary and in it deposited the tiny filing. Lackman reappeared with one of the elevator boys.

"He —" Lackman began.

But MacBride said: "Let him tell it."

"It was about nine-thirty, I guess, but I ain't sure. Anyhow, it was between nine and ten: I'm sure of that. This man kind of slammed into the elevator with his hat on crooked and a wild kind of look in his face. His face looked flushed. He was very excited."

"Describe him."

"About as tall as you, I'd say. Only younger. Oh, I guess he was maybe twenty-one or two. He wore a light tan coat; it looked like a trench coat only it wasn't. He was very fair complected, his cheeks were very red at the time, like I said."

The woman stood up, her lips trembling and her hands folded tightly. She stared at the elevator boy and then she stared at MacBride.

"Know him?" MacBride said.

Her lips were still trembling. "It couldn't have been!" she cried in a thick, clogged voice.

"Who is he?"

"His name is Leonard Barnsdale. But it couldn't —"

MacBride silenced her with a quick movement of his hand. "Where's he live?"

She began shaking her head, but at the same time she said: "At the *Hotel Bradford.*"

MacBride turned. "Mory, Ike — you guys stay here." He grabbed up his hat and strode hard-heeled towards the door. When he reached the elevators, he found Kennedy beside him.

"Listen, Kennedy, I'm tired of having a stooge along. Why don't you try night school or something?"

"Why, when I know everything already?"

They rode down in the elevator, and as they stepped into the lobby one of the managers accosted MacBride and led him to the desk.

"Mr. Skayne," he said, indicating one of the clerks behind the desk, "just came back on duty. He had to leave earlier in the evening because his wife is at the hospital, very ill. He said that just before he left, at about nine-thirty, a man came up to the desk and asked for the number of Miss Carewe's apartment. Of course, Mr. Skayne asked who was calling, and the man smiled and didn't care to give his name. He tried to pass Mr. Skayne a five-dollar bill. Mr. Skayne, of course, refused and the man went away."

MacBride looked at Skayne. "What did he look like?"

"In his forties, I'd say. He was in evening clothes but looked rather hard — not the type of person who would be apt to call casually on Miss Carewe. He was quite tall, very broad, with a dark, smooth face and a hard, slow, kind of husky voice. I'd know him if I saw him again."

MacBride said: "Thanks." He pointed. "Keep memorizing what he looks like. I may need you later."

He pivoted and strode out of the lobby and found Kennedy drowsing in the tonneau of the police touring car.

"Finnegan," MacBride said, "the *Hotel Bradford*."

II

The *Hotel Bradford* was a narrow building of red brick, eight stories tall. It was unpretentious and for men only. It had a reading-room and a gymnasium and catered to students and business men of good reputation, and its rates ran from one-fifty to two-fifty a day, but usually rooms were engaged by the month.

There was no roof garden, no view — the hotel was in the palm of the business district — and no marquee, no doorman. The doorway in front of which the police car stopped was large, plain, slightly recessed. The street — North Water — was deserted at this hour. Half-way up the face of the building, there was a scaffolding suspended by a series of ropes from the roof.

Kennedy lolled out of the touring car and MacBride, in a hurry, shoved him out of the way and went pounding his feet across the sidewalk. He yanked open the door, climbed three inside steps to the small, plain lobby and headed for the desk. His heels made loud, rhythmic sounds and he blew his nose and was shoving his handkerchief into his overcoat pocket by the time he reached the desk.

An oldish man, thin, bald, looked up at him and MacBride said: "I'm MacBride from Police Headquarters. What room's Leonard Barnsdale in?"

"Uh — who?"

"Barnsdale — Barnsdale."

The man blinked, looked right, left, blinked again. "Uh — you wanted to see him?"

MacBride nodded wearily. "Yes."

The man fidgeted with his lip. "Uh — well — well, of course." He made a vague gesture with his hand. "Room seven-two-six. Uh — could I be of any assistance?"

"Yes. Stay here."

MacBride pivoted and crashed into Kennedy. Kennedy held his nose and said "Ouch," quietly.

"Well, you will get underfoot all the time." MacBride swung off towards the single elevator. It was open, its attendant standing alongside. MacBride entered and Kennedy followed, still holding his nose.

The elevator rose leisurely and at the seventh floor MacBride shoved Kennedy out, then went striding off ahead of him. He came to a door painted 726 in plain white lettering, and knocked. There was the sound of a chair being moved, a quiet voice, and in a minute the door opened and a youth's face peered out anxiously.

"Hello," MacBride said.

"Hel-lo."

"You Barnsdale?"

"N-no."

"Where is he?"

The youth moistened his lips. "Who — are you?"

The skipper pulled his badge out of his pocket. The youth took a backward step, reluctantly, and MacBride, putting his hands back into his overcoat pockets, opened the door wide with a neat twist of his shoulder. He saw another youth lying on a single bed with a wet towel draped over his eyes and forehead. Kennedy drifted in and closed the door with a kick of his heel.

The room was very small, very plain, with one narrow window. The bed was of iron, painted white. There was a small bureau, one chair; there was no bath.

MacBride pointed with his chin: "That Barnsdale?"

The youth who had opened the door nodded.

The skipper drew out his battered pipe. He stood back on his heels, unhurried now. Back of him, Kennedy stood holding his nose. The skipper worked roughcut tobacco into the pipe bowl and said:

"And what's your name?"

"John Atwood."

"Live here?"

"Y-yes. Downstairs a bit."

MacBride lit his pipe, said: "What's the matter with him?"

"He's — well, he's asleep now."

"I can see that. . . . Wake him up."

Atwood went to the bed — he had to move but a step — and shook Barnsdale, said in a low voice: "Leonard, Leonard. . . ."

Barnsdale heaved a vast sigh, raised his hands and dragged the wet towel from his face. He blinked. There was a blue welt on his forehead. He sat up abruptly, looking from Atwood to MacBride with suddenly harried eyes.

MacBride carried the solitary chair to the bedside and sat down. "Well, Barnsdale, I'm from the cops. Been in an accident?"

"No. No."

"Walked into a doorway, I suppose."

Barnsdale shook his head. "No."

"Been over to see Lily Carewe tonight?"

Barnsdale grimaced and looked away. There was a subdued fever in his eyes, a torn look about his mouth; his hair was disheveled and his hands shook. He was young, MacBride saw, and not bad to look at. The skipper drew on his pipe, letting the smoke dribble upward from one corner of his mouth.

"You were over there, weren't you?"

Barnsdale, still grimacing, nodded. MacBride took a few more puffs, keeping his narrowed-down eyes fastened on the working agony in Barnsdale's face.

Then MacBride said: "You'd better get dressed, boy."

"Why — why? Oh, I'm tired, tired."

"He's a recluse," Kennedy chimed in. "He wants to be alone."

"Come on, Barnsdale," MacBride said. He stood up, replaced the chair. "Maybe you thought you just smacked her, but as a matter of fact, boy, you killed her."

"*Killed her!*"

Barnsdale pivoted on the bed, his feet hit the floor and he stared up at the skipper with bulging eyes.

"What are you saying?" he cried.

"Come on, get dressed."

Barnsdale jumped up and grabbed MacBride by the lapels. "But what are you saying, what are you saying?"

"I'm saying," MacBride explained, "that Lily Carewe is dead."

Barnsdale backed up, clutching at his throat with one hand. He kept

backing up until the wall stopped him. Atwood started towards him, his face anxious, one arm half-extended. MacBride stopped him.

"Mind your own business," MacBride said.

"But I tell you —"

"I told you to mind your own business. . . . Barnsdale, get your pants on."

"Lily . . . Lily . . . Lily," Barnsdale moaned, and wagged his head loosely, hopelessly, from side to side. "It's not so. It isn't true. Lily can't be dead."

MacBride took his pipe from his mouth and sighted along the stem at Barnsdale. "Lily Carewe is dead. It was a tussle and she was strangled and in the tussle you collected that welt on your head —"

"No, no! I didn't. I got this welt —" He stopped short, shook his head violently. "I tell you I didn't! Please believe me! I — I'd be the last person —"

"Get dressed. Cut out this act. You're going over to Headquarters. That's final," MacBride snapped. "Any more talk out of you, I'll take you the way you are."

Barnsdale looked stupefied. In a stupor, he began dressing. Atwood, watching him, kept swallowing frequently, and color began to creep over his face and presently he spun on MacBride and said:

"He didn't! I'll tell you how he got the bump on the head!" He leveled an arm at the window. "See that window? Well, he jumped out of it. He tried to commit suicide. He intended smashing himself on the street below but a story and a half down there's a scaffolding and he landed on it. I live one floor below. I heard the sound and looked out and there he was on the scaffolding, just below my window. I jumped down.

"He was stunned and I held on to him, and just then another fellow, who'd heard the sound also, looked out and I told him to help me. He went in my room and knotted two sheets together and hung them out. I tied one end around Leonard and we hauled him into my room. We had to borrow some smelling salts from the desk clerk, and he was curious and he came up, too. We all decided to keep it quiet. We brought Leonard back to his room and I stayed with him. We can prove that by the desk clerk."

Barnsdale had stopped dressing. He was hanging his head, his body limp.

"Of course," said Kennedy, "what you say is likely true. You can prove that Barnsdale tried to commit suicide. You can't prove that he didn't kill

Lily Carewe. Naturally, sometimes, when a guy hauls off and kills a jane and then thinks it over, he figures the quickest way out for him is to do the Dutch. Say you did prove how he got the bump on the head. Okey. But how the hell can you prove he didn't choke the girl to death?"

Atwood's mouth fell open.

MacBride moved, tapped Barnsdale's shoulder. "Come on, boy; the pants on."

III

It stopped snowing during the night. It was a cold, clear morning when MacBride returned to work. The cold nipped at his cheeks, his nose, reddened them, and he came striding into his office with snow still clinging to his rubbers. He hung up hat and overcoat, sat down, took off his rubbers and opened both windows a few inches from the top. He sat down at his desk, yelled: "Rheingold on deck!" into the annunciator, and began thumbing rapidly through a batch of bulletins and reports.

Detective-Sergeant Rheingold came lazy-footed into the office and MacBride said:

"What did you get out of Barnsdale?"

"Ever try to get water out of a stone?" He spread his palms, shook his head. "Nothing doing."

"What do you think?"

"I think he's either a sap or he don't know a thing."

"Lay a hand on him?"

"Nah. But everything else we put him through. You can't seem to raise the guy out of the dumps he's in. It sorta bores me after a while."

MacBride said: "Send him up."

Rheingold went out and the skipper rose, took a turn up and down the office, placing his hand on the back of his head and drawing it down his nape. In a little while Rheingold reappeared with Barnsdale and MacBride said to the sergeant:

"You wait outside the door." And to Barnsdale: "You sit down there."

Barnsdale dropped limply to a chair, let his hands hang between his knees. His collar was open and his tie undone. The skipper prowled about the office, slowly, measuring Barnsdale with a keen, unwavering stare. At last he sat on his desk, bracing one foot on the floor, letting the other dangle. He thrust his hands deeply into his trousers pockets.

His low, gruff tone was intended to chide: "Come on, boy; open up. You've got to realize you're in a tough corner, that everything's against you. Come on, come on; give us a line."

Barnsdale mumbled: "I didn't kill Lily."

"See? Same old story, same old tune. The words and music are ancient, boy. Lily's found choked to death. You were there at about the time. You go home and dive out a window." He raised his arms. "Do you blame us for snagging you?"

"I didn't kill Lily."

MacBride folded his arms. "What was the fight about?"

"There was no fight."

"Sure there was."

Barnsdale, staring weakly at the floor, shook his head. "No. Lily — well, Lily told me we were through." He picked the palm of one hand with the forefinger of the other. "Lily said we were through. It was so sudden, out of a blue sky. I — I did get angry a little, I was so surprised. And yet — I don't know, maybe I shouldn't have been. Who am I? A forty-dollar-a-week piano player."

"Where'd you meet her?"

"In a radio broadcasting station."

"When?"

"Six months ago."

"When'd you start going with her?"

"Well, about a month ago."

"Any other man in the case?"

"No, I don't think so."

He withdrew a pipe from his pocket and fidgeted with it. MacBride passed him a pouch of tobacco and Barnsdale stuffed the pipe and the hard-boned skipper struck a match.

"You see," MacBride said, "I'm not going out of my way and trying to hang something on you. But, hell, look at the way the cards read."

Barnsdale took a few drags on his pipe and then forgot it. His whole body sagged hopelessly in the chair. He began talking as if to himself, in a small remote voice: "I can't understand it. I can't believe Lily's dead. It doesn't seem right, it doesn't seem possible." He wagged his head. "I — I can't even believe I'm here being charged with —" He stopped, wagged his head again and covered his face with a hand.

MacBride rocked to and fro on the desk for a long minute, chewing on his lip, keeping his keen, speculative stare bent on Barnsdale. Presently he stood up, went to the door and opened it and said to Rheingold:

"Okey; take him down."

Rheingold raised an inquisitive eyebrow. MacBride shook his head, turned, said to Barnsdale:

"Okey, boy."

The door closed and the skipper walked slowly to his desk, laid his hand on the telephone. After a moment he picked it up and called the hotel where Lily Carewe had met her death. He asked for the manager.

"This is Captain MacBride," he said to the manager. "Is your clerk Skayne there? . . . Well, phone his home and tell him to come over to Headquarters immediately. . . . Understand, I said immediately."

He hung up as Kennedy lolled in. The reporter drifted to the radiator, tapped his wet shoes against it.

"Why the hell don't you wear rubbers?" MacBride frowned.

"Make my feet sweat."

"Humph!"

"And I always said I'd rather freeze to death than sweat to death. . . . And how is our youth Barnsdale this fair morning?"

MacBride scowled at the desk. He rapped the desk lightly with his knuckles. "Shot to hell. You know," he went on, peering down at his knuckles, "I'm beginning to believe the kid is on the up and up."

"Going soft-headed in your old age, huh?"

"Maybe." MacBride sat down. "Maybe, Kennedy. But I've been in this business so long, so long, sweetheart, that I can almost smell the truth. No reason for it, no reason you can lay a mit on. It just — well, you just smell it. I've seen heels come and go, and I've seen guys that've gone cuckoo over a dame and sloughed her. I've seen, I've picked up eighteen-year-old punks that were as old as the hills in other ways; kind of ageless. But a kid like this — a kid like this kind of impresses you with his youth. He hits a jam like this one and he seems, well, like he was just born."

"Stop," cried Kennedy dramatically, "you're going to make me bawl any minute. I'm just going to break down and —"

"Yeah, I know how you are. I've been around you a long time, Kennedy, and I've come to know your front. Anything for the wise-crack. . . . But I'm getting on in years."

"You're telling me?"

"And the older I get, the more I want to give a guy a break. My reputation's made. I don't have to build myself up any more. Looking back, I figure I've hung two-to-five-year raps on guys that didn't deserve 'em. I was younger then, hell-bent to make a record."

Kennedy grinned, opened a telephone book. "We will now both break into a hymn."

MacBride stood up, struck the desk briefly, said in a brief, blunt voice: "That kid's innocent."

"May I print that?"

"Print it now and I'll print your puss."

Skayne, the hotel clerk, went down into the basement of Police Headquarters with the skipper. Here were large metal books bracketed to the walls; these books contained many metal pages and the pages contained many pictures of men who had been booked on criminal charges.

"This is our Rogues' Gallery," MacBride explained, opening the first metal book. "The idea is to find a likeness of the man who asked for Miss Carewe's apartment number. We figure that after he left the desk he may have found her apartment number from someone else. Pick out any picture that even looks just a little like this guy. Take your time. Go down this aisle and up the other. I'll be over by that desk. Call me if you see anything."

The skipper left Skayne and went over to the desk. Mullins was taking fingerprints of a suspect, and in a few minutes Bachman, one of his assistants, appeared in shirt sleeves and said:

"Well, Steve, we went over that apartment. We found Barnsdale's prints, a maid's, the mother's, the dead dame's, a bellhop's — this was on the door — and then we found a thumb print that don't match up."

"Where'd you find it?" MacBride asked.

"On a sterling silver cigarette humidor. The dead dame's is on it and then this other one — a guy's. I've put Bickle on the files, to see if maybe we can spot anything, but I don't think so."

MacBride said: "Good work."

About twenty minutes later Skayne called him and MacBride rapped his heels up the aisle and found Skayne pointing to an old picture.

Skayne said: "I don't know about this. It doesn't look very much like the man; in fact, it looks very little like him. But at the same time, there is a

resemblance. The man on the picture is much younger, and the chance is so wide that I'd hate to swear to it."

McBride made a note of the file number and said: "That's what I want. Keep looking till you've seen 'em all."

He gave the file number to Bachman and in a few minutes Bachman returned with a memorandum.

"It was taken twelve years ago, Steve. It's a picture of Sam Cebra —"

"Sam Cebra!"

"You got it, skipper. He's never been up since, and as a matter of fact, according to this record, he beat that rap. At that time, he came here from Cleveland and was picked up for sticking up a lunchroom on River Road —"

"Hey," Bickle said, coming over, "I just tailed down that thumb print you picked up in the Carewe place. It's Sam Cebra's and we got this print about twelve years ago."

"Why all the hullaballoo about Sam Cebra?" Kennedy asked, drifting down the stairway.

IV

Sam Cebra is one of the institutions of Richmond City, but one not to be whispered in the same breath with, for instance, the Cabot Memorial Library or the Town Hall. Cebra hit Richmond City in his late twenties, a lad on the make, but in a tin-horn way. He figured the city a pushover in those days, and on his first job, much to his amazement, he never got to first base. It was the lunchroom job. He cracked it on his lonesome and was hiking around the corner towards the docks when he ran smack into a then first-grade detective, Steve MacBride.

In those days MacBride hit first and asked questions afterwards, and he opened Cebra's scalp with a blackjack to the later tune of eleven stitches. That blackjack may have put a great deal of sense into Cebra's head, for he was never caught red-handed again. Possibly, too, it was the smart shyster who got hold of him, beat the rap for him, and of course emptied his pockets.

But Cebra rose. Not openly. His shadow grew rather than the man himself, and while from time to time killings occurred up his alley, none occurred on his doorstep. An alley and a doorstep are much different from each other in the legal catch-as-catch-can. So Cebra rose, making his power felt first here, then there, looking always before he leaped and then many times preferring not to leap.

He was known to the cops and to the District Attorney's office as a smart fellow, a generally sane fellow. He was of course a public enemy, one of the most powerful gang barons the city had ever endured. He had wide political influence, but he was not a loud-mouth. They took it for granted that he was a killer, but they could not hang anything on him. The know-it-alls said that probably in the end a woman would be the cause of his downfall. . . .

It was at about noon that MacBride stepped from the police sedan, walked across the sidewalk, which had been cleared of snow, and entered the lobby of the white stone apartment house. To the elevator operator he said:

"Sam Cebra's."

"Who's calling?"

"Never mind ringing him, boy. I'm from the cops." He showed his badge as he walked into the elevator.

"Penthouse A," the boy said.

The elevator rose swiftly, silently. It stopped. The door slid open and MacBride stepped into a private corridor. He pressed a white pearl button beside the door. A small, rocky-looking man in black livery opened the door.

"Hello, Snoozer," MacBride said.

"Strike me, as I live and breathe, if it ain't —"

"You live and breathe, Snoozer," MacBride said, walking in. "Live your way to Sam and breathe to him I'm here."

"Honest, I ain't seen you since —"

"I caught you with your paw sunk in a drunk's pocket back of Union Station."

"Jeeze, I been off that stuff for years. I come up in the world."

"What, fourteen stories?"

"Hah?"

"Let it slide. Where's Sam?"

"Just taking his bath."

"Me after you."

They went down a corridor, then down a short circular staircase whose steps were padded with carpet an inch thick. This brought them to a triangular foyer off which three doors opened. MacBride found Sam Cebra in the blue-and-white tiled bathroom, sunk in a tub of steaming, scented water.

"Hello, Steve."

"Hello, Sam."

"I'll be out in a minute. Run in the living-room. Hey, Cornelius, mix the skipper a drink."

Snoozer said: "What you having, Cap?"

"Nix."

MacBride wandered into the tremendous living-room. At one end was a fireplace, at the other a small, chromium bar with four high stools standing before it. Every bit of floor space was covered by dark green carpet. There were three divans.

In a few moments Cebra entered, yanking tight the belt of a gray silk robe. His feet were encased in straw sandals. and, saying: "Well, of all people," cheerfully, he went to a humidor, plucked a cigarette, lit up. "Yes, of all people. How are you feeling these days, Steve?"

Cebra was tall, a little taller than MacBride and much broader. His face was big but it had a dark satin smoothness and his eyebrows were sleek black, his hair lay back smoothly on his big head, partless. His hands were huge, but well-kept.

MacBride unbuttoned his overcoat and said: "Sam, I haven't seen you in a long time because I haven't had cause to. I mean, I guess there's been plenty of cause but —"

Cebra smiled. "I get you, Steve."

"Now, though . . ." MacBride sat down. "Now, though, Sam, there's something up your alley."

"There've been a hell of a lot of things up my alley."

"This particular alley looks like a sure bet to your doorstep. I'm speaking of Lily Carewe."

Cebra dropped casually on to one of the divans, lounged back comfortably. His unconcerned "Let's have it" was accompanied by a tranquil stream of cigarette smoke.

MacBride leaned his elbows on his knees. "You were in her apartment last night, Sam."

"Was I? Tell me about it. I'd like to know."

"Smooth, aren't you? I like 'em smooth, Sam. They're easier to wrinkle. . . . Well, we picked up a fingerprint of yours in her apartment and fingerprints have a habit of wandering around with the guy that owns 'em."

"They have, skipper. Nonetheless" — he sat up, tapped a yawn —

"you're just a little nuts." He twisted his head. "Cornelius, bring me some black coffee. . . . As I was saying, Steve —"

"I know: I'm nuts. Hang your ears on this bit of wisdom, Sam. You stopped at the hotel desk last night and tried to buy your way up to Lily Carewe's apartment. The clerk turned you down. Who else did you bribe?"

"What do you mean?"

"Who told you her apartment number?"

Cebra brought his eyebrows together. "Listen, what the hell are you trying to hang on me?"

"Murder, Sam."

"Okey, I can take a joke."

"It's no joke."

Cebra stood up, jamming his big hands into the pockets of his robe. "Listen, I have a hell of a time as it is enjoying my breakfast, without having you busting in here with something you heard in your sleep."

MacBride rose slowly, flexed his legs and then placed them wide apart and jacked his hands on his hips. "Sam, you've come up in the world. I met you on your first job in Richmond City and it looks as if I'm seeing you on your last."

"Oh . . . so I knocked off Lily Carewe. Why, will you tell me?"

"I don't know why. But you were clowning around her hotel and we picked up your print in her apartment."

Cebra's eyes darkened, his mouth hardened. "I tell you I never saw her apartment."

"Don't be a dope, Sam. Why did you try to chisel at the hotel desk? Why did you want to see her?"

"I'll not tell that."

"You admit you stopped at the desk, then?"

"Yeah."

"Why?"

Cebra's eyes narrowed down. He shook his head slowly. "I guess it was just an idea I had."

"Now I've got an idea, Sam. Get dressed. Come down to Headquarters. You haven't been there in a long time. We've made a lot of alterations."

Snoozer came in with a cup of black coffee and Cebra said: "Thanks, Cornelius." And to MacBride: "I never did like Headquarters and I don't think the alterations'll interest me. I wasn't in that girl's apartment and

that stands."

"Your fingerprints stand, too, Sam."

"I smell a double-cross somewhere."

"Finish the coffee and we'll go."

Cebra took a few quick gulps, set down the cup. There was a sting in his tone: "For a one-track mind, Steve, you take the cake. Damned if you don't."

The skipper was sitting in his office when Lewiston, a laboratory man, came in and deposited the tiny sliver of gold which MacBride had picked up in Lily Carewe's apartment.

Lewiston said: "It looks, near as I can figure out, like it came from a clasp pin. It's so damned small though, it's hard to tell, but I'd say it's part of some design. It's very fragile. Rings are usually stouter, so I don't think it came from a ring."

"Okey, thanks," MacBride said, and Lewiston went out.

Sam Cebra turned from the window, sighed. He was obviously bored, though he was also a little worried. He was a fine figure of a man, dressed now in decorous blue.

In a few minutes Rheingold brought in Barnsdale and MacBride said: "Barnsdale, did you ever see this man before?"

Cebra and Barnsdale looked at each other, and after a moment Barnsdale shook his head and mumbled: "No." He looked haggard and drawn, listless.

MacBride went on: "Did Lily Carewe ever express fear of someone? Did she ever seem scared?"

"Only — well, when she told me we were through, she seemed a little queer. I don't know whether it was fright or what it was. I guess I didn't think much about it at the time."

"Who's he?" Cebra asked.

"Another suspect," MacBride said. "Okey, Rheingold; take Barnsdale away."

When they had gone out, Cebra bent a curious eye on the skipper. "How does the kid figure in it?"

"The kid was in love with Lily Carewe. I thought I picked up a red-hot when I picked him up, but I began changing my mind. I changed it completely when things worked out in your direction, Sam," the skipper said, standing up, "I ought to have a motive nailed to you, but I haven't. Are

you going to do a little talking or am I going to book you right off the bat?"

"I guess maybe you'll have to book me."

"Sam," MacBride went on roughly, "you're dumb to take this thing easy. Fingerprints don't walk into a place without fingers. We've got your print. We got it in Lily Carewe's apartment — it was plain as day there on a silver cigarette humidor."

Cebra's eyes steadied; they narrowed down and a shrewd look, almost a look of cunning, captured them. After a moment he said:

"I sent that humidor to Lily Carewe."

"Be your age —"

"I am. I sent it to her yesterday morning."

"Sam, quit stalling."

"I'm on the up and up."

"Why the hell would you send her a humidor?"

Cebra smiled slowly. "I kind of liked her singing."

"Did you send your card with it?"

"No. I just wrote out on a white card, 'From a fan.' "

"Then why did you go to the hotel desk last night?"

Cebra chided MacBride with his slow smile. "I don't know. It was just an idea, just a kind of impulse."

MacBride snapped: "Sam, you're a damned liar. You can't even prove you sent that humidor."

"Can't I? Put on your duds and come with me."

They went to a jewelry shop in Spruce Street, a smart, very fashionable shop, and MacBride saw instantly that Cebra was recognized. A tall man in a cut-away bowed and said:

"How do you do, Mr. Cebra?"

Cebra idly slapped his gloves in his palm and said: "What kind of purchase did I make yesterday morning?"

"You mean the silver humidor?"

Cebra smiled sidewise at MacBride and continued: "I had it sent to a young lady from here, didn't I?"

"Of course, Mr. Cebra. I recall you asked for a chamois and brushed the humidor, inserted a card and placed the humidor in our special blue velvet gift box, which we wrapped and sent to the address indicated."

Cebra again smiled mockingly at MacBride.

MacBride said: "Let's go."

They stopped on the sidewalk outside.

Cebra said lazily: "I get crazy ideas sometimes, Steve. That was one of them. It ought to make it plain that just because you find a guy's fingerprints in a place is not evidence complete that the guy was there. . . . I've got a date now. Or do you want to book me?"

MacBride was peering keenly into Cebra's face. "One of us is crazy, Sam." He tightened his lips, trying to keep down the color of chagrin that was working up his neck. "I can dish it and I can take it, though. Keep your date. But watch your alley, Sam."

Cebra chuckled and mockery again touched his voice when he said: "Why should I, when you're watching it?"

"Little razzberry, huh?"

Cebra said: "Well, toodle-oo, Steve." He strode leisurely off, hailed a taxi and climbed in. As the taxi moved past the skipper, Cebra grinned sardonically at him, raised his hands, clasped them and gave a prize-ring shake.

MacBride's face got very red.

V

Barnsdale was sobbing. There was a trickle of blood on his cheek, a cut on his lip. He was breathing quickly, thickly, the sobs intermingled with the hoarse, grating breath. A couple of cops held him in vise-like grips. They had torn one of his coatsleeves, ripped his tie. His eyes, harried and terrified, kept jerking from side to side.

MacBride walked in on the group, stopped, rasped: "Who the hell's been beating up this kid?"

Moriarity was sitting on a tipped-back chair. "No one beat him up, skipper. Downstairs, Jake got careless with the cell and left it open for a minute, and what does this kid do but try to lam. He makes it upstairs and is heading for the garage when he runs into Grosskopf. Grosskopf tries to stop him, but he's slow, and the kid makes the garage as Wayne and Simmonds" — he indicated the cops who held Barnsdale — "come up the ramp. They nail him and he fights like hell, so they have to sock him a couple of times."

Kennedy drawled: "It was like this. Barnsdale didn't like the confinement. He started out on a little road work and Wayne and Simmonds mistook his purpose — "

"You," chopped off MacBride darkly, "for once keep your oar out of this." The skipper looked suddenly malignant; with a quick stride he reached Barnsdale, took a fistful of Barnsdale's shirt and shook him violently. "What the hell do you mean by pulling an act like that? . . . You guys let him go."

Wayne and Simmonds stepped back and MacBride shook Barnsdale again, backed him across the room and flung him into a chair. "What I get for being decent to you, huh? I ought to get my pants kicked off! . . . Listen to me, boy. I kind of went soft on you. I tried to treat you right, didn't I? What the hell was the idea?"

Barnsdale stared stupidly at the floor. MacBride hit him with the flat of his hand, snarled:

"Snap out of it!"

Barnsdale cringed in the chair. Above him MacBride towered, his face dull with rage and his fists knotted and pressed hard against his thighs. There was a muggy, dangerous look in his eyes, a savage twist to his mouth. He reached down, grabbed hold of Barnsdale's hair and snapped back his head.

"Answer me? What was the idea?"

"I — I don't know."

"Well, well, well," chuckled Kennedy.

"Shut up!" MacBride flung over his shoulder. And then to Barnsdale, furiously: "Answer me!"

Barnsdale croaked: "I don't know. I — I just saw the door open. For a minute — for a minute I guess I went mad. I was afraid. I walked out and then I ran and then I couldn't stop. I — I just ran on and on — "

"And what were you afraid of?"

Barnsdale was panting, wagging his head. "Everything."

"The murder of Lily Carewe, for instance?"

The boy screamed suddenly: "I didn't murder her! You're trying to make me say I murdered her! But I didn't! . . . I ran because — because, I don't know, everything seemed so hopeless for me, so terribly hopeless. I — I wasn't in my right mind. I'm not now. But you can't, you can't," he cried desperately, "make me say I killed Lily!"

MacBride said in a deadly voice: "You killed Lily Carewe. You strangled her. She turned you down and you went mad, just as you say you went mad when you ran out, and you jumped on her and choked the life out of her!"

Barnsdale heaved up, his eyes bulging. "No. No!" He struggled, he fought MacBride with a wild, unreasonable desperation. Moriarity started to jump him. MacBride said: "Stay back!" And he swung round and round the room with Barnsdale until at last Barnsdale collapsed, sagged to the floor.

MacBride stepped back and said: "Take him out. Lock him up and see he stays locked."

Wayne and Simmonds took Barnsdale out and the skipper withdrew a handkerchief, mopped his face, the back of his neck and up beneath his chin.

Kennedy sighed. "And so our dear old skipper has another illusion broken. He goes ga-ga over a nice young boy and the nice young boy repays him by trying to lam. Tsk, tsk; well, well; so, so. Blessed is the earth, for it shall inherit the meek."

"Razz me, Kennedy. If it makes you feel better, razz me."

"The trouble is, old tomato, that you're letting up. You got too meek. Just because this kid has a nice face and a sad story, you forget all you ever learned. He came to you as a suspect on a gold plate, well seasoned, and just because you got sentimental you go waltzing around town trying to drag in folks like Sam Cebra. You're losing the old grip, you're losing the old grip."

MacBride made a fist and looked down at it. "Am I?" he muttered. He remained silent for a long moment, looking at his fist. Then he opened it. The palm was damp with sweat. He swiveled and strode out of the office, went down to the garage and climbed into his sedan.

"Drive around, Finnegan," he said.

"Where?"

"Just around."

The skipper sat in the back of the sedan and Finnegan drove it out of the garage. Riding on, MacBride tried to consider himself. Was he going soft? A few more breaks like this last one and he'd wind up in some outlying precinct. He had come out bluntly and said that he did not believe Barnsdale was guilty, and then Barnsdale had tried to break jail. Going off on a tangent, he had landed on Sam Cebra with a feeling that here was the man. He had been dead certain about Sam Cebra. And Sam was an old offender, worth the catch. But how easily and how smoothly had Sam Cebra turned the tables on MacBride! Up Sam's alley again, but not on his doorstep. An old joke!

He leaned forward and told Finnegan to drive to the hotel where Lily Carewe had been murdered. And leaning back again, he remembered Lily's young loveliness. Too young, too young to die. Like Barnsdale. He also was too young.

When MacBride walked into the hotel lobby he ran into Lackman, the house dick, and Lackman was perturbed.

"Listen, Captain," he said. "I was just about to phone you. It's about Lily Carewe's mother."

"What about her? I was just going up to see her."

"Well, look now. The maid was up in Mrs. Carewe's room, cleaning, and the old lady said she was going around the corner to a drug-store and would be back in ten minutes. She told the maid to leave the door and windows open, to air the room good. Well, the maid did, and about half an hour later she was going down the hall and she saw the door still open. It kind of puzzled her, because the old lady hadn't come back.

"But she didn't say anything and went on about her business; only when she passed the door an hour later, well, it was still open and the old lady wasn't in yet. Then she told the housekeeper and the housekeeper told me. That was about fifteen minutes ago. I hunted all over the hotel, but nobody saw her come in. I went down to the drug-store, and they said she hadn't been in today. So I was just about to give you a ring. It looks damned funny."

MacBride squinted into space, said after a moment: "It does, Lackman, it does. If she turns up, ring Headquarters. If I'm not there, leave the message."

He returned to the sedan, placed his foot on the running-board and crammed tobacco into his pipe.

"What's up?" Finnegan said.

"Lily Carewe's mother walked out of the hotel about two hours ago and kind of vanished. Got a match?"

"Yeah."

The skipper lit up, staring thoughtfully over the bowl of his pipe. He tossed the match away, said: "Drive to Sam Cebra's, Finnegan," and clumbed in.

"Cebra's?"

MacBride said in a hard, absent-minded drawl: "Yeah."

He got out of the elevator, took two slow steps and jabbed his forefinger against the pearl bell-button alongside the door. He plunged his hands into his overcoat pockets, tilted his pipe upward in one corner of his mouth and rocked gently to and fro on his heels. After a full minute, the door opened and Sam Cebra said:

"Twice the same day."

"Twice the same day, Sam," said MacBride laconically. He heard swift running feet somewhere — on the spiral staircase, he thought. The sound vanished soon.

"Come in," Cebra said.

"Intended to."

The skipper strolled in and Sam Cebra closed the door, gestured with an open palm. "Before me, Steve."

MacBride nodded and they moved on, walked down to the living-room. Snoozer was standing behind the bar, reading a newspaper.

The skipper called out: "You always sprint down stairways, Snoozer?"

"Cornelius," Cebra said, "maybe the Captain'll have a drink now."

"Can that," MacBride said. "I didn't come here to drink."

Cebra chuckled. "Well, I can see things have gone wrong again, Steve. What brings you up here this time?"

"Just a hunch this time, Sam." MacBride opened his overcoat. "I thought I'd like to look your place over. They say it's a swell layout. I'd like to see it."

Cebra, lighting a cigarette, lifted his eyes to MacBride's face, lowered them. "Don't try to be funny, skipper. What's on your mind?"

"Any objection to me seeing the dump?"

"Don't horse around. What do you want?"

MacBride put his tongue in his cheek. "Just see the place — the rooms, the furnishings. You know, see the place."

Cebra began to look very grave. "After a while I get tired of horseplay, Steve. We've got on well for years but if you're going to begin to get nasty, that's okey by me, too. I was just going out. Come up some time when I'm not busy. It's a big place and it takes time to do it justice."

"I'd like to see it now."

"Some other time."

"What's the idea, Sam?"

"I just hate being made a goat."

MacBride blew his nose. "Okey. You go on where you're going. I'll wander around myself."

Cebra grabbed his arm, spoke very close to MacBride's face: "You heard me, Steve."

"Take it off."

"You heard me."

"Take it off, Sam."

Cebra removed his hand and MacBride stepped quickly backward, tripped over an ottoman and fell down. Snoozer hit the bar with the flat of his hand, burst into laughter.

"Cornelius!" barked Cebra, disapproving.

Snoozer's face froze.

MacBride got up, a little flustered, and with a humid look in his eyes. He turned on his heel and made for the spiral staircase.

"Where you going?" Sam Cebra called.

"Look your place over."

Cebra broke into a run and caught MacBride halfway up the stairway. "You can't pull that stuff here, Steve."

MacBride snarled down into his face: "Can't I? What the hell am I doing now? . . . Leggo, Sam!" He broke from Cebra's grip and reached the top. But Cebra was at his heels and caught hold of him again.

"Steve," Cebra said in a grating voice, "you're not going to act the cop in my place. Get out or I'll throw you out."

"Listen," Snoozer said anxiously, "kind of stop and reason it out kind of like."

"Cornelius," Cebra said, "you stay out of this. . . . Steve," he went on grimly to MacBride, "if you don't get out of here —"

MacBride spun Cebra against the wall. Anger flared in Cebra's eyes and he rebounded and hit MacBride hard on the side of the jaw. The skipper careened, lost his footing and went down the staircase; but halfway down he caught himself, rose and came back up the steps with a vicious glint in his eyes.

Cebra panted: "For cripes' sake, Steve!"

MacBride, about to punch Cebra, stopped short at sight of Lily Carewe's mother coming out of one of the rooms beyond. At the same time there was a small sound from Snoozer, who started swiftly towards the woman. His hand was outstretched, as if to placate. Cebra was in MacBride's way, and

the skipper could not see what actually happened; but in an instant he saw Snoozer groveling on the floor.

MacBride grunted: "So you did kidnap her, Sam!"

The woman came on the run and MacBride held out his hand. The next instant he found himself on the floor. He caught a glimpse of the woman going down the staircase. Cebra was bounding after her. MacBride jumped up and followed. In the huge living room he saw Cebra dive at the woman, saw her shift, brace herself and throw Cebra off sidewise. Then she darted for the small door behind the bar. It was locked. She spun and gripped the bar, looked down, her lips tight. She made a grab at something back of the bar.

"Look out!" Cebra cried.

MacBride said: "Mrs. Carew —"

She was leveling a gun across the bar. MacBride now found that his left arm, the one with which he had tried to stop her, was quite numb.

He said: "Put down that gun. In the name of the law —"

"Get back," she said. "I'm going out."

Suddenly she shifted, fired. Snoozer fell from the lowest step into the living room.

MacBride yelled: "Drop it, woman!" and started towards her.

She fired, missed MacBride. He saw there was nothing else to do. His own gun leaped in his hand, roared. The bullet turned the woman half around, slammed her backward. She struck a shelf of glassware and the glasses came down, shattering about her. Her feet kicked around back of the bar as she went down, and her body, heaving, crunched the fallen glassware.

MacBride went to her, bent, took hold of her and dragged her out into the living room. She was quite heavy. She tried to get away, fought with her left hand; her right was useless."

"Cut it out, cut it out," MacBride kept saying.

Cebra said: "She drilled Cornelius clean."

MacBride finally had to fling her roughly to the floor. One of her stockings had fallen down and the skipper, reaching to yank her dress down, saw that her right knee bore a small stain. An iodine stain. The stain covered a small cut.

"My God!" he muttered.

He stood up, stared at Cebra.

Cebra said: "She's not Lily Carewe's mother."

"She's not —"

"No," said Cebra. "Hell, I ought to know. Lily was my kid." There was a glaze in his eyes, but his voice was almost offhand. "I just found that out. Yes, Lily was my kid. Lily Cebra was her name, though she didn't know it. This is Hortense Carewe. 'Babe' Carewe she used to be when she was a tumbler in a circus, years ago. . . . Should I phone a doctor?"

"Yeah," MacBride said in a dull, vacant voice.

Cebra walked away. He stopped and looked down at Snoozer. Snoozer was quite dead.

"Poor Cornelius. . . . His name wasn't really Cornelius, Steve. I just called him Cornelius."

He went on to the telephone.

Kennedy came into the skipper's office and the skipper, sunk in thought, did not look up for the space of a full minute. Then he blinked, roused himself.

Kennedy gave a sigh of relief. "Why the brown study?" he said.

"It was the first time I ever deliberately drilled a woman. I was just thinking it over. I had to drill her or she'd have drilled me." He rubbed his jaw. "She was strong. Stronger than you. Hell, she'd have tossed you over her shoulder."

"What did she say?"

MacBride leaned back, clasped his hands on his nape. "She killed Lily because Lily wanted to marry Barnsdale. She didn't kill her deliberately. It was an accident, fit of rage; she didn't know her own strength.

"Lily was determined to marry Barnsdale. The old woman was determined she wouldn't. Why? Because the old woman was getting most of the dough Lily made and she didn't want anyone else cutting in. Barnsdale made very little dough. It came to a head when the old woman finally told Lily that she was not her daughter. What's more, she told Lily who her father was — Sam Cebra, one of the most notorious public enemies. And she told Lily that if she married Barnsdale she would be through as a high-priced lullaby singer — because the old woman said she'd spring the truth on the public.

"Imagine how the girl must have felt. She'd never seen her father and therefore had no affection for him. She realized that Barnsdale didn't always work; not because he didn't want to, but because of conditions. Also, she was afraid of the notoriety. You can't blame her. So she sent him away. Then she remembered the awful look in his face and was afraid he'd commit

suicide. She told the old woman she was going to Barnsdale's hotel and tell him the truth. The old woman argued; they both argued; and in a fit of rage the old woman lit on Lily. Knelt on her, broke the lavallière Lily was wearing — with her knee, of course."

"Whew!"

MacBride went on: "Lily's mother ran away from Sam when Lily was a year old. She got a job in a circus dancing, met Babe Carewe, told Babe about her life. Six months later she died and Babe brought the kid up as her own, never told her.

"A week ago Sam saw a picture of Lily in the newspaper and remembered his wife. Lily looked a little like her, not much, and Sam didn't really think Lily was his kid. But he got sentimental and sent her a cigarette humidor anonymously. He even got so sentimental that he wandered around to the hotel. When Lily was murdered, he began to take a great interest. He remembered that his wife had gone with a circus, and so he phoned Babe Carewe and said: 'Were you ever with a circus?' She hung up on him. This made him figure she had been, so he got Snoozer and they watched the hotel and when the old woman came out they waltzed her into Sam's car. She was scared stiff, and went along without a fight. Sam got very curious and got tough with her and she went to pieces. He was trying to get the whole truth out of her when I turned up. He didn't want me butting in. He wasn't sure yet."

Kennedy grinned. "I guess my face ought to be red, huh?"

"No redder than mine. When I walked in on Sam, I was dead sure of him. I never figured the woman at all." He stood up, stretched. "Too bad. I'm getting to like Sam Cebra. But some day Sam's going to miss his step. Tough. Too bad. I'll walk up his alley, find something on his doorstep, put the cuffs on Sam and help the State burn him. I won't like to do it, because Sam's a nice guy. Tough. Too bad."

The League of Forgotten Men

NUMBER 3

Bert Bayliss

The department which we call THE LEAGUE OF FORGOTTEN MEN, you will recall from previous issues, has been instituted to bring back to you periodically a detective of fiction who has been forgotten in the press of years, and whose adventures still make solid, enjoyable reading. . . . So here is Forgotten Man No. 3 in our gallery, Bert Bayliss, in a story by the late Carolyn Wells, "A Point of Testimony," which appeared in Adventure Magazine in the year 1911! . . . This is a peculiarly fitting time to print a story by Miss Wells, whose death occurred this year. She wrote more than 170 books of all descriptions during her lifetime, of which more than 75 were mysteries. Her best-known fictional detective, Fleming Stone, who first appeared in Lippincott's Magazine in 1907, has gratified the hearts of millions, although never in a short story. Failing a Fleming Stone short, we reprint "A Point of Testimony" — as fresh and absorbing today as that day, so many years ago, when it was first written.

A POINT OF TESTIMONY

by CAROLYN WELLS

BERT BAYLISS was the funniest detective you ever saw. He wasn't the least like Vidocq, Lecoq or Sherlock, either in personality or mentality. And perhaps the chief difference lay in the fact that he possessed a sense of humor, and that not merely an appreciative sense, either. He had an original wit and a spontaneous repartee that made it well-nigh impossible for him to be serious.

Not quite, though, for he had his thinking moments; and when he did think, he did it so deeply yet rapidly that he accomplished wonders.

And so he was a detective. Partly because it pleased his sense of humor to pursue a calling so incongruous with his birth and station, and partly because he couldn't help it, having been born one. He was a private detective, but none the less a professional; and he accepted cases only when they seemed especially difficult or in some way unusual.

As is often the case with those possessed of a strong sense of humor, Bayliss

had no very intimate friends. A proneness to fun always seems to preclude close friendships, and fortunately precludes also the desire for them. But as every real detective needs a Dr. Watson as a sort of mind-servant, Bert Bayliss invented one, and his Harris (he chose the name in sincere flattery of Sairey Gamp) proved competent and satisfactory. To Harris, Bayliss propounded his questions and expounded his theories, and being merely a figment of Bayliss' brain, Harris was always able to give intelligent replies.

Physically, too, young Bayliss was far from the regulation type of the prevalent detective of fiction.

No aquiline nose was his, no sinister eyebrows, no expression of omniscience and inscrutability. Instead, he was a stalwart, large-framed young man, with a merry, even debonair face, and a genial, magnetic glance. He was a man who inspired confidence by his frankness, and whose twinkling eyes seemed to see the funny side of everything.

Though having no close friendships, Bayliss had a wide circle of acquaintances and was in frequent demand as a week-end visitor or a dinner guest. Wherefore, not being an early riser, the telephone at his bedside frequently buzzed many times before he was up of a morning.

Every time that bell gave its rasping whir Bayliss felt an involuntary hope that it might be a call to an interesting case of detective work, and he was distinctly disappointed if it proved to be a mere social message. One morning just before nine o'clock the bell wakened him from a light doze, and taking the receiver, he heard the voice of his old friend Martin Hopkins talking to him.

"I want you at once," the message came; "I hope nothing will prevent your coming immediately. I am in Clearbrook. If you can catch the nine-thirty train from the City, I will meet you here at the station at ten o'clock. There has been murder committed and we want your help. Will you come?"

"Yes," replied Bayliss. "I will take the nine-thirty. Who is the victim?"

"Richard Hemmingway, my lifelong friend. I am a guest at his house. The tragedy occurred last night, and I want you to get here before anything is touched."

"I'll be there! Good-by," and Bayliss proceeded to keep his word.

"You see, Harris," he said, silently, to his impalpable friend, "Martin Hopkins is a gentleman of the old school and a man whom I greatly admire. If he calls me to a case requiring detective investigation, you may be sure it's an interesting affair and quite worthy of our attention. Eh, Harris?" The

imaginary companion having agreed to this, Bayliss went expectantly on his way.

At the Clearbrook station he was met by Mr. Hopkins, who proposed that they walk to the house in order that he might tell Bayliss some of the circumstances.

"Mr. Hemmingway was my oldest and best friend," began Mr. Hopkins, "and, with my wife and daughter, I've been spending a few days at his home. He was a widower, and his household includes his ward, Miss Sheldon, his nephew, Everett Collins, a housekeeper, butler, and several under-servants. This morning at six o'clock, the butler discovered the body of Mr. Hemmingway in his library, where the poor man had been strangled to death. Clapham, that's the butler, raised an alarm at once, and ever since then the house has been full of doctors, detectives and neighbors. We are almost there now, so I'll tell you frankly, Bayliss, that I sent for you to look after my own interests. You and I are good friends, and you're the best detective I know. The evidence seems, so far, to point to some one in the house, and among those addle-pated, cocksure detectives now on the case it is not impossible that I may myself be suspected of the crime."

"What!" cried Bert Bayliss in amazement.

"Just that," went on the old man, almost smiling. "Hemmingway and I have had large business transactions of late, and as a big bundle of securities has disappeared from his safe, it may look as if I had a hand in the matter."

"I can't quite take that seriously, Mr. Hopkins, but I'll be glad to look into the case and perhaps I can give justice a boost in the right direction. You've no further hints to give me?"

"No, the hints all point one way, and you'll discover that for yourself soon enough." They walked together up the short path that led to the house of the late Richard Hemmingway.

Clearbrook was a small settlement of well-to-do society people, who wished to live near but not in New York. The houses were rather pretentious, with well-kept grounds, and picturesque flower-beds, but Bert Bayliss paid little attention to the landscape as he hurried to the Hemmingway mansion. Once in the drawing-room, Bayliss was presented by Mr. Hopkins to his wife and daughter, also to Miss Sheldon and Mr. Collins.

It was surely a tribute to the young man that all these people, who were fully prepared to treat the detective with a supercilious hauteur, were won at once by his affable and easy demeanor and involuntarily greeted him as a

man of their own class and standing.

Mrs. Estey, the housekeeper, was also in the room, and at the moment of Bayliss' arrival, Coroner Spearman was about to begin his preliminary queries of investigation. Quite content to gain his knowledge of the case in this way, Bayliss settled himself to listen.

"Harris," he said silently to his faithful friend, "these are all refined and sensitive people, but, excepting Mr. Hopkins, not one shows a deep or abiding grief at the death of this gentleman. Therefore I deduce that with most of them the loss is fully covered by inheritance."

"Marvelous, my dear Bayliss, marvelous!" replied Harris correctly.

At the command of the coroner, Clapham, the butler, was summoned to give his account of the discovery of the body.

"I came downstairs at twenty to six, sir," said the pompous but deferential Englishman, "and it would be about six when I reached the master's library. The door was closed, and when I opened it I was surprised to find one of the lamps still burning, the one by the desk, sir. By its light I could see the master still sitting in his chair. At first I thought he had come downstairs early, to do some work; then I thought he had been working there all night; and then I thought maybe something was wrong. These thoughts all flew through my mind in quick succession, sir, and, even as I thought them, I was raising the blinds. The daylight poured in, and I saw at once my master was dead, strangled, sir."

"How did you know he was strangled?" asked the coroner.

"Because, sir, his head was thrown back and I could see black marks on his throat."

"What did you do then?"

"First I called Mrs. Estey, who was already in the dining-room, and then, at her advice, I went to Mr. Collins' door and knocked him awake. He hurried downstairs, sir, and he said ——"

"Never mind that. Mr. Collins will be questioned later."

"Harris," said Bayliss silently to his friend, "that coroner is no fool."

"No," said Harris.

"If that is all the account of your finding of Mr. Hemmingway's body," continued Mr. Spearman, "tell us now what you know of Mr. Hemmingway's movements of last evening."

"He was in his library all the evening," said Clapham. "He went there directly after dinner, and gave me orders to admit three gentlemen that he

expected to call. He told me, sir, that I need not wait up to let them out, as they would stay late, and he would see them to the door himself. The three gentlemen came, sir, between nine and ten o'clock. They came separately, and after I had shown the last one into Mr. Hemmingway's library I did not go to the room again — until this morning. I went to bed, sir, at about eleven o'clock, and at that time they were still there, as I heard them talking when I left the dining-room, sir."

"Good servant, Harris," commented Bayliss. "If this household is broken up, he'll have no trouble in finding a new situation and yet — is he just a trifle too fluent?"

"Perhaps," said Harris agreeably.

Mrs. Estey simply corroborated Clapham's story, and was followed by Everett Collins, who had been the next to appear upon the scene of the tragedy.

Bayliss looked at this young man with interest. He was not of an attractive personality, though handsome and well set up. He had the physical effects of an athlete, but his face was weak and his glance was not straightforward.

"He impresses me as untrustworthy," Bayliss confided to Harris, "and yet, confound the fellow, there's something about him I like."

"Yes," said Harris.

Mr. Collins had little to say. He had been wakened by Clapham from a sound sleep and had hastily run downstairs to find his uncle dead, evidently strangled. As to his own movements the night before, he had spent the evening out, had returned at about half-past eleven, had let himself in with his latchkey and had gone to bed. He had noticed that the library door was closed, and he could not say whether any one was in the room or not.

Miss Ruth Sheldon testified to the effect that she had played bridge with Mr. and Mrs. Hopkins and Miss Ethel Hopkins until about eleven, when they had all retired. The Hopkins family corroborated this, and all agreed that they had heard no sound of any sort downstairs after reaching their rooms.

"It was Mr. Hemmingway's habit," volunteered Miss Sheldon, "if he had late callers, to let them out himself, to close the front door quietly after them, and then to go up to his room with great care in order not to disturb any of us who might be asleep. He was most thoughtful of others' comfort, always."

The members of the household having been heard, Mr. Spearman turned

his attention to some others who sat in a group at a small table. One of these was the lawyer, Mr. Dunbar. He simply stated that he had full charge of Mr. Hemmingway's legal affairs, and was prepared to make an accounting when required. But he added that his client's business with him was not extensive, as the late financier was accustomed personally to look after all such matters as did not require actual legal offices.

Mr. Hemmingway's private secretary, George Fiske, testified that he was in the habit of coming to Mr. Hemmingway's home every day from ten o'clock to four. He had left as usual the day before, at four o'clock, and knew of nothing unusual regarding his employer or his business matters at that time. Fiske had been sent for earlier than usual on this particular morning but could throw no light on the affair. He knew the three men who called, and they were three of the richest and most influential citizens of Clearbrook, who were more or less associated with Mr. Hemmingway in some large financial interests. As a confidential secretary, Mr. Fiske courteously but firmly declined to go into details of these matters at present.

There seemed to be no reason to suspect any one whose name had been mentioned so far, and the coroner next turned his attention to the possibility of an intruder from outside, who had forced an entrance after the three gentlemen had departed and before Mr. Hemmingway could have left his library.

But investigation proved that the windows were all securely fastened and that the front door shut with a spring lock which could be opened only from the outside by a latchkey. No one, save those who were already accounted for, possessed a latchkey, and as no doors or windows had been forced, it began to look to the coroner as if the evidence pointed to some one inside the house as the criminal.

The doctor declared that Mr. Hemmingway had died between twelve and one o'clock and the three men who had called, being asked over the telephone, asserted that they left the house about midnight. One of these, Mr. Carston, had tarried after the others and had talked a few moments with Mr. Hemmingway at his door, but though this would seem to make Mr. Carston the last person known to have had speech with the dead man, nobody dreamed for a moment of suspecting him. Bayliss' eyes traveled over the assembled listeners.

"Pshaw," he said silently to Harris, "there are too many suspects. Granting the criminal was in the house, it might have been any of the servants,

any of the guests, the ward or the nephew. Every one of them had opportunity, for, apparently, after midnight the callers were gone and every one in the house was sound asleep except the victim and the criminal. But the fact of strangulation lets out Mrs. and Miss Hopkins, who are too slender and delicate for such a deed. That big, athletic Miss Sheldon might have done it, had she been inclined; that gaunt, muscular housekeeper could have accomplished it; and as to the men, young Collins, old Mr. Hopkins and that complacent butler are all capable of the deed, physically. So, Harris, as we've heard the facts of the case, we'll now hunt for clues and theories."

"Marvelous, Bayliss, marvelous!" breathed Harris with deep admiration.

II

Reaching the library, Bayliss found the Precinct Inspector busily going through the papers in Mr. Hemmingway's desk. Inspector Garson had heard of clever Bert Bayliss and was glad to meet him, though a little embarrassed lest the city detective should look upon his own methods as crude.

With the coroner's permission the body of the dead man had been removed, but otherwise no changes had been made in the room. Bayliss glanced interestedly about. There were no signs of a struggle. The position of several chairs showed the presence of callers who had evidently sat around in conversation with their host. The desk, though not especially tidy, showed only the usual paraphernalia of a man of business.

By themselves, in an open box, had been laid the articles taken from the dead man's pockets. Bayliss looked at, without touching, the watch, the bunch of keys, the knife, the pencil, the pile of small coins and the handkerchiefs, which, together with a few papers, comprised the contents of the box.

Then Bayliss looked swiftly but minutely at the desk. The fittings of handsome bronze were of uniform design and rather numerous. Every convenience was there, from pen-rack to paste-pot. There were a great variety of pens, pencils and paper-cutters, while many racks and files held a profusion of stationery, cards and letters.

Yet everything was methodical; the plainly labeled packets of letters, the carefully sorted bills and the neat memoranda here and there, all betokened a systematic mind and a sense of orderly classification.

"The motive was, of course, robbery," said the Inspector, as several others followed Bayliss into the library, "for though everything else seems intact, a large bundle of securities, which Mr. Dunbar knows were in Mr. Hem-

mingway's safe last Friday, are now gone."

"Oh, those," said George Fiske; "I didn't know you looked on those as missing. I have them at my own rooms."

"You have?" said the surprised Inspector. "Why did you not state that fact when interviewed by Mr. Spearman?"

"Because," said the young man frankly, "I didn't consider that the time or place to discuss Mr. Hemmingway's finances. I was his confidential secretary, and though prepared to render an account at any time, I am careful not to do so prematurely. The bonds in question are at my home because Mr. Hemmingway gave them to me last Saturday to keep for him temporarily. Here is a list of them.

Fiske took a card of figures from his pocket-book and handed it to the Inspector, who glanced at it with satisfaction and approval.

"You did quite right, Mr. Fiske," he said, "and I'm glad the securities are safe. But then what in your opinion could have been the motive for the deed of last night?"

Fiske made no reply, but the expression on his face seemed to imply, against his will, that he could say something pertinent if he chose.

"Might it not be, Harris," whispered Bayliss, "that that young man overestimates the confidentialness of his secretaryship at this crisis?"

"H'm," said Harris.

Meanwhile the Inspector was rapidly looking over a sheaf of opened letters, each of which bore at its top the rubber-stamped date of receipt.

"Whew!" he whistled, as he read one of these documents. He then looked furtively at George Fiske, who was occupied with some clerical work which had to be done at once. Without a word Inspector Garson handed the letter to Bert Bayliss, signifying by a gesture that he was to read it.

After a glance at signature and date, Bayliss read the whole letter:

Sunday Afternoon,
September 9th.

My Dear Mr. Hemmingway:

After our talk of yesterday morning, I feel that I must express more fully my appreciation of your declaration of confidence in me, and my gratitude therefor. I was so surprised when you asked me to act as executor of your will that I fear I was awkward and disappointing in my response. But, believe me, dear sir, I am deeply grateful for your trust in me, and I want to assure you that I shall perform all the duties of which you told me, to the very best of my ability, though I hope and pray the day is far off when such need shall arise. I am not a fluent talker and so take this means of telling you that a chord of my

nature was deeply touched when you asked me to assume such a grave responsibility. I am, of course, at your service for further discussion of these matters, but I felt I must formally assure you of my gratitude for your kindness and of my loyalty to your interests.

As to the revelation you made to me, it was so sudden and such a surprise, I can not bear to think your suspicions are founded on the truth; but as you requested, I will observe all I can, without seeming intrusive or curious. I have in safe keeping the papers you entrusted to my care, and I hope our present relations may continue for many happy years.

Faithfully yours,

GEORGE FISKE.

With his usual quick eye for details, Bayliss noted that the letter was dated two days before (that is, the day before the murder, which occurred Monday night); it was postmarked at the Clearbrook post-office Sunday evening, and had therefore been delivered to Mr. Hemmingway by the first post Monday morning. This was corroborated by the rubber stamped line at the top of the first page, which read: "Received, September 10."

The letter was among a lot labeled "To be answered," and it seemed to Bayliss a very important document.

"I think," he said aloud to the Inspector, "that we would be glad to have Mr. Fiske tell us the circumstances that led to the writing of this manly and straightforward letter."

George Fiske looked up at the sound of his name. "Has that come to light?" he said, blushing a little at being thus suddenly brought into prominence. "I supposed it would, but somehow I didn't want to refer to it until some one else discovered it."

"Tell us all about it," said Bayliss, in his pleasant, chummy way, and at once Fiske began.

"Last Saturday morning," he said, "Mr. Hemmingway had a long talk with me. He expressed his satisfaction with my work as his secretary and kindly avowed his complete trust and confidence in my integrity. He then asked me if I would be willing to act as executor of his estate, when the time should come that such a service was necessary. He said it was his intention to bring the whole matter before his lawyer in a few days, but first he wished to be assured of my willingness to act as executor. He told me, too, that he would add a codicil to his will, leaving me a moderate sum of money. All of this was on Saturday morning, and when I left at noon, as I always do on Saturdays, he gave me a large bundle of securities, and also his will, asking me to keep them for him for a few days."

"You have his will, then?" asked Inspector Garson quickly.

"I have; and also the bonds of which I have given you a memorandum. They are all at your disposal at any time."

"Then Mr. Hemmingway died without adding the codicil to his will in your favor," observed Bayliss.

"Yes," replied Fiske, "but that is a minor matter in the face of the present tragedy."

Bayliss felt slightly rebuked, but he couldn't help admiring the manly way in which Fiske had spoken.

"And this conversation occurred on Saturday," went on Mr. Garson. "You took occasion to write to Mr. Hemmingway on Sunday?"

"I did," agreed Fiske. "I was so surprised at the whole thing that I was unable to express myself at our interview. I am always tongue-tied under stress of great surprise or excitement. So I sat down Sunday afternoon and wrote to Mr. Hemmingway. I mailed the letter Sunday evening and he had already received it when I reached here on Monday morning, at ten o'clock, as usual."

"Did he refer to your letter?" asked Bayliss.

"Yes; he said he was glad I wrote it, and that he would answer it on paper that I might also have his sentiments in black and white. Then he said we would discuss the matter more fully after a day or two, and we then turned our attention to other matters."

"And this revelation he made to you?" queried Inspector Garson, running his eyes over the letter.

Mr. Fiske hesitated and looked not only embarrassed but genuinely disturbed.

"That, Mr. Garson, I want to be excused from telling."

"Excused from telling! Why, man, it may help to elucidate the mystery of Mr. Hemmingway's death!"

"Oh, I hope not, I hope not!" said Fiske, so earnestly that both Bayliss and the Inspector looked at him in surprise.

"You *do* know something," said Mr. Garson quickly, "that may have a bearing on the mystery, and I must insist that you tell it."

"It is because it may *seem* to have a bearing that I hesitate," said Mr. Fiske gravely. "But, to put it boldly, as I told you I am not fluent under stress of excitement; in a word, then, Mr. Hemmingway implied to me, that — that he had a half-defined fear that some time his life might — might end suddenly."

"In the way it did?"

"Yes, in that way. He feared that some one desired his death, and that was the reason he asked me to care for his will and his valuable securities for a few days."

"Why were these things not in a safe deposit vault?" asked Bert Bayliss.

"They have been; but a few days ago Mr. Hemmingway had them brought home to make some records and changes, and as it was Saturday he could not send them back then, so he gave them to me. I have a small safe at home, and of course I was willing to keep them for him."

"Then Mr. Hemmingway feared both robbery and murder," said Bayliss, and Mr. Fiske shuddered at this cold-blooded way of putting it.

"Yes, he did," said the secretary frankly.

"And whom did he suspect as his enemy?"

"That I hope you will allow me not to answer."

"I'm sorry, Mr. Fiske," broke in the Inspector, "but you have knowledge possessed by no one else. You must, therefore, in the interests of justice, tell us the name of the man whom Mr. Hemmingway feared."

"The man," said George Fiske slowly, "is the one who inherits the bulk of Mr. Hemmingway's fortune."

"Everett Collins, his nephew?"

"His wife's nephew," corrected George Fiske. "Yes, since I am forced to tell it, Mr. Hemmingway feared that Mr. Collins was in haste to come into his inheritance, and — and ——"

"You have done your duty, Mr. Fiske," said Inspector Garson, "and I thank you. I quite appreciate your hesitancy, but crime must be punished, if possible, and you need not appear further in the matter. After your evidence the law can take the whole affair into its own hands."

III

The law took its course. Although circumstantial evidence was lacking, the statement of George Fiske and the undoubted opportunity and evident motive, combined, caused the arrest of Everett Collins.

The will, when produced, left nearly all the estate to him, and as he was known to be a thriftless, improvident young man, the majority of those interested felt convinced that he was indeed the villain.

The property of the late Mr. Hemmingway, however, was of far less amount than was generally supposed, and also, the large fortune which he

had in trust for his ward, Miss Sheldon, had dwindled surprisingly. But this, of course, was in no way the fault of the nephew, and it was thought that Mr. Hemmingway had perhaps been unfortunate in his investments. George Fiske became executor, as desired by the late millionaire, but probate of the will was deferred until after Everett Collins should have been tried at the bar of justice.

Collins himself was stubbornly quiet. He seemed rather dazed at the position in which he found himself, but had nothing to say except a simple assertion of his innocence.

"And he *is* innocent, Harris!" declared Bert Bayliss soundlessly. "No villain ever possessed that simple straightforward gaze. Villains are complex. That man may be a spendthrift and a ne'er-do-well, but I'll swear he's no murderer, and I'll prove it!"

"Marvelous, Bayliss, marvelous!" said Harris.

Bayliss had come to Clearbrook on Tuesday, and on Wednesday Collins was arrested.

On Wednesday afternoon Bayliss shut himself up alone in the library to clue-hunt, as he called it. Acting on his conviction that Collins was innocent, he eagerly sought for evidence in some other direction. Seating himself at Mr. Hemmingway's desk, he jotted down a few notes, using for the purpose a pencil from the pen-tray in front of him.

He looked at the pencil abstractedly, and then he suddenly stared at it intently.

"A clue!" he said mentally to Harris. "Hush, don't speak," though Harris hadn't. "I sure have a clue, but such a dinky one!"

He looked at the pencil as at a valuable curio. He glanced about the desk for others, and found several. In a drawer he found many more. They were all of the same make and same number, and while those on the desk were all more or less well sharpened, those in the drawer had never yet been cut.

"Oh!" said Bayliss, and putting carefully into his pocket the pencil he had used in making his notes, he began scrutinizing the waste-basket.

There were not many torn papers in it, but the top ones were letters, envelopes or circulars, each torn once across. On top of these were some chips of pencil cedar and a trifle of black dust.

As if collecting precious treasure, Bayliss, with extreme care, lifted out the top layer of torn envelopes and, without disarranging the tiny wooden chips and black lead scrapings, laid all in a box, which he then put in a small cup-

board and, locking its door, put the key in his pocket. Then he returned to the desk and picked up the packet of letters which had been received on Monday and from which Mr. Fiske's letter had been taken. There were about a dozen of them and he looked with interest at each one. Every one was cut open the same way, not by a letter-opener, but with shears — a quick clean cut, which took off a tiny edge along the right-hand end. Each was stamped at the top with the rubber "Received" stamp in red ink.

"Clever, clever villain!" mused Bayliss. "I say, Harris, he's the slickest ever! And nobody could have found him but Yours Truly."

"Marvelous!" murmured Harris.

Then straight to Inspector Garson Bayliss marched and asked to see the letter that Mr. Fiske wrote to Mr. Hemmingway.

Receiving it, he stared at it steadily for a moment, then, going to the window, scrutinized it through a lens.

Moved by an excitement which he strove not to show, he returned it to Mr. Garson, saying: "You've no doubt, I suppose, as to the genuineness of that letter and all that it means and implies?"

"No, I haven't," said Mr. Garson, looking straight at the young man. "I have wondered whether there could be anything wrong about Fiske, but that letter is incontrovertible evidence of his veracity."

"Why couldn't it be faked?" persisted Bayliss.

"I've thought of that," said Mr. Garson patiently, "but it's too real. Whether it was written Sunday or not, it was positively posted Sunday evening and it was positively delivered to Mr. Hemmingway Monday morning. The postmark proves that. Then Mr. Hemmingway opened it, for it is cut open precisely the way he cuts open all his letters, and he dated it with his own dating-stamp, and put it with his lot 'To be answered.' Can anything be more convincing of Fiske's good faith?"

"And yet," said Bert Bayliss, "it *is* a faked letter, and George Fiske's the murderer of Richard Hemmingway!"

"My dear sir, what *do* you mean?"

"Just what I say. Richard Hemmingway never saw this letter!"

"Can you prove that?"

"I can. Look at the envelope closely with this lens, in a strong light. What do you see between the letters of Mr. Hemmingway's name?"

"I see" — the Inspector peered closer — "I see faint pencil-marks."

"Can you make out what they spell?"

"No — yes — 'G-e-o' — *is* it 'George Fiske'?"

"It is, though not all the letters are discernible. Fiske wrote this letter on Sunday and mailed it on Sunday, *but* — he addressed it to himself, *not* to his employer."

"Why?" exclaimed Mr. Garson in amazement.

"Listen. He addressed it with a very soft pencil to himself, and traced the address very lightly. It reached his boarding-house Monday morning, of course, and then he erased the pencil-marks and boldly wrote Mr. Hemmingway's name in ink. Then he cut off the end, in precisely the way Mr. Hemmingway opens his letters, and put the whole thing in his pocket. All day he carried it in his pocket (I am reconstructing this affair as it must have happened), and at four o'clock he went home with the missive still there.

"Late Monday night he returned. After the three visitors had left, he strangled Mr. Hemmingway. You know he's an athlete, and his employer was a frail old man.

"And *then* he used the rubber stamp on his own letter and tucked it into the bunch of 'To be answered.' Then he rifled the safe, with Mr. Hemmingway's own keys, turned off all the lights but one and swiftly and silently went home to bed. The rest you know."

"Mr. Bayliss, I can scarcely believe this!" said Inspector Garson, fairly gasping for breath.

"What, you can't believe it when the villain has written his own name as damning evidence against himself?"

"It must be," said the Inspector, again scrutinizing the faint trace of pencil-marks. "But why did he do it?"

"Because he wanted to be executor and thus be able to convert into cash the securities he has stolen."

"He returned those."

"Only a few. Oh, it was a clever and deep-laid scheme! Fiske has quantities of bonds and other valuable papers entirely unaccounted for and which, as sole executor, he can cash at his leisure, all unknown to any one."

"How did you discover this?"

"By the simplest clue. I chanced to notice on Mr. Hemmingway's desk a pencil, freshly sharpened, but sharpened in a totally different way from those sharpened by the man himself. I looked at all the other pencils on his desk, at the one taken from his pocket and at one in his bedroom — they are all sharpened in exactly the same way, with numerous long careful shaves,

producing a whittled pyramid. The pencil I spoke of — here it is — is sharpened by only five strong, clean cuts, making a short exposure of cut wood, quite different from the long point of wood in the others. Then I looked in the waste-basket, which at your orders had not been touched since the discovery of the crime, and *on top* I found the chips and lead-dust of this very pencil. They were *on top* of some torn envelopes whose postmarks proved they had come in Monday evening's mail, which reaches the Hemmingway house about six-thirty. Hence, whoever sharpened that pencil did it *after* six-thirty o'clock Monday night, and *before* the discovery of Mr. Hemmingway's dead body."

Mr. Garson listened breathlessly. "And then?" he said.

"And then," went on Bayliss, "I looked around for some pencils sharpened like that, and found several on and in Fiske's desk in the library. The pencil might have been borrowed from Fiske's desk, but it was sharpened right there at Mr. Hemmingway's desk after half-past six o'clock. Fiske, as you know, testified that he left at four and did not return until Tuesday morning."

Bayliss' deductions were true. Confronted suddenly with the story and with the traced envelope, Fiske broke down completely and confessed all. He had been planning it for weeks, and had the decoy letter ready to use when Mr. Hemmingway should have a large amount of bonds in his own home safe. The whole story of the Saturday morning interview was a figment of Fiske's fertile brain, and of course Mr. Hemmingway had no suspicions of his nephew. Fiske had known of the expected callers, had watched outside the house until the last one went away and then, running up the steps, had stopped Mr. Hemmingway just as he was closing the door and requested a short interview. Innocently enough Mr. Hemmingway took his secretary into the library, and, while waiting for his fell opportunity, Fiske talked over some business matters. While making a memorandum, Mr. Hemmingway broke his pencil-point, and, unthinkingly, Fiske obligingly sharpened it.

"And to think," murmured Bayliss to Harris, "that little act of ordinary courtesy proved his undoing!"

"Marvelous, Bayliss, marvelous!" said Harris.

THE ADVENTURE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN

by ELLERY QUEEN

The Characters

ELLERY QUEEN	*the detective*
NIKKI PORTER	*his secretary*
INSPECTOR QUEEN	*his father, of Police Headquarters*
SERGEANT VELIE	*of Inspector Queen's staff*
MRS. DILL	*who owns a poor tenement*
CHARLEY MORSE	*a tenant-in-need*
MRS. PISANO	*a tenant-in-need*
A DOCTOR	*from a Settlement House*
PATRICK O'BRIEN	*a tenant-in-need*
JOHANN SCHMIDT	*a tenant-in-need*
OLAF NANSEN	*a tenant*
HELGA NANSEN	*Olaf Nansen's wife*
A POSTMAN	*who appears in times of need*

Scene

New York City: Various Flats in 13 Garrett Street — also Ellery Queen's Apartment

SCENE 1: *A Tenement in a New York Slum: The Morse Flat.*

(MRS. DILL, *a fat and wheezy woman, is climbing a creaky flight of stairs — and mumbling to herself.*)

MRS. DILL: . . . and how they expect a propitty-owner t'pay taxes an' int'rest on mortgages when *they* don't pay their rent beats *me*. . . . Ooomp! (*As* MRS. PISANO *bumps into her*) Why'n't ye look where ye're goin', Mrs. Pisano? Near knocked me down the hull flight o' stairs!

MRS. PISANO: (*She is an excitable, emotional woman*) 'Scus-a me, Mrs. Dill. I look-a for my boy Salvatore. All-a time that keed-a he's in trouble.

MRS. DILL: (*Shrilly*) You stop that young hoodlum o' yourn from

swipin' the covers o' the garbage pails, Mrs. Pisano! My other tenants are complainin'.

MRS. PISANO: (*Breathlessly*) Sure, Mrs. Dill — I feex him! (*She clatters downstairs.*) Salvatore! Salva-*tooooo*-re?

MRS. DILL: (*To herself*) Prob'ly grow up to be a first-class gangster. (*She resumes her climb.*) Fyoo! That Mrs. O'Brien an' her cabbage! (*Pants*) Whoo. . . . So why d'ye stand it, Martha Dill? Wasn't ye better off when ye was livin' on West End Avenoo, like a lady? Ye was! (*She walks on in an upper hall.*) Martha, you was a fool to invest Mr. Dill's money — rest his soul! — in East Side real estate! (MRS. DILL *raps sharply on the door to the* MORSE *flat.*) Mr. Morse! Open up! (*Pause. Shrilly*) You don't fool me one bit, Charley Morse. Open up! (MORSE *suddenly unlocks and opens his door.*)

MORSE: (*He is a plain American working man, at the moment very nervous*) Uh . . . come in, Mrs. Dill. I didn't hear ya knock.

MRS. DILL: (*Sniffing*) Now didn't ye. Mr. Morse, I want my rent.

MORSE: Rent. Uh — Gimme a little more time, Mrs. Dill —

MRS. DILL: Time! I've given ye four months — ain't that time enough? Four months' rent, twenty-five dollars a month — that's a hundred dollars y'owe me, Charley Morse!

MORSE: But Mrs. Dill — you know I been outa work —

MRS. DILL: I know! (*Softly*) I know. . . . (*Harshly*) But I can't help it! You got my rent, or ain't ye?

MORSE: (*Despairing*) Where would *I* get a hundred dollars?

MRS. DILL: (*Sullenly*) Then I'm servin' you with a dispossess tonight. Tomorra — out ye go!

MORSE: Mrs. Dill, I got a wife an' four kids. We ain't got a cent in the house. Ya can't throw us out on the street this way! (*He suddenly begins to cry with rage and defeat.*)

MRS. DILL: (*Passionately*) Whadda you people want from me? Everybody calls me an ol' witch — but I gotta live, too, don't I? I'm a widda — all I got in the world's this piece o' propitty — I'm so poor I gotta live in this flea-trap meself! . . . *Stop cryin', Mr. Morse!*

MORSE: (*Gulping, angry*) Who's cryin'? (*Earnestly*) Mrs. Dill, you know I'm an auto mechanic by trade, an' a good one if I say so myself. But there just ain't no jobs! Now if ya'll gimme a little more time — I got a prospect —

MRS. DILL: No! (*Then — grudging-*

ly) What kinda prospect?

MORSE: (*Eagerly*) One o' the taxi companies promised to gimme a chance to drive a cab soon's I can show 'em a hack-driver's license, an' I'm comin' up for a driver's test next week. Wait till next week — huh?

MRS. DILL: No. You gotta git out. I got a new tenant ready to pay two months' rent in advance.

MORSE: (*Hard*) Okay, Mrs. Dill. We'll be outa here tomorra.

MRS. DILL: (*Softly*) I'm . . . sorry, Mr. Morse. But *I* can't help it. I'm in hard luck, too. I'm awful sorry —

MORSE: (*Bitterly*) Thanks! I can feed my fam'ly on sympathy! Go on — get out, ya fat ol' miser! "Sorry . . ."! (*There is a knock on the door.* MORSE *shouting*) Whoever you are, beat it! Go 'way!

POSTMAN (*From the hall*) Special delivery for Charles Morse!

MORSE: Huh? (*He opens the door.*) Fer *me?* (*He signs for the letter as* MRS. DILL *speaks.*)

MRS. DILL (*Eagerly*) You ain't expectin' any money, are ye, Mr. Morse? 'Cause if that's money in that letter, I'd be willin' to let ye stay — rather'n put ye out in the gutter — anything, Mr. Morse — say, one month on account. . . . (*The* POSTMAN *leaves.*)

MORSE: (*Muttering*) Who'd send *me* dough? (*He rips open the envelope.*) Prob'ly a bill or somepin'. (*Calling*) Annie! (*Lower*) Naw, she's feedin' the baby. Look, Mrs. Dill, ya wanna read this letter for me? I broke my glasses a couple o' minutes ago — I can't see a thing.

MRS. DILL: (*Eagerly*) Sure, Mr. Morse! (*She reads with difficulty*) "Dear Charles — Morse . . . Please . . . accept the en — en*clo*sed in . . . gra — gra-ti-tude for . . . the help you've . . . given me . . . in the past. Signed, Your Grate-ful Friend!"

MORSE: (*Excited*) Enclosed? See if there's somepin' in the envelope, Mrs. Dill!

MRS. DILL: Yes, Mr. Morse — oh, it's butter-fingers I've got! . . . (*She gasps*) Mr. *Morse!*

MORSE: (*Very excited*) Money! It's money! How much? Gimme that! (*Disappointed*) Just one bill? (*Gasps*) But . . . it's a — a *hunderd-dollar bill!* (*Dazed*) A *hunderd.* . . !

MRS. DILL: (*Ecstatic*) Oh, Mr. Morse, it's wonderful to have such rich, rememberin' friends! Who sent it?

MORSE: (*Dazed*) I dunno. I never done nothin' like what the letter says. (*Happily*) I gotta show Annie. She'll die. Annie — ! No, wait. (*With stern dignity*) Mrs.

Dill, you been belly-achin' about not gettin' your back-rent — here's the whole hunderd dollars! Charley Morse *pays* his debts!

MRS. DILL: (*In a small voice*) Yes, sir. I mean — thank ye, Mr. Morse. A hunderd dollars! 'Tis like money from heaven! (*She exits.*)

MORSE: (*Immediately*) Annie! Our rent's paid — we got a roof over our heads again — (*He fades, shouting, laughing*) Annie, the most won'erful thing's happened!

SCENE 2: *Mrs. Pisano's Flat*

(MRS. PISANO *is crying bitterly in her kitchen as she faces a settlement physician.*)

DOCTOR: But this morning, right after the boy's accident, I told you to notify your husband, Mrs. Pisano!

MRS. PISANO: Luigi's on da WPA job, *Doctore* — I don' know how call-a him. . . . *Mio bambino!* All-a time he run in da street! I tell him, "Salvatore, don' run in da street. . . ." (*She sobs.*)

DOCTOR: (*Savagely*) These hit-and-run drivers! (*Gently*) Mrs. Pisano, unless your little boy is operated on within forty-eight hours, I'm afraid he'll remain a . . . cripple for the rest of his life.

MRS. PISANO: *Madre mia!*

DOCTOR: I'm sorry, Mrs. Pisano. I had to tell you the truth. Have you any money?

MRS. PISANO: Mon'? Where we get-a mon'? We poor peop'. My Luig', he don' make enough for operashun, *Doctore!*

DOCTOR: (*Fretfully*) Too bad. This operation demands exceptional skill, and unless we can get some great surgeon . . .

MRS. PISANO: An' he's-a gonna need a special nurse, huh, *Doctore?* Day nurse? Night-a nurse? Dat's-a cost much-a mon'!

DOCTOR: Yes, Mrs. Pisano. Are you sure you can't borrow a couple of hundred dollars somewhere?

MRS. PISANO: Couple hunder' dollar! (*She laughs hysterically*) You can get-a blood-a from a stone? (*And weeps again.*)

DOCTOR: Don't cry, Mrs. Pisano. I'll do my best. We'll find *some* way. . . . (*There is a knock on the door.*) No, don't get up, Mrs. Pisano. I'll answer the door.

MRS. PISANO: *Grazia, Doctore.* (*The* DOCTOR *opens the door.*)

DOCTOR: Yes? What is it, please?

POSTMAN: Special delivery for Luigi Pisano.

DOCTOR: I'll sign for Mr. Pisano — he isn't home. (*The* DOCTOR *signs and returns with a letter.*) Here's a special delivery for your husband, Mrs. Pisano.

MRS. PISANO: (*Scared*) Spesh'l deliv'? What's-a dat, *Doctore?*

DOCTOR: A — er — a quick letter, Mrs. Pisano. Would you like me to open it for you?

MRS. PISANO: Please-a. (*The* DOCTOR *opens the letter, glances over it quickly.*)

DOCTOR: (*Excited*) Mrs. Pisano! Read this!

MRS. PISANO: Wha's-a mat'? More troub'? (*She reads slowly*) "Dear . . . Luig' . . . Pisano . . . Please-a accept the en — en —" Wha's-a dat word, *Doctore?* (DOCTOR: "Enclosed!") *Grazia.* ". . . the enclosed in gra — grat-tit-ude for the . . . help you've give-a me in the . . . past. Your Grate-ful Friend . . ." (*Dazed*) My Luigi help-a someone? I no rememb' . . .

DOCTOR: But you don't understand, Mrs. Pisano. There's money in this envelope! (*She gasps*) Look! *Three one-hundred-dollar bills!*

MRS. PISANO: (*Dazed*) T'ree . . . hunder' . . . dollar . . . (*Laughs hysterically*) Now my Salvatore he get operash'! Get-a nurses — get-a well! (*Laughing and crying*) Save-a my *bambino's* life . . . t'ree hunder' dollar . . . *grazia, grazia, grazia!*

SCENE 3: *The Queen Apartment*

(*In the* QUEEN *apartment are* ELLERY, NIKKI, O'BRIEN, SCHMIDT *and the* INSPECTOR. O'BRIEN *has a slight Irish brogue,* SCHMIDT *a German accent.* SERGEANT VELIE *enters.*)

NIKKI: Here's Sergeant Velie.

ELLERY: Hullo, Sergeant!

VELIE: Hullohullohullo. Gosh, I'm all in! Say, I'm sorry. Did I bust in on somepin'?

INSPECTOR: Course not, Velie. Shake hands with Patrick O'Brien and Johann Schmidt. Sergeant Velie of my staff. (*They exchange greetings.*)

ELLERY: You're just in time to hear an amazing story, Sergeant.

NIKKI: Mr. O'Brien and Mr. Schmidt came to see us about a sort of divine monkeyshines going on in the East Side tenement where they live.

O'BRIEN: 'Tis on Garrett Street, Sergeant Velie.

SCHMIDT: The number iss thirteen.

VELIE: Thirteen Garrett Street? Say, Inspector, ain't that the tenement where —

INSPECTOR: (*Quickly*) Take a load off your feet, Velie, and listen in. And what happened after that, Mr. Schmidt?

SCHMIDT: Ach, such eggcitement! The house buzzes from day until nighdt! Who would be neggst? everybody ask. It iss like Bank Nighdt in the movies!

O'BRIEN: So thin me friend Schmidt here, *he's* elected! (*Chuck-*

les) Git on wid ye, Schmiddy — tell 'em what happened!

SCHMIDT: I, I am a butcher. I work in a chain store. We are poor people, the family iss growing —

O'BRIEN: Schmiddy's got six kids. (*Laughs*) An' I think maybe the stork's got his beady eye on Mrs. Schmidt ag'in, bedad!

SCHMIDT: (*Irritably*) Shod op, O'Brien! Who iss telling my story? So I haf a life-insurance policy — an old one — I pay for years — it comes the time to pay again — no money! A hard year it hass been — we cannod save —

ELLERY: Couldn't you borrow against your policy, Mr. Schmidt?

SCHMIDT: Ach, I haf borrowed already the maximum. So if I cannod pay the premium, the policy lapses — I cannod take out anodder — (*Coughs exaggeratedly*) — my heart — nod so goodt! — they will not pass me now. So what am I to do? *Verflücht!* I am lefdt withoud protection!

NIKKI: That's a shame, Mr. Schmidt.

SCHMIDT: (*Dramatically*) But waidt! All iss not lost! The Good Samaritan! (ELLERY *and the* INSPECTOR *chuckle.*) A special delivery letter comes — it iss just like the ledders Charley Morse undt Luigi Pisano receive — and in idt iss a *one-hundred-dollar bill! Wunderbar!* My premium — paid! We can sleep again! *Hein?* (*Laughs with joy*) Ach, America iss a wonderful country!

VELIE: (*Tense*) Say, Inspector, I'd like to see ya a minute!

INSPECTOR: (*Smoothly*) You're seeing me, aren't you? Uh . . . Mr. O'Brien, what are *you* grinning about?

O'BRIEN: 'Tis out of the fullness of me heart, Inspector!

NIKKI: The Good Samaritan visited you, too, Mr. O'Brien?

O'BRIEN: An' how! I was outa work for a long time, we'd ett up all our savin's, an' then I get me a job workin' as a trolley conductor. I'm just gettin' back on me feet, mind ye, when — zingo! the finance comp'ny cracks down!

ELLERY: You'd borrowed money, Mr. O'Brien?

O'BRIEN: Mr. Queen, I did that. An' they're just goin' to move out all me furniture when — a blessed special delivery letter comes with a nice, cracklin' hundred-dollar-bill insoide! (*Chuckles*) So why shouldn't I laugh? Saints be praised — I paid off the finance comp'ny an' saved me furniture!

SCHMIDT: America iss a wonderful country.

VELIE: (*Plaintively*) Inspector — could I see ya a minute . . . just one minute, Inspector?

INSPECTOR: (*In an undertone*) No, you cluck! Not now!

ELLERY: (*Chuckling*) Almost too good to be true, Mr. O'Brien. But I can't imagine why you two men have called on *me*. There's been no crime!

O'BRIEN: Crime! Ye don't git it, Mr. Queen. We come here t'ask ye to find the daycent, helpful man or woman who's been sendin' us all that money just when we need it most!

SCHMIDT: We wandt to show how we are gradeful. We want to thank him.

VELIE: (*Low*) Inspector —

INSPECTOR: (*Through his teeth*) You . . . flatfooted . . . small-brain!

NIKKI: Oh, Ellery, I think it's wonderful! You're always being asked to look for a murderer, or a thief, or a blackmailer, someone who's done wrong — isn't it ever so much more fun looking for a *good* man?

ELLERY: (*Dryly*) I'll confess I'm a little dazed, Nikki.

VELIE: If ya'd on'y gimme a chance to shove my two cents in —

INSPECTOR: Did everyone in the tenement receive money, O'Brien?

O'BRIEN: No, sor. Six fam'lies live in the house — Pisanos, Morses, Schmidts, an' us, that's four — we were helped. But Mrs. Dill, the owner — she lives there, too — she didn't get no letter or money —

SCHMIDT: *Natürlich!* Mrs. Dill needts no money. She owns the house, no?

ELLERY: That makes five families. Who's the sixth?

O'BRIEN: A Swede carpenter, Nansen. Wife an' one kid.

VELIE: (*Chuckling*) Slacker! Now if ya'd on'y . . . Okay, okay, Inspector. You don't have to draw me no diagrams!

ELLERY: (*Thoughtfully*) So Nansen got no letter, eh? What happened to the letters and envelopes you gentlemen received, and Mr. Morse and Mrs. Pisano?

SCHMIDT: (*Triumphantly*) Whadt didt I tell you, O'Brien?

O'BRIEN: (*Ashamed*) We none of us kept the letters or envelopes, Mr. Queen. Schmiddy here said that was a boner!

NIKKI: Too bad. They might have concealed a clue to the identity of the sender — is that it, Ellery?

ELLERY: Yes, my child. Well, gentlemen, that's all for the moment. Thanks for calling me in on this. Strangest assignment I've ever had! Nikki, would you see Messrs. O'Brien and Schmidt to the door?

NIKKI: Of course, Ellery. (*Ad libs of departure.*)

ELLERY: (*Calling as they open the door*) Yes, I'll investigate and let

you know!

VELIE: *Now* can I talk? I'm practic'ly *stranglin'* to death!

INSPECTOR: (*Low*) Hold it . . . you . . . eighteen-carat . . . Ethiopian! (*Calling*) 'Bye, boys! Goodbye! (*Door closes off.*)

ELLERY: Now what's this all about?

NIKKI: (*Running back*) Wait for me! Sergeant, you *know* something about this case!

VELIE: Know somethin'! I should kiss a pig I know somethin'. And so's your old man, Mr. Queen.

INSPECTOR: What do I have to do — break a bat over your head to keep you quiet, Velie? I didn't want those two men to know we knew anything!

NIKKI: Know *what*, for heaven's sake? I'm simply perishing!

ELLERY: Apparently there's a connection in Dad's mind — and Velie's — between Number Thirteen Garrett Street and those rather monotonous hundred-dollar bills. Eh, Dad?

INSPECTOR: Yes! A year ago, a bank messenger was held up and robbed of a hundred thousand dollars in hundred-dollar bills. We caught the thief, all right —

VELIE: An' he camped out at *Number Thirteen Garrett Street!*

ELLERY: (*Thoughtfully*) I see!

NIKKI: But you didn't find the stolen money. Is that it?

INSPECTOR: That's it, Nikki. Almost tore the thief's flat apart. But the money wasn't there. He was convicted on the messenger's identification and he's in Sing Sing serving his time right now.

VELIE: We been hammerin' away at him ever since his conviction, to tell where he hid the hundred grand. But he's smart — no talkee!

ELLERY: Which of the six apartments in the tenement did this thief live in at the time you caught him, Dad?

INSPECTOR: The one now occupied by the landlady, Mrs. Dill.

ELLERY: Thief ever known to work with an accomplice?

VELIE: That hatchet-faced Lone Wolf? Say, he wouldn't cut his own mother in on the California Gold Rush!

ELLERY: Then I believe I know what happened. Instead of hiding the hundred thousand dollars in his *own* flat, the thief hid it in one of the *other* flats.

NIKKI: He was *afraid* he'd be caught!

ELLERY: Yes, and he expects to serve out his sentence, return to the tenement, and take back his hidden treasure. (*Chuckles*) But apparently someone's beaten him to it.

NIKKI: Ellery! You think one of the present tenants has found that hundred thousand dollars?

ELLERY: No question about it, Nikki. Probably found it by accident, and is playing the Caliph of Bagdad to his fellow-unfortunates in the tenement, distributing one-hundred-dollar bills to help them out of their troubles!

VELIE: Question is — in whose apartment was the dough hid?

INSPECTOR: Might be anyone's except Mrs. Dill's. We searched that one a year ago, when we collared the thief.

ELLERY: Get your best bib-and-tucker on, Nikki. We march!

NIKKI: Ellery! You've got a clue?

ELLERY: No, but I want to talk with the only tenant in the house who did *not* receive a letter containing money —

NIKKI: The Swedish carpenter, Nansen?

ELLERY: Yes, my turtle-dove. (*Chuckles*) So — let's play Diogenes . . . and start looking for an honest man!

SCENE 4: *The Nansen Flat*

HELGA: (*She is a frightened Swedish housewife*) Police — we have done nothing —

NANSEN: (*He has a slight Swedish accent*) (*Sternly*) Helga, go. Go in to the children. I handle this.

HELGA: But Olaf —

NANSEN: Helga! (HELGA *leaves submissively.*)

ELLERY: (*Smoothly*) But I assure you, Mr. Nansen, you've nothing to fear. I'm *not* a policeman.

NIKKI: It's just that we're trying to find out who's been so generous to all your neighbors in this house.

NANSEN: The others — they get money — good. I am happy. They need it. But me — I mind my own business.

ELLERY: You've no idea who's sending that money, Mr. Nansen?

NANSEN: No.

NIKKI: Aren't you a wee bit jealous at being left out, Mr. Nansen? I'm sure you could use one or two of those hundred-dollar bills!

NANSEN: I work. I make living for my family. I need no hundred dollar from who knows who!

ELLERY: Then let's say it would be neighborly of you to assist my investigation, Mr. Nansen.

NANSEN: I am good neighbor. But how? I know nothing.

ELLERY: (*Eagerly*) I have a plan, Mr. Nansen. Apparently our Good Samaritan knows instantly something goes wrong with a tenant in this house. And four times now within a short period he's managed to send a special delivery letter with money just in time to avert a catastrophe.

NANSEN: Ya. I hear that. That is so. A good man!

ELLERY: Now suppose you and your

wife start complaining in the neighborhood about *yourselves*, Mr. Nansen. *Make believe the Nansen family is in trouble, too.*

NIKKI: Ellery! That's a terribly clever idea.

ELLERY: Tell everyone in the house your doctor's ordered you to go to Arizona for your lungs . . . life and death . . . a matter of days . . .

NANSEN: But . . . I am healthy like a horse!

ELLERY: I know, Mr. Nansen, but say it just the same. Don't you see? I want the Good Samaritan to come to *your* rescue, too.

NIKKI: (*Eagerly*) Then we'll have the letter he sends — it may tell us who he is, Mr. Nansen! Please!

NANSEN: (*Slowly*) I do not like a lie. But . . . I do it. But if he send money, I don't take it! No! I know nothing. I mind —

NIKKI: *We* know — you mind your own business. (*She laughs.*)

ELLERY: Thanks very much, Mr. Nansen. Remember — the instant you receive a special delivery letter — phone me. *And save that letter!*

SCENE 5: *The Same, Some Time Later*

(*There is a radio montage:* POSTMAN: "Special delivery for Olaf Nansen. Sign here." *Into* NANSEN: "It comes! I call Mr. Queen!" *Into coin effect in phone box. Into speeding car in traffic. Into steps on creaky tenement stairs.*)

NIKKI: Whew! These *stairs* . . .

VELIE: An' that aroma. (*Chuckles*) Sweet essence o' corned beef an' cabbage.

INSPECTOR: (*Chuckling*) Deduction: it's from the O'Brien flat. (*Panting*) Where does Nansen live — on the roof?

ELLERY: (*Cheerfully*) One flight more, Dad. I could have kissed that Swede when he rang up just now to say he'd received one of those special delivery letters!

INSPECTOR: Let's hope it tells us who found that stolen bank money!

NIKKI: Here's the top, thank goodness. Rear flat?

VELIE: Yeah. (*They walk along the hall.*) Whoever in this rat-hole is sendin' the hundred-buck bills is the guy who found the hundred grand that crook in stir hid away last year. But what *I* don't savvy is —

INSPECTOR. How about savvying in silence, Velie? Here we are. (*He knocks on the* NANSEN *door.*)

NIKKI: Oh, if Mr. Nansen's letter only has a clue! (NANSEN *opens the door.*)

ELLERY: Hello, Mr. Nansen.

NANSEN: Come in, Mr. Queen. (*They enter.*) Helga! Go to the children!

HELGA: (*She flees*) Ya, Olaf . . .

ELLERY: Now, Mr. Nansen. Let's have that special delivery!

NANSEN: Here. I don't even open it. (*They chatter excitedly as* ELLERY *opens the envelope:* "Hurry, Ellery!" "Let's see that!" *etc.*)

ELLERY: To Olaf Nansen . . . same message as to the others . . . signed "Your Grateful Friend . . ."

NIKKI: Grateful for what? They all say they never did anything important for anybody!

VELIE: Got a sense of humor, whoever he is. . . . Say!

INSPECTOR: *Four one-hundred-dollar bills enclosed!*

NIKKI: It worked!

VELIE: Postmarked the neighborhood P.O. station —

ELLERY: Cheap paper, message in block capitals, pencil — address on envelope ditto . . . blast it!

NIKKI: That's mean! You'd think he was a criminal, he's been so careful not to be found out!

INSPECTOR: Unless there are fingerprints on this letter or envelope, son, I'm afraid it's a washout.

ELLERY: (*Softly*) Not quite, Dad. Look at the *back* of this sheet of notepaper!

NIKKI: (*Puzzled*) But . . . it's just a jumble of capital letters.

VELIE: (*Disgusted*) A gageroo. Wise guy!

INSPECTOR: Hold on, you two. Ellery, read that long straight line of letters off aloud.

ELLERY: Written in pencil, too. (*Reading*) E . . . F, P . . . T, O, Z . . . L, P, E, D . . . P, E, C, F . . . D, E, D, F, C . . . Z, P and so on. . . . Hmmm. The writer of the letter had jotted these capitals down on this sheet of paper at some previous time, then forgot he'd written them and used the reverse side of the same sheet to write to Nansen. We're in luck!

VELIE: What kind? This slumgullion don't mean nothin' to *me*.

NIKKI: I know what it is — it's a code! A cipher!

INSPECTOR: No, Nikki. Notice the capitals aren't all the same size. First one — E — is the largest in the line. The others get smaller and smaller as you read along.

ELLERY: Yes, and they grow smaller with a definite *regularity*. Notice the pattern? These letters come in *groups*. The first capital — a large E — stands by itself. Then come F and P — both same size, but slightly smaller than the E. Then the next three — T, O, and Z — are smaller still. Next four capital letters *still* smaller, next five smaller than that, and the last six the smallest size of all.

NIKKI: Capital letters in diminish-

ing size-groups. What on earth can it mean?

VELIE: It means some kid was doin' his homework.

INSPECTOR: No, these letters were drawn by an adult, Velie. But I'll admit — they're just a meaningless hodgepodge to me.

ELLERY: Meaningless? (*Chuckles*) Quite the contrary, Dad. They tell us the identity of our Good Samaritan!

But do you *know the identity of the Good Samaritan of 13 Garrett Street? You can gain additional enjoyment from these unusual little radio plays by playing the same game with each problem that has been played by so many armchair detectives who have listened to "The Adventures of Ellery Queen." And that is — stop reading at this point and try to figure out the identity of the criminal — in this case the "Good Samaritan" — before* Ellery *returns to give you the correct answer and the logical reasoning that led up to that answer.*

And now, if you think you've figured it out . . . go ahead and read Ellery Queen's *own solution to "The Adventure of the Good Samaritan."*

The Solution

SCENE 6: *The Same, Immediately After*

ELLERY: Before I tell you the name of our Good Samaritan, I'd like you to promise me something, Dad.

INSPECTOR: Sure, son. What?

ELLERY: Well, usually when we solve a crime, it's your duty to arrest the criminal and see that he's punished. But in this case I want your word you'll not only let the malefactor go, but give him a helping hand, too.

VELIE: *He* should need a helpin' hand with a hundred grand!

NIKKI: Quiet, Sergeant. There's something brewing here.

INSPECTOR: (*Chuckling*) I'm 'way ahead of you, son. I've talked with the bank people. They're willing to give a reward of five thousand dollars to the person or persons instrumental in recovering the money stolen last year.

ELLERY: (*Laughing*) It's a deal, you old mind-reader! Well, then, I'll tell you who's got that hundred thousand. This long line of capital letters on Nansen's note is the clue. The letters fall into groups, groups diminishing in *size*. Now what does this peculiar arrangement of letters suggest? (*Pause*) Think! Where have you seen such capital letters?

VELIE: I'm thinkin', but it ain't doin' me any good.

INSPECTOR: (*Musing*) One large

capital, two smaller ones, then three still smaller, and so on . . .

NIKKI: I can't guess beans. Ellery, don't be mean!

ELLERY: Forget that the letters are strung out in a long line. Visualize them in their diminishing size-groups, but one group *under* the other! (*Gasp from* NIKKI) See it? One large E — smaller F and P *centered directly under the E* — still smaller T, O, and Z centered directly under the F and P . . . Yes, Nikki?

NIKKI: I know! (*Ruefully*) But I can't imagine how it tells you who the sender of the money is.

INSPECTOR: Never mind that, Nikki. What does it mean?

NIKKI: Well, when you have your eyes tested, the doctor always shows you a sort of poster-card with capital letters on it. There's always just one capital at the top, the largest of all the letters on the chart — generally a big E, too! — then underneath are two smaller capitals, and so on. Right, Ellery?

ELLERY: Of course. Capitals in such groups can only mean one thing — *an eye-testing chart!*

INSPECTOR: But no one in this house has anything to do with an optometrist or oculist, Ellery!

ELLERY: Ah! Then the capitals *weren't* jotted down on the paper in line with anyone's work or profession. Then why did the sender of the money list them? Obviously, *to become familiar* with the order and size of the letters *used* on an eye-chart! Why should anyone do that? *In order to memorize them!* — to learn by rote the exact order of the letters on an eye-chart! But why should anyone want to memorize them?

NIKKI: Because he can't see.

VELIE: Huh? We gotta look for a blind man now?

ELLERY: No blind person we know of in the house. Who else would want to commit the letters on an eye-chart to memory?

INSPECTOR: *Somebody expecting to take an eye test who can't trust his vision but wants to pass the test!*

ELLERY: Yes, Dad. And that deduction gives us our benevolent criminal. (*Chuckles. They urge him:* "Who?") *Mr. Charles Morse!* (*They repeat the name.*) Morse, the first recipient of a letter with money — which he sent *to himself* as a cover-up!

NIKKI: The one who was behind in his rent? But Ellery — how do you *know* Morse was the Good Samaritan?

ELLERY: Remember that when Morse received the first anonymous letter he asked Mrs. Dill to read it for him? He told her he'd just broken his eyeglasses! So ob-

viously Morse couldn't see well without glasses. But he told Mrs. Dill he had a chance to become a cab driver and was to take a driver's-license examination the next week. Well, one part of a driver's examination, as everyone knows, is a simple eye-test. So, Morse's glasses being broken, unable to see well, anxious to get the job, afraid to use one of the stolen hundred-dollar bills to fix his glasses — the bills would be traced to him — *Morse* would have perfect reason to copy down and memorize the capital letters of an eye-chart so that he could fake the eye-test and get his license. The only one in the house who *had* such a reason.

INSPECTOR: Now I see what happened. The original thief hid the hijacked hundred grand in the flat now occupied by the Morses. Morse just found the hiding-place by accident — realized it was stolen money. He's an honest man, but he didn't dare tell the police what he'd found — he'd naturally think we might accuse him of being connected with the year-old hold-up. So Morse just held on to it — worrying his head off!

NIKKI: Till his family was in danger of being thrown into the street for non-payment of rent.

ELLERY: Yes, then Morse risked using one bill by sending it to himself anonymously — and he only did that to keep a roof over his family's head.

VELIE: Say, this Morse must be a right guy. Used on'y one bill for himself for back rent, then helped out his neighbors when they were up against it!

ELLERY: Yes, Charley Morse saved the Pisano boy from being a cripple — the O'Briens from losing their household furniture — the Schmidts from being left without life-insurance protection — and he tried to help send Nansen to Arizona for "lung-trouble"!

INSPECTOR: (*Chuckling*) The Santa Claus of crime, by thunder.

NIKKI: *I* move we go right downstairs to Charley Morse's flat and tell him to stop worrying — that he'll get a five-thousand-dollar reward for returning the bank's money!

ELLERY: The "best" criminal we've ever caught. (*Laughing*) Come on, you three — this is going to be a pleasure!

(*The music comes up.*)

Here is a story to delight the mystery enthusiast's heart. In several important respects it is one of the most unusual detective short stories your editors have ever read. It is told in the language of England — the London vernacular — at the turn of the Eighteenth Century; it concerns the exploits of a grim, John Bullish precursor of the modern British police officer — the Bow-Street Runner — and his years-long chase of a criminal; and it introduces the curious and whimsical note of "The Admiral" — none other than Lord Nelson, the hero of Trafalgar, and how he taught the Bow-Street runner a lesson in detection! Moreover, the story has the secret appeal of a modern parallelism. An original short story, never before published anywhere, "The Bow-Street Runner" is proudly presented by "Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine."

THE BOW-STREET RUNNER

by SAMUEL DUFF

HI DON'T S'Y the danger of old England being inwaded by the Enemey had everythink to do with it, all by itself. But there the danger wos. There *He* sat, just t'other side of the Channel, a-glaring acrosst at us and a-licking of His chops. And it wos nobody but Him wot made me travel ten thousand mile at sea, whilst Hi wos a-hunting of the murderer of Henery Smith.

Hi don't s'y it wos becos Hi wos afraid of Him, for Hi wos not. There wos not a man in all England, nor no woman, neither, oo wos afraid. But it wos nothink to lawf about. People's fices wos solemn. Parsons prayed in the pulpits. Becos, you see, He had run over one country arter another, like a wild Beast, and there wos some pore iggerant people oo reelly believed He had horns and a tail.

From the cliffs on our side of the Channel, you could almost see Him, a-setting there at Boulogne. He wos only wyting for the right moment, you understand. He had thousands of barges there, all ready to cross the Channel when He give the word; thousands, Hi s'y, *and* the sogers to go into them.

Speaking only of meself, Hi never gave Him a thought. Hi wos employed, and still am, in a werry humble stytion in life. Hi wos kept too busy to think of anythink excep the duties in front of me own nose. Humble as it is, Hi am proud of me profession. Hi am a Bow-Street runner.

Me duty as a Bow-Street runner is to apprehend criminals — criminals oo think that by escaping to distant parts they will escape pursuit by the Lor.

Such is me business; and, Hi repeat, Hi am proud of it. If Hi do say so meself, Hi will hang on till *they* hang. If that sounds as if Hi means it as a joke, please do not mistike my meaning. There are those oo have found it wos no joke. *If* Hi may s'y so.

Murder had been done, and in Lunnon. The wictim wos a man by the nime of Henery Smith, wot kept a small lodginghouse of werry low character, near the docks. He wos supposed to have set aside a goodish bit of money, but for a fortnit before his murder the only lodger he had had wos a sailor by the nime of Ned Tapper. When his body wos found, Tapper had disappeared. A tin box with a padlock to it, where Smith kept his money, wos broken open and empty. The chest wot Smith kept his welweteen coat and britches in wos empty. The sailor had been seen a-hurrying aw'y from the house that night, with a bundle over his shoulder. But as them that saw him had no idee at that time that murder had been done, nobody stopped him. The last pusson that had saw him in Lunnon wos the ticket-clerk wot sold him a place on the Liverpool stage.

When Hi got me orders to go arter the murderer and bring him back, England wos at peace with all the world. But by the time Hi had got to Liverpool, war had begun. The Bow-Street runner oo wos with me — for we always run in couples — went back to Lunnon. Hi wos left on me own.

Now, you might well s'y that in a time such as that wos, when the Murderer of the Continong wos loose, no attention could be paid to the murder of one private citizen, and him of no consekence nohow. But you would be wrong. The Lunnon police has their duty to do, war or no war. The Inwasion wos not my affair. The murder of this Henery Smith had been reported to the Bow-Street police orffice. Therefore, the Bow-Street police orffice would find the murderer. Me own duty wos werry simple and plain.

So Hi went on a-hunting for Tapper. Heverywhere Hi went, he had been and gone, just before Hi got there. To cut a long story short, when Hi had been a-hunting for two full years, Hi finds meself in Gibraltar, a thousand mile from Ome, with the War still a-going on, and me not knowing how Hi wos to get my prisoner back to Lunnon even if Hi caught up with him, which the same Hi wos beginning to doubt.

The reason w'y Hi wos no furtherer along than when Hi had started, as Hi see now, wos that up to that time Hi had not had the light come over me. Hi had been a-doing me duty as an orfficer of the Lor just as Hi had been ever since Hi had fust joined the Force — me duty, as Hi then saw it. But

me eyes had not yet been opened to the full duty of a proper Bow-Street orfficer. In short, Hi wos using me legs; but Hi wos *not* using me Intelleck.

On the arternoon of the seventh day of May, then, two year arter Hi had left Lunnon, Hi wos walking along the beach of Rozeer Bay, there at Gibraltar, me eyes fixed on the sand, too downhearted to look up. Hi had got word that morning that the man Hi wos a-hunting for — Ned Tapper — had never been seen in Gibraltar at all. All me journeying had been for nought. It began to be borne in on me that the man might never have left Lunnon at all. But now — how wos Hi to get back to Lunnon? To go Ome by coach acrosst the Continong wos now himpossible. To find any private ship on which to book passage wos equally out of the question. The war had stopped the shipping trade through the Straits. Hi wos desprit.

Hi feels a hand a-pulling at me sleeve. Hi looked around. It wos a bloke in a long robe, with gold rings in his ears, one of them Moorish blokes oo sail over from Algier in their little boats to bamboozle the sogers in the garrison out of their shillings. He had a black beard and he wos a-grinning like a monkey. He points at his boat and at the ships in the Bay.

"Wisit sheeps, werry fine?" he says. "Two sheelleeng!"

Hi looks out acrosst the water, where he wos pointing; and immejutly somethink exploded, if Hi may put it that w'y, in me head. Hi could have ugged that greasy Moor.

"Tike me out there!" Hi says, a-ugging him. "Urry!"

Hi don't know w'y Hi hadn't thought of it before! There wos the ships. There wos a baker's dozen of them — ten tremenjus ships-of-the-line, and three frigates. At anchor.

They wos his Ludship's fleet, wot had been a-hunting the Enemey fleet all around the Mediterranean for nigh on to two years; ever since the war wos started.

Where they wos a-going next wos a secret. But Hi had kept me ears open, and Hi knew. That wos w'y Hi told the Moor man to tike me out there, quick.

Hi steps into the Moor man's little boat, he unfurls his three-cornered sail, and we shove off. The breeze is werry light, from the northwest. It wos hardly enough to move the boat, small as it wos. But in time we got in amongst the big ships, and Hi tells the Moor to steer up alongside the biggest one of all, the one with the Admiral's pendant drooping lazy-like from the masthead. Hi stood up and lepped from the boat to the platform at the

foot of the companion-ladder that wos at the ship's side.

When Hi cocked me head back and looked up the side of that ship, hanging straight over me, like, it wos like looking straight up the side of St. Paul's. At the top of the ladder wos two Marines, but they wos so far away they looked no bigger than wax dolls. Hi started to climb. Hi felt like a fly climbing up the side of a ouse.

At the top of the ladder, the two Marines stood in me way. But a little whippersnapper orfficer-boy struts up and asks me business.

"To see his Ludship the Admiral," Hi tells him.

"And oo are you?" says the boy.

"Me nime is Jem Spyers," Hi says. "Hi am a orfficer of the Lor, and Hi have come all the w'y from Lunnon. On the King's business."

"Oh, on the King's business?" says the boy, and he touches his hat. "Wyte here, and Hi'll awsk."

So off he goes and in a minute back he comes and tells me to follow him.

Well, when Hi stood afore his Ludship the Admiral, me heart wos in me mouth. He wosn't wot Hi had expected to see, and that's a fack. A little feller he wos, his uniform wos threadbare, the gold eppyletts on his shoulders was tarnished with salt spray, he had only one arm, the empty sleeve wos pinned acrosst his coat, and he wos arf blind, for he had lost an arm and an eye in battles. But, for the matter of all that, Hi knew Hi wos standing in front of the greatest man in all England. He gives me one terrible grim look, and then he smiles like the sun a-coming out from behind clouds.

"A Bow-Street runner, upon me soul!" he says.

The day wos terrible hot, as it is in those parts, and Hi wos wearing me Bow-Street greatcoat — for Hi would never risk leaving it in me lodgings ashore — and the sweat wos pouring down me face.

"But where is the other one?" he says. "Hi thought you never travel except in pairs!"

"He turned back in Liverpool, me Lud," Hi says. "Two year ago."

Hi don't know w'y, but at that he lawfed fit to kill. When he could get his breath, he asks me to tell him me story, which the same Hi did. And Hi winds up by saying that since Hi had come to the conclusion that the murderer, Tapper, had gone back to England — if, indeed, he had ever left there — Hi must go back there, too, this being me plain duty. Then Hi fires me gun:

"Me Lud," Hi says, "since you are about to sail for Ireland, could you set

me ashore in Ireland with no trouble to yourself? Let me get but that far, and Hi can get on to Lunnon, no fear."

This time he looks at me werry sharp, from under his eyebrows.

"Oho!" he says. "So Hi am sailing for Ireland, am Hi?" he says. "Wot makes you think so, pray?"

" 'Tis well known," says Hi, werry cocky. "The Enemey's fleet wos seen as it passed here, four week ago, this werry day, heading for the open sea. 'Tis common knowledge that when the Enemey makes his try at inwading England, he will try it by w'y of Ireland. So it is to Ireland, of course, that his fleet is bound now. 'Tis no place else in the whole wide world that you would go, me Lud, except to Ireland. So tike me along, and thank you kindly, me Lud."

He stares at me, sharper than ever. "Humph!" he says. Then he smiles at me, in a w'y to warm your heart.

"Damme, Hi will!" he cries. "Are we not, you and Hi, engyged in the same business, precisely? For two years, you have pursued a murderer, and, let him turn and twist as he will, you still stick to his heels! And wot am Hi, me lad, but a Bow-Street runner like yourself? Hi, too, pursue a murderer — for, mark you, though the admiral of that Enemey fleet is a brave man, yet he does the will of the Murderer — and, damme, Hi will dog him till Hi have me hand on his throat! We shall make a pair, you and Hi, eh, me lad? Your Bow-Street beagles must always hunt in couples!"

"Me Lud!" says Hi, flabbergasted. Hi wos weak with the joy of it, as oo would not be? But Hi had commonsense enough to know it wos merely a manner of speaking.

"But oo knows when Hi can sail?" he cries, in the next breath. "For four full weeks the wind has been foul, or there has been no wind at all!"

He then said he wos expeckting another gentman immejut, and would Hi excuse him whilst he finished that business, and then we would resoom our conwersation. So, tyking the hint, Hi withdrored meself to the ship's rail and wyted, telling meself how lucky Hi wos, to get — as it looked — a free passage Ome. *Prowiding* there wos wind!

The other gentman came aboard, and a great fuss wos made over him. He wos older than his Ludship, and he wos in a most elegant uniform, quite superior to his Ludship's. They went below, to his Ludship's cabin, for full an hour; and from the time they left the desk, the wind began shifting around and rising, till it came steady and strong out of the east. When his

Ludship came on deck again, he took one look at the pendant on the masthead, now streaming bold to the west, and his whole face wos a-shining. He could hardly wyte till he had showed his wisitor over the side, before he give the command to weigh anchor and set sail immejut. Hi could see he had forgotten all about me, of course. Never in me life do Hi expeck to see agayne such a hurrying and a bustling as he set afoot like a shot. The orfficers wos everywheres all at oncet, the men wos a-running about like a swarm of bees, all a-working like mad. There had been a covey of little bumboats and barges a-crowded around the big ship like saucers around a teakettle — now, they wos chased away so sudden you wouldn't believe. A cannon goes off, so loud Hi almost jumped out of me boots. Up to the masthead goes a string of little flags, all colors, fluttering out signals. Boats come a-pulling out from shore, frantic, with men tumbling into them. Up on the forecastle, there wos a hundred of them a-heaving around and around on a long pole and a-bringing the anchors up. Men wos a-running up the rigging like monkeys and a-loosening the big sails. Hi wos almost dazed, like, wot with the noise and all. Hi looked acrosst the water, and the same thing wos going on with all the other ships in the Fleet. The white sails wos a-blossoming out on all of them. Hi could feel our ship beginning to move. The side-ladders wos heaved up. Hi wos weak in me knees.

Hi casts a look behind us and Hi can see we has walked aw'y from me little Moor man in no time at all. He wos standing up in his little boat with the three-cornered sail and wos shaking his fists arter us. He hadn't got his two shilling.

You may well understand, Hi would never dare to come nigh his Ludship whilst all that racket and hurry wos a-going on. But now that we wos a-standing out to sea and the great ship wos beginning to dip and curtsey to the pull of it, things wos a little quieter. Hi wentured to creep up a bit nearer, where he wos a-standing amongst his orfficers and Hi says:

"Me Lud, Hi am most beholden to your Ludship. When Hi asked to be took to Ireland Hi didn't dare hope we wos to start so sudden-like."

He whirls around like he had been touched off with a trigger.

"God bless me soul!" he says. "Here's me Bow-Street runner! Hi had clean forgot about you!"

"Hi wish to thank you, me Lud," Hi says, like the cat wot swallied the canary.

"You'll not thank me for werry long," says he, werry grim. "We are *not*

bound for Ireland."

Nobody laid the tip of a feather to me, or Hi would have fall flat on the deck. But Hi managed to pull meself together.

"Wot difference, me Lud?" says Hi. "So long as Hi am with *you*, Hi am on 'Is Majesty's business."

"Hah!" says he, werry short. But Hi could see he wos pleased as Punch.

He eyes me up and down. "Hi can trust you, Hi think," he says. "You saw the gentman Hi wos closeted with at the last moment? He brought secret word that the Enemey is not heading for Ireland, as Hi had thought, but is hastening acrosst the Atlantic. The Murderer thinks to harry our West Indies before Hi can get there! But follow him Hi will, for if Hi cannot overtake him Hi will meet him on his way back. Hi promise you a long cruise, Mister Spyers, but a glorious one! It's a great pity Hi couldn't give you time to fetch your portmanteau with you, but Hi dared not lose one moment of this fair wind."

"Begging your pardon, me Lud," says Hi, tapping the breast of me great-coat. "Hi have me hair-comb here in this pocket, and Hi have the handcuffs here in me other pocket. And that's all the luggage a Bow-Street runner ever needs to tike with him."

He puts his hand on me shoulder and he turns to his orfficers. "Gentmen," he says, "Hi commend this orfficer of the Lor to your attention. He has followed his fox for two full years, and is not weary of the chase. Hi need say nothink more."

Arter that, he told one of his quartermasters to make room for me with the sogers they had on board, for he knew Hi would be awk'ard in the compny of the orfficers; and it wos a long time before he had any occasion to trouble himself about me agayne.

The cruise wot wos begun in that w'y, that day, turned out to be a cruise wot wos a cruise, and no mistyke, even though we never caught up with the Enemey. The wind held fair behind us, and arter we left the tip end of Spain we ticked off one hunderd and twenty mile a day, reglar as clockwork, day arter day for twenty-seven days until we anchored at the Barbadoes on the fourth day of June. The Enemey fleet had been a-cruising around there for nigh onto three weeks, but doing no great harm, and on that werry same day, as wos found out arterwards, wos only one day's sail aw'y from us. But on account of bad information from shore, we hunted for him in the opposite direction, and when his Ludship found out he had been cast on a wrong

scent his rage wos terrible. The Enemey wos able to head back for Spain with a week's start on us, and there wos nothing to do but follow agayne, hoping to overhaul him. But the wind wos contrary at times, we took thirty-seven days to get back to Gibraltar, and in all that nine weeks we saw nor hide nor hair of the Enemey. For meself, Hi had sailed nigh onto eight thousand mile, acrosst the Ocean and back, and wos just where Hi had started from.

His Ludship and Hi wos in the same boat, in two ways of speaking — when he went ashore that day, the twentieth of July, it wos the fust time he had set foot on dry land for two year, lacking only ten days. Hi hadn't seen Bow-Street in more than two year.

His Ludship took only five days to put fresh provisions aboard, and water, and set sail agayne, still a-hunting the Enemey. This time he wos sure the Enemey wos a-heading for England, and he made no difficulty about taking me with him.

By the third of August we wos well to the north, a matter of four hunderd mile to west'ard of the Spanish arbours the Enemey wos always running in and out of, to hide.

The sun wos werry hot that day, and Hi had washed out me only shirt and had hung it up in a corner of the deck to dry. Whilst Hi wos wyting for it, Hi wos on me back on the deck, trying to get a bit of a nap, when all of a sudden there wos a cry of "Sail, ho!" from the lookout-man high over me head. Hi nearly jumped out of me skin.

The ship that had been sighted wos a matter of twenty mile away from us, to the north. It took us five hours to come up with her, and me shirt wos dry long afore that.

When we came together, his Ludship orders off a boat to go over to her, to ask if she has had sight of the Enemey fleet, anywhere. She wos an American merchantship, as it turned out, bound to New York from Lisbon, which the same wos a neutral port.

The American captain sends back word that he has not seen the Enemey fleet, not at no time. But he also says that only the day before he had come up on a dismasted barque, adrift and abandoned. He had gone on board the wreck, and had found it had been set fire to, afore it wos abandoned. The fire had gone out before it had made much headway, but it had burnt off the name of the barque. In the cabin, he said, he had found nothink but the ship's logbook, and in the forecastle nothink but a bundle of seamen's jackets. And the pages of the logbook had been tore out, at the front, where

the barque's name should have been. The only page that had any writing on it had only the words, "Two large wessels in the West-North-West." So, for lack of anythink better, the American captain sends this good-for-nothing logbook and this bundle of dirty jackets to his Ludship, and wishes him well of them.

His Ludship's orfficers all gathered around him, whilst he stood turning over the blank pages of the logbook, one by one. He has only one hand to do this with, and 't is awk'ard. He almost drops it once, and as he grabs at it, a loose sheet of paper drops out of the book. Someone picks it up and hands it back to him. He looks at it, shakes his head, and has it passed around from hand to hand. It wos a dirty piece of paper, covered with nothink but figures, with no words on it whatsoever. As for me, Hi couldn't have made head nor tail of it. But the werry fust orfficer oo looks at it, says: "This seems to be a try at casting up the ship's position, me Lud, before it wos abandoned."

"Precisely!" snaps his Ludship. "But as it has neither starting-point, nor course, nor date, of what value is it?"

Nobody answers a word.

His Ludship leans over and picks up the sea-jackets, one by one. One by one he lifts them up and looks them over, inside and out, werry careful.

Nobody says a word.

His Ludship tosses the last jacket back on the deck, and glances around from one orfficer to the next, and each face wos as blank as a wooden block, but his own eyes is a-twinkling brighter and brighter. By the time his eyes come to me, where Hi wos a-standing timid like behind the others, they wos a-twinkling like he had got the finest news in the world, unexpected.

"Gentmen," he says, gay as a youngster, "up to this minute Hi have been wondering whether the Enemey is a-heading north, south, east, or west agayne! But now he has kindly sent word by his own hand that he has sailed north. Therefore, north we go!"

You could have heard a pin drop on the deck.

Not one of the orfficers wanted to be the fust to ask, but finally Captain Hardy, him that wos his Ludship's clostest friend, he says:

"Begging your pardon, me Lud, but where do you read all this?"

"'T is plain, Hardy!" says his Ludship, werry gay. "Hi think Hi can read the whole message werry clear. Hi flatter meself"—and here he glances at me—"Hi would make a werry good Bow-Street runner, if Hi wos put

on a murder case!

"Fust, here is the wictim, this pore ship wot wos dismasted and then set a-fire to. Oo is to know oo she wos, or even wot her nationality wos? Her name is burned off, and, although we have her logbook, the page that would show her name has been tore out! The murderer does not want us to know oo his wictim wos!

"But, gentmen, mark the page that wos left. True, there are only six words on it: 'Two large wessels in the West-North-West.' But they are enough! Becos their langwidge is English. Therefore, we know the barque wos a British wessel. Nobody but a English shipmaster writes out his log in English. A Yankee might, you say? True, but our present Enemey is not at war with America. This barque wos a British ship, and no mistake.

" 'Two large wessels in the West-North-West'! That wos the last words, mark you, that the pore fellow had time to set down! Oo would they be? W'y, the Enemey, of course! Had they turned out to be friends, he would have made other entries. The blank paper tells the story. They overhauled him and captured him!

"If there wos any doubt about that, look at these seamen's jackets that wos found. They are not British-made. They are of Enemey manufacture. They belonged, of course, to the Enemey prize-crew that wos sent on board when she wos captured.

"Look, too, at the figures scrawled on this loose leaf that wos in the log-book. Look at the cross-stroke on each number seven. No Englishman makes such figures. They wos made by the Enemey prize-master, whilst trying to work out his reckoning.

"Finally, w'y wos the barque abandoned, instead of being taken into an Enemey port? W'y? Becos the Enemey fleet wos not heading for a home port, but wos — and is — on its w'y to England, and now we know that the Murderer plans to strike soon, acrosst the Channel! For, although this pore prize had been captured, it wos almost at once abandoned. Word must have come to the Enemey that we are hot on his heels. He had no time to rig jury-masts on the dismasted ship, nor to tow her into port. So his prize-crew wos ordered off in hot haste, setting fire to her as they left, and even leaving some of their jackets behind.

"So wot remains to ask? They would not be bound west, for they have but just returned from the West Indies. They have not sailed east, or this American would have sighted them. Had they sailed south, we should have

met them before this. Aye, north they have certainly gone, and north we follow!"

Hi never heard such a cheer as went up as his Ludship finished.

"You have all given your thought to the plan of battle Hi have worked out, in case we come up with the Enemey," he says. "Follow the signals Hi shall give when we join battle. But if, in the smoke of the guns, signals cannot be seen or clearly understood, just this last word: No captain can do werry wrong if he places his ship alongside that of an Enemey!"

The fust cheer wos nothink, compared to the one that followed.

For me own part, Hi crept off into a corner where Hi could think by meself. Wot his Ludship had said wos somethink like a turning-point in me whole life. It wos like a great sudden flash of white light. Hi saw then, for the fust time in me life, wot a police orfficer might reelly do, if he set his mind to it. Nobody had ever shown me different, before. All me life Hi had been using me Legs, faithful, but not me Head. Hi saw that Hi had to start all over agayne, now; and Hi wanted a quiet corner to think in.

We anchored at Portsmouth on the eighteenth of August, and as soon as Hi had got ashore Hi went on to Lunnon as fast as the stage-coach could carry me. Hi goes straight to Bow-Street and Hi hunts up the constable wot had fust discovered the body of the murdered man.

"Ullo!" he says. "You've been gone quite a bit. Have you brought Ned Tapper, the sailor wot murdered Henery Smith, back with you?"

"No," Hi says.

"W'y not?" says he.

"Becos," says Hi, "they told me he left here for Liverpool. But when Hi had got to Liverpool, Hi heard he had crossed over to Dublin. In Dublin they told me he had shipped on a brig for Naples. In Naples, though Hi wos bothered a bit by the langwidge they speaks there, Hi heard he had been pressed on board a despatch cutter for Gibraltar. And in Gibraltar Hi met a old shipmate of Ned Tapper's, wot said that Ned had done him an ill turn, three year ago, and he would be glad to turn him in; but that he would take his oath to it that Tapper hadn't been in Gibraltar since then. So here Hi am. Whilst Hi think of it, wot did this Henery Smith, the man wot wos murdered, look like?"

"How should Hi know?" he says. "His head wos bashed in so his own mother wouldn't have knowed him. Hi never happened to see him, living. But he wos a big chap — better than six foot tall, and he weighed fifteen

stone, they tell me."

"So does this Ned Tapper, Hi am told," Hi says.

From Bow-Street, Hi goes to the orffices of the Lunnon-Liverpool stage-coaches and Hi gets the names of the guards wot had been on the coach that left for Liverpool the morning arter the murder wos done. Arter that, Hi booked meself on the coach for Dover, which the same is south from Lunnon, whilst Liverpool is northwest.

When Hi gets to Dover, Hi asks a constable to direck me to the lodging-house wot had been opened up just two year before.

"Two year?" he says. "That would be Willyum Jones's. An easy question to answer, Spyers, for all the rest ha' been here since the Flood."

Hi thanked him, marched off to the place, opened the door without knocking, and slipped me hands into the pockets of me greatcoat as Hi went in. Henerey Smith wos standing beside the fireplace, and he knew wot wos up as soon as he clapped eyes on me. He reached for the firetongs.

"None of that," Hi says, pulling a barker from me righthand pocket. "Henery Smith, Hi arrest you for the murder of Ned Tapper, the sailor wot lodged with you in Lunnon, two year ago."

Henery Smith had killed his lodger, Tapper, in a fit of rage becos the sailor hadn't the money to pay for his lodging. Not having time to hide the body, he had pulled off Tapper's clothing, dressed the dead man in his own, and battered Tapper's face till it wos unreckernizeable. T'wos his Ludship's story of the ship wot had had her name burnt off wot made me guess this for the fust time.

Then, in Tapper's sea-clothes, but with his own extry clothes in the bundle over this shoulder, Henery Smith had slipped out of his own house, taking good care that someone should see him leave, though keeping his face hid by the high collar of the seajacket. The biggest chance he took wos when he walked into the posthouse and bought a ticket for the Liverpool stage. But nobody knew him there, and all that the coroner could find out wos that a sailor had bought the ticket. Of course all that Henery Smith had to do wos to tear up the ticket without getting onto the coach at all, change back into his own clothes and throw Tapper's away, and then take the coach for Dover, as safe as you please.

He stood quiet as a lamb, whilst Hi clapped the nippers on his wrists, and Hi took him back to Bow-Street by the night stage.

The Bow-Street runner will always hang on. His Ludship did.

Mr. Detzer is one of America's most popular story-tellers. Here is a superb Detzer crime story, with a surprise ending you will not see through.

THE REAL THING

by KARL DETZER

JOE looked across the table at Bingo Cole's hand, holding his Scotch-and-soda. Bingo's hand was steady. The guy had nerve, Joe must admit. Here he sat in the Brown Derby, talking about horses at Santa Anita, lapping up highballs, one-two-three, as if nothing was going to happen!

But what *was* going to happen? Joe shifted uneasily. He was a light, youngish man with pale eyebrows that looked yellow against his brown skin. He fancied that he resembled Jimmy Cagney and so made a habit of hunching one shoulder and speaking fast from the side of his mouth.

The difference, he often told himself, was that Cagney just acted. His stuff wasn't the real thing, like this business tonight. Truth sure was stranger than the movies! Why, he'd never even heard of Bingo Cole till last week when Bingo hailed his taxicab on Hollywood Boulevard and they'd started talking, the way guys do.

"Listen, kid," Bingo had said as he got out. "I like your style. Maybe we can fix up a deal."

"Okay, boss," Joe had answered from the side of his mouth.

That's how it began. Now Joe sat waiting. He glanced at the front door, then at his wrist watch. Ten o'clock. Bingo said Katie Joy would be in around ten. Said she usually came in for one drink and a sandwich, then went home to San Fernando Valley. That's where they'd pull the job, just as she reached her door. Provided, of course, she wore the necklace.

Bingo had planned everything. Joe didn't even know where Katie Joy lived, never had seen her off the screen. He'd left it all to Bingo. Bingo was an old hand. He'd been around, knew all the answers.

"Of course," he admitted, "if there's a slip, we'll have to lam out till things cool. Sure you can get into Mexico without being stopped?"

Joe had to laugh. Hadn't he spent four months pulling a half-ton truck across the border through Pinto Wash, smuggling Chinks and opium, and

sometimes guns? "Hey, look, now!" he said.

A yellow-haired girl was coming into the restaurant. She had on dark glasses that hid half her face, and a white summer wrap, and expensive, crazy-looking clothes. Behind her waddled a fat man with a shiny bald head. He wore a dark sport shirt and a white coat.

"It's her," Bingo spoke behind his glass, pretending to drink. "Watch close. See if she's wearin' 'em."

Joe smiled. Nobody need tell him *that!* What was he here for? The necklace was worth a hundred grand, Bingo said. Get fifty for it tomorrow. Fifty, split two ways. Easy.

"Fat guy's Looie Gunzler, her producer," Bingo whispered. "She's goin' to marry him, maybe, after her divorce."

Joe stared. She certainly didn't look the way Katie Joy did on the screen. Wasn't pretty, like Katie. He said so.

"A lot of them aren't," Bingo answered. "Besides, it's her dark glasses."

"Oh!" Joe's breath caught. She had dropped her wrap and the necklace, looped about her throat, tossed back the lights.

"Did you bring the cash?" Bingo asked.

"Sure," Joe kept his eyes on Katie. "Only I hope we don't have to . . ."

"So do I. But you can't tell. Something may happen so we got to lam out. Then we'll need it. How much?"

Joe started to say, "One thousand," then remembered Jimmy Cagney, so he said, "One grand," the way Cagney would in pictures.

"That'll do," Bingo admitted. "I just hoped that you'd scrape up a little more than that. You never can tell."

Joe didn't look at him, answering, "That's all I could get my hands on." He didn't say anything about the extra hundred hidden in his shoe. Bingo wasn't the only smart guy in Hollywood. What he didn't know didn't hurt him. Joe had earned his money the hard way, smuggling across the border. He patted his pocket. "I got it here. In one bill."

A funny look came over Bingo's face. "In one bill? The whole grand? Well, of all the dumb . . ."

"I ain't so dumb," Joe answered. "Keep it in one piece and I don't spend it foolish. What's more, I can't see why I'm the guy that puts up all the cash for a get-away."

Bingo lighted a cigarette. "Have it your way," he said. "I told you the reason. 'Cause I was fresh out of jack at the moment. Only reason I cut

you in on any of it. Needed get-away cash just in case. If you don't want any of the deal, if you scare easy . . ."

"I want in on it," Joe answered fast. "I ain't scared, either. Besides, I don't figure we'll have to lam out."

"You never can tell." Bingo glanced around the room, then whispered, "Katie's lookin' at us."

After a moment Joe said, "She's still lookin'. So's the guy. They're both lookin' at *me*."

"That's too bad," Bingo answered and took another drink. "Guess maybe we'd better be goin'."

Joe got into his cab, put on his monkey cap with his hack license pinned to it, and pulled it over his left eye, the way Cagney would. He said, "Them two sure eyed me. All the way to the door."

"Yeh, they did." Bingo had an uneasy tone. He sat behind, so if the law happened to notice them he'd look like a cash passenger. Once more he went over their plan. They'd park near Katie's front gate and Joe would stay in the cab. Bingo would wait outside the door. When Katie drove up, Bingo would do his stuff and come running with the stones and they'd drive straight to Pasadena, fast.

Bingo sure could figure. Had the package stamped and addressed to "William Short, general delivery, El Centro, California." Just needed to put in the jewels and mail it. Then in a few days, after the cops got tired hunting, they'd drive down to El Centro and pick it up.

Joe repeated, "Them two looked me over plenty at the Derby."

"Yeh," Bingo answered. "Too bad."

Joe's knees felt funny.

"Here's the place," Bingo said. "Park under that pepper tree."

He got out and Joe asked, "Turn on my radio?"

"Hell, no. Just set."

Joe wiped his forehead with his sleeve. Awful lonely neighborhood. No other houses in a couple of blocks. He wiped his forehead again. Pretty hot night, to make a man sweat so. But what if Katie *had* stared at him? Maybe it didn't mean . . . here came a car now. It turned into Katie's driveway and Joe switched on his ignition and held his foot ready to tramp the starter.

Then a man's voice hollered, "Who're you? What you want?"

Then Bingo said, "Put 'em up, I tell you."

Then the girl screeched, "It's one of them guys from the Derby!"

Joe felt a chill. Then somebody fired three shots. Joe felt another chill. Katie was screeching plenty loud. Then Bingo was climbing into the cab and Joe was driving fast.

After a mile Bingo said, "Had to kill him."

The wheel wobbled in Joe's hands.

"It was him or me," Bingo panted. "Got the stones, though. Look." Joe didn't dare look. "We got to lam out," Bingo said.

At Glendale, Bingo dropped the package in a mailbox. Joe felt better after that and said so, but Bingo answered, "What difference does a little evidence make? She recognized us, didn't she?"

They drove to a hot-pig-sandwich joint near Alhambra, where Bingo knew a guy. Joe stayed outside while Bingo went in. Some cops cruised past and one turned and looked at Joe's cab, and Joe had to grip the wheel to keep from getting out and running. Mighty hot night, to make a fellow sweat so.

Bingo came out at last. He said, sort of worried, "That dame sure can talk. My friend's got a pipeline to headquarters. Fifty cops are prowling for us right now. Got our description down perfect. Says you're a dead ringer for Jimmy Cagney."

"Yeh?" Joe gulped.

"We split up," Bingo said. "Can't be seen together or we'll get picked up sure. Meet me in El Centro tomorrow. What's the name of this joint where you used to hang out?"

"Garcia's lunch room. Run by a Mexican fellow."

"Okay," Bingo said. "Garcia's lunch room. Provided I'm not picked up." He gave a funny laugh. "If I'm not there, it means I'm in jail. If you're not, you're in jail. Hope we both get there. Don't crave no murder rap."

"No," Joe agreed. "I don't either. I'll watch the papers."

Bingo said quickly, "Don't trust 'em. They hold things out sometimes, to spring a trap on a guy. And listen. If I ain't around, lay off the postoffice. They might be watchin' it."

"How come? You're not goin' to talk."

"Cops got ways to make a party talk," Bingo replied. "Now about the cash, that thousand bucks. . . ."

"We got to break the bill."

"Break it? Who the hell would break it now?" Bingo wanted to know.

"I tell you the heat's on us! You got change till tomorrow. I got to have it. . . ."

"The whole thing?" Joe shook his head. "What if I need?"

"It's me that needs," Bingo said. "And I'll be seeing you tomorrow."

Joe started to argue, "Now, listen, Bingo," then he saw the gun in Bingo's hand and he remembered those three shots, back there by that lonesome house. Bingo was saying, "Thanks. I'll keep it safe for you. See you in El Centro, unless. . . ."

He climbed out, with the money, and Joe drove away. What had got into Bingo, anyhow, taking all the cash? It wasn't honest. Well, anyhow, there was the hundred in his shoe, Joe remembered, that Bingo didn't know about. Good thing he didn't.

Joe hurried south on Highway 99. Couldn't get any speed out of the old bus for some reason. Cars kept overhauling him. And how could a fellow tell which of them might be full of cops? His throat was dry, but he didn't stop for a drink. Lots of time after he'd put plenty of miles between him and Katie Joy's pepper tree.

He wondered which way Bingo had gone. He'd have to take a train. Cops watched trains, always. What if . . . here came another car, hurrying up behind. No, just a couple of dames in it. Joe tramped the accelerator and turned on his radio.

He had left the hot-pig-sandwich joint at midnight; at three he was ducking around Palm Springs on the main road. At four o'clock he bought gas in Indio.

"Radiator's almost dry, mister," the station fellow said. "Got to watch it down here."

Joe answered, "Fill it up. Hot night."

"Yeh, kinda," the fellow said, and gave Joe a funny look. Joe got away fast. At five o'clock the sun blazed up behind the black teeth of the Chuckwalla range, east of Salton Sea. The air got hotter. Joe turned off his radio. No news, anyhow. Nothing important. Just some stuff about Hitler. The cops were keeping quiet about Katie's boy friend getting killed. Well, let 'em be smart. Bingo was smarter still, figuring out everything. Joe was thinking of the cool beer at Garcia's when suddenly he felt his foot jam down hard on the brake. A sign stood in the middle of the road. He spelled it out.

"Halt: Inspection Station."

Joe's stomach turned over. That meant border patrol, shaking down cars for aliens and smuggled goods. They had a way of shifting posts around, so you didn't know where to dodge them. Joe didn't like the border patrol. That's why he had quit smuggling.

He stopped and the inspector walked out, looking him over, asking, "What you doing with 'n L. A. cab 'way down here?"

Joe started to answer from the side of his mouth but remembered just in time. That dame had told the cops about him being a dead ringer for Cagney. Better speak straight out. He said, "Some movie guy sent for me. Wants a shot of my cab in a picture he's making over toward Yuma. I'm meetin' him at El Centro."

The inspector had the door open and was poking in the cushions. At last he said, "Okay, go on."

Garcia's lunch room was a little dump on Main Street and Joe drove up to the back door. He used to know Garcia pretty well in the old days. But he'd not been here since he quit smuggling.

He opened the screen door and walked in. Garcia was making coffee. He didn't seem to recognize Joe because he just said, "What'll it be?" and went on making coffee.

Joe said, "How's tricks? I'm meetin' a guy here."

Then Garcia stared at him and said, "Oh, it's you. Where you been?"

"L. A.," Joe told him. "That's my cab outside."

Garcia looked at it, then at Joe, and asked, "On the lam?"

"Yeh," Joe said. "Got in a little jam."

"Then you best get the hell out of here," Garcia answered. "I don't want no trouble. Cops and border patrol, in here all the time, lookin' me over. And like I say, I don't want no trouble."

He went on making coffee. He said, "They was in here a'ready this mornin', lookin' for somebody. How do I know? They don't tell me, they just ask me."

Joe drove away fast. He'd be back later, after Bingo got here, and collect his thousand, and then they'd go to the postoffice.

He knew a place outside town where he hid sometimes when he was smuggling, so he drove to it and parked his cab beside an irrigation ditch, screened in the brush and eucalyptus trees. He left his monkey cap and put on his hat and walked back to town.

In a hot dog joint where he had breakfast, nobody paid much attention

to him, but two fellows at the counter were talking, and he heard one say, "Never gave the poor guy a chance!"

Joe got up and asked for his check. The counterman was a pleasant sort of fellow and he said, "I was just saying you sure look like Jimmy Cagney."

Joe backed away. He said, "Who, me? Oh, no, I don't look like him at all." He got out of there and walked to the depot. "Bingo'll be on this train," he told himself. "Sure, he'll be on this train."

But Bingo wasn't. Well, maybe he'd hitched a ride. If the cops hadn't . . . Joe pushed aside the thought trying to form. Back at Garcia's, Bingo hadn't showed up, and Garcia still didn't want trouble. Two big guys were standing in the shade by the postoffice, talking. Joe walked past, hurried down the side street.

Bingo wasn't on the night train, either. Joe didn't sleep, just sat in his cab and had ideas. Not very pleasant ideas. He'd picked up an evening paper. The cops still were keeping quiet. But a couple of guys had been hanged that morning in some prison. Joe read all about them. They ate a hearty breakfast. Joe didn't want anything to eat.

Garcia opened his diner at eight in the morning and Joe was walking toward it at five minutes past when he saw a cop come out. The cop had a toothpick in his hand. He stopped and looked around. Joe stopped, too. The cop looked at him and Joe started to walk away. After half a block he glanced over his shoulder and the cop was still behind him whistling quietly to himself. Joe hurried. He glanced back again. The cop saw him and stopped and stared at him.

Then something happened to Joe's feet. They were running. Fast. He didn't look back any more. Just ran. A little Mexican kid hollered at him and he ran faster. He knew that the cop was running, too, so he dodged down alleys and across back yards till he was at the edge of town. At last he reached his cab and hid in the brush. But no cops came near. A fellow's throat sure got dry. It was dark before he dared crawl to the ditch for a drink of its warm, muddy water.

But his plans were made. Mexico was close at hand. No cops over there, just desert and mountains and friendly Indians. And Bingo hadn't come to El Centro. He'd been picked up, that meant. Bingo wouldn't squeal. Sure not. He was a nice sort of guy. Only he hadn't been too sure himself what the cops would make him do. They can make you do lots of things you don't want to, he'd said. Well, in that case . . . to hell with the package in

El Centro postoffice. It could wait. Twenty-five miles southwest lay Pinto Wash, with safety at its other end, for him at least. But a fellow needed food, water, gasoline. Just enough to take him to a place called La Tinaja. It was a long way, a hundred miles, but he had friends there who'd help him. They were smugglers, people you could trust.

At midnight Joe drove west on Highway 80. In the back seat were two tins of gasoline, one of water, a sack of food. That storekeeper would sure be surprised in the morning to find the broken lock. After ten miles Joe left the road for a desert trail. He drove without lights, remembering the border patrol. The high black cone of La Centinela rose from the flat horizon at his left; to the right the Superstition Mountains made a soft dark blur against the sky.

Ahead lay Pinto Wash, a hot, dry river bed, running straight to Mexico. Joe halted, turned off his motor, and sat holding his breath, listening. The night held its breath, too. A desert rat somewhere in the darkness made a small, shrill complaint. Ten miles to the rear a car was panting up the highway grade to Mountain Springs. There was no other sound. Joe took a long drink of water and started again.

He had driven five miles when off to the right a dark bunch of shadow started moving toward him. It came fast, a car without lights. Border patrol! Joe put on speed. His cab bounced over loose rocks. The other car followed, drew closer. Then a stone post loomed up and Joe rushed past it. He was in Mexico now. He looked back. The other car crossed the boundary, too, and still was following.

"They got no right in Mexico!" Joe complained. "Ain't legal!"

The pursuers gave up at last and Joe slowed down. His motor was knocking. He stopped and watered his thirsty radiator, then drove on, feeling shaky inside. It was the heat, he told himself. There was no road to follow, but he needed none. The flat alkaline crust made a hard pavement. After two hours he stopped again to fill his gasoline tank from one of the tins. A coyote started to yip up in the dark Sierra de Juarez, a mile to the west, and Joe got away from there fast. He didn't like coyotes. Made him think of dead people on the desert.

The night got hotter and there was no breeze. Made Joe want to pant. At last he turned through a notch in the ranges and looked eastward across the desert at the flaming dawn. La Tinaja was straight ahead. It once had been a town; now only Indians squatted in its ruins. Nice fellows, those

Indians. Often had helped Joe with his smuggling. Nice place, too, where mesquite trees made a patch of thin shade on the dry face of the land.

Joe saw the trees at last. The friendly smoke of cooking fires rose straight on the still hot air. Then, at half a mile, Joe made out the figure of a man in front of the nearest brush *ramada*. Another came and stood beside him. Joe stopped. They didn't look like Indians. Looked like soldiers. Mexican soldiers. They didn't move, just stood there, as if waiting.

Joe's terror made a plug in his dry throat. Had the L. A. cops sent word 'way down here? Were these guys waiting to take him back?

"Oh, the dirty devils!" he groaned. He didn't dare turn around. No, the border patrol would get him if he did that. He slid into gear and headed toward the two men. But before he reached them he speeded in a wild circle around them and roared on southward. He didn't even look at them as he went by. Didn't dare look. What were they doing now? Starting after him? His water and gasoline tins bounded in the rear seat. He left the village behind, but not till he had gone five hot, rough miles did he slow down. His engine was back-firing and his radiator boiling. No one was following. Not in sight, anyhow. Didn't do to take anything for granted.

Keeping an eye to the north, he carefully picked up the water tin. It had sprung a leak, was nearly empty, leaving one swallow for him and a little for the radiator. He poured it with caution and hurried on.

Where? He didn't know. As far as possible from that pepper tree in front of Katie Joy's lonesome house, from that cop in El Centro, from the border patrol, from those two men who stood and waited at La Tinaja. He'd never been this deep in Mexico before. Indistinctly he remembered that smugglers used to talk about an Indian town somewhere down this coast. San Felipe they called it.

"If you ever got to hide, go there," they used to say.

The trail grew rougher, the sun hotter. Joe passed a pile of stones, with a wooden cross tumbled beside it. Someone had died there, that meant; been buried where he died. A lonesome place, Joe thought, and got sick.

His motor began to knock. The desert narrowed, between naked mountains and the empty sea which Mexicans call the Gulf of Cortez. The trail was a rough, thin track, mile after endless mile. Joe looked back; in spite of himself looked again. No one was coming, Bingo nor cops. Had they caught Bingo? Had he talked? How much had he told? Ninety rough miles south of La Tinaja, Joe rounded a heap of black rock and saw the grass

houses of San Felipe, and people around without many clothes. He drove on and at the first brush *ramada*, an Indian came out.

"*Buenos dias*," Joe said. The Indian was friendly and when he heard the croak in Joe's voice, gave him water in a gourd. Joe drank, then asked in Spanish, "Any soldiers here?"

"No," the Indian said, and Joe felt good. Then the Indian said, "Only the *delegado*, the policeman. He has two guns. And he can shoot them."

"Oh," Joe said. "Why do you need a policeman here?" A big man with a wide hat had come out of a brush house across the village and stared at him.

"To put the bad strangers in jail, *señor*. Ah, we now are civilized. We have a jail. If the bad strangers do not wish to remain, the *delegado* shoots . . ."

Quickly Joe said, "How can I get away from here?"

"The same road you came, *señor*. No? One other way only. Between the mountains there. The small road leads to the desert. It is very hot. I have not been there. But I hear that on the other side of the desert are cool mountains. Ah, there stands the *delegado*. The man with the hat. He is looking at you."

Joe even forgot to say, "*Gracias, señor*," he was in such a hurry. It took him a long time to reach the arroya that led through the first mountains to the desert, the ground was so rough. His motor was knocking plenty now. Trying to kick a piston through its head. But the *delegado* was not following him. Joe couldn't see him, anyway. He kept looking back again. When he did get to the desert it was a huge, blistering bowl, with bare rock ranges on three sides, and far to the west a higher range, with woods showing on top.

He headed toward it, wishing he'd had time to ask for water in San Felipe. The cab was a bouncing oven. The steering wheel got hot, blistering his hands. At last the sun sank and night dropped fast. But it stayed hot. Joe halted and sat in the cab and tried to sleep. But he couldn't. He was too thirsty. Too busy thinking about Bingo. Wondering whether the police ever came to this place, too. All night the coyotes yipped and Joe got thirstier.

He began to drive again at dawn toward the tall mountains twenty miles ahead. At this slow rate it would take four hours. Could he hold out that long? Could the cab do without water, even if he did? There was water in those mountains . . . he tried to hurry. Then a rear tire blew out.

It took a long time to change. The jack got too hot to touch. Joe's dry tongue was beginning to swell. He'd have to hurry. He thought again of Bingo. Nice fellow, Bingo. He got the spare tire on at last and started to drive. But before noon the cab stopped. The radiator was dry. It wouldn't run again. Joe started to walk. The mountains lay ten miles ahead.

He couldn't keep his mouth shut. His tongue kept popping out. Something was happening to his eyes. After a little while he couldn't see the mountains. He just kept on walking.

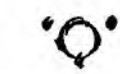
Walking, falling down, getting up. Hot, yes. But he wasn't sweating. Funny, to be this hot and not sweat. Funny, not able to see anything in this hot light. He fell down once more and couldn't get up. So he started to crawl. At last he couldn't crawl and just lay panting.

Once he stirred. That sounded like coyotes. He tried to see. Something was moving, not far away. Moving 'round and 'round him, making hungry yips. Couldn't be coyotes. Nobody dead here. He lay down again, wondering where Bingo was. Maybe Bingo would come . . . now if Jimmie Cagney were in a spot like this . . .

The coyotes closed in at dark.

Bingo sat across the table from the yellow-haired girl with the dark glasses and the expensive, crazy clothes, who didn't really look very much like Katie Joy, and the fat man with the shiny bald head and dark sport shirt. "Who, the taxi driver?" Bingo said. He laughed. "How do I know what happened to him? He run out, like I knew he would, poor sap. And here's our thousand bucks. No, he'll not be back. Scared. But listen. I got a new sucker lined up. Tomorrow night. Same plan. Same place. Same empty house. Same three shots. He's got lots of jack, too."

"Bingo, you're wonderful," the girl said. "It's so easy and so safe. And nobody ever gets hurt."



One of the great short-story writers of America in his classic venture into the literature of crime. "Blue Murder" has so many points of distinction, as a tale of murder and passion, that some critics of the short story consider it one of the 20 best American short stories ever written . . . an opinion in which we wholly concur.

BLUE MURDER

by WILBUR DANIEL STEELE

At Mill Crossing it was already past sunset. The rays, redder for what autumn leaves were left, still laid fire along the woods crowning the stony slopes of Jim Bluedge's pastures; but then the line of the dusk began and from that level it filled the valley, washing with transparent blue the buildings scattered about the bridge, Jim's house and horse-sheds and hay-barns, Frank's store, and Camden's blacksmith shop.

The mill had been gone fifty years, but the falls which had turned its wheel still poured in the bottom of the valley, and when the wind came from the Footstool way their mist wet the smithy, built of the old stone on the old foundations, and their pouring drowned the clink of Camden's hammer.

Just now they couldn't drown Camden's hammer, for he wasn't in the smithy; he was at his brother's farm. Standing inside the smaller of the horse paddocks behind the sheds he drove in stakes, one after another, cut green from saplings, and so disposed as to cover the more glaring of the weaknesses in the five-foot fence. From time to time, when one was done and another to do, he rested the head of his sledge in the pocket of his leather apron (he was never without it; it was as though it had grown on him, lumpy with odds and ends of his trade — bolts and nails and rusty pliers and old horseshoes) and, standing so, he mopped the sweat from his face and looked up at the mountain.

Of the three brothers he was the dumb one. He seldom had anything to say. It was providential (folks said) that of the three enterprises at the Crossing one was a smithy; for while he was a strong, big, hungry-muscled fellow, he never would have had the shrewdness to run the store or the farm. He was better at pounding — pounding while the fire reddened and the sparks flew, and thinking, and letting other people wonder what he

was thinking of.

Blossom Bluedge, his brother's wife, sat perched on the top bar of the paddock gate, holding her skirts around her ankles with a trifle too much care to be quite unconscious, and watched him work. When he looked at the mountain he was looking at the mares, half a mile up the slope, grazing in a line as straight as soldiers, their heads all one way. But Blossom thought it was the receding light he was thinking of, and her own sense of misgiving returned and deepened.

"You'd have thought Jim would be home before this, wouldn't you, Cam?" Her brother-in-law said nothing. "Cam, look at me!"

It was nervousness, but it wasn't all nervousness — she was the prettiest girl in the valley; a small part of it was mingled coquetry and pique.

The smith began to drive another stake, swinging the hammer from high overhead, his muscles playing in fine big rhythmical convulsions under the skin of his arms and chest, covered with short blond down. Studying him cornerwise, Blossom muttered, "Well, don't look at me, then!"

He was too dumb for any use. He was as dumb as this: when all three of the Bluedge boys were after her a year ago, Frank, the storekeeper, had brought her candy: chocolates wrapped in silver foil in a two-pound Boston box. Jim had laid before her the Bluedge farm and with it the dominance of the valley. And Camden! To the daughter of Ed Beck, the apple grower, Camden had brought a box of apples! — and been bewildered, too, when, for all she could help it, she had had to clap a hand over her mouth and run into the house to have her giggle.

A little more than just bewildered, perhaps. Had she, or any of them, ever speculated about that? . . . He had been dumb enough before; but that was when he had started being as dumb as he was now.

Well, if he wanted to be dumb let him be dumb. Pouting her pretty lips and arching her fine brows, she forgot the unimaginative fellow and turned to the ridge again. And now, seeing the sun was quite gone, all the day's vague worries and dreads — held off by this and that — could not be held off longer. For weeks there had been so much talk, so much gossip and speculation and doubt.

"Camden," she reverted suddenly. "Tell me one thing, did you hear —"

She stopped there. Some people were coming into the kitchen yard, dark forms in the growing darkness. Most of them lingered at the porch, sitting on the steps and lighting their pipes. The one that came out was

Frank, the second of her brothers-in-law. She was glad. Frank wasn't like Camden, he would talk. Turning and taking care of her skirts, she gave him a bright and sisterly smile.

"Well, Frankie, what's the crowd?"

Far from avoiding the smile, as Camden's habit was, the storekeeper returned it with a brotherly wink for good measure. "Oh, they're tired of waiting down the road, so they come up here to see the grand arrival." He was something of a man of the world; in his calling he had acquired a fine turn for skepticism. "Don't want to miss being on hand to see what flaws they can pick in 'Jim's five hundred dollars' wuth of expiriment.' "

"Frank, ain't you the least bit worried over Jim? So late?"

"Don't see why."

"All the same, I wish either you or Cam could've gone with him."

"Don't see why. Had all the men from Perry's stable there in Twinshead to help him get the animal off the freight, and he took an extra rope and the log chain and the heavy waggon, so I guess no matter how wild and woolly the devil is he'll scarcely be climbing in over the tailboard. Besides, them Western horses ain't such a big breed, even a stallion."

"All the same — (look the other way, Frankie) —" Flipping her ankles over the rail, Blossom jumped down beside him. "Listen, Frank, tell me something, did you hear — did you hear the reason Jim's getting him cheap was because he killed a man out West there, what's-its-name, Wyoming?"

Frank was taking off his sleeve protectors, the pins in his mouth. It was Camden, at the bars, speaking in his sudden deep rough way, "Who the hell told you that?"

Frank got the pins out of his mouth. "I guess what it is, Blossie, what's mixed you up is his having that name 'Blue Murder.' "

"No, sir! I got some sense and some ears. You don't go fooling me."

Frank laughed indulgently and struck her shoulder with a light hand.

"Don't you worry. Between two horsemen like Jim and Cam —"

"Don't Cam me! He's none of my horse. I told Jim once —" Breaking off, Camden hoisted his weight over the fence and stood outside, his feet spread and his hammer in both hands, an attitude that would have looked a little ludicrous had any one been watching him.

Jim had arrived. With a clatter of hoofs and a rattle of wheels he was in the yard and come to a standstill, calling aloud as he threw the lines over the team, "Well, friends, here we are."

The curious began to edge around, closing a cautious circle. The dusk had deepened so that it was hard to make anything at any distance of Jim's "expiriment" but a blurry silhouette anchored at the wagon's tail. The farmer put an end to it, crying from his eminence, "Now, now, clear out and don't worry him; give him some peace tonight, for Lord's sake! Git!" He jumped to the ground and began to whack his arms, chilled with driving, only to have them pinioned by Blossom's without warning.

"Oh, Jim, I'm so glad you come. I been so worried; gi' me a kiss!"

The farmer reddened, eyeing the cloud of witnesses. He felt awkward and wished she could have waited. "Get along, didn't I tell you fellows?" he cried with a trace of the Bluedge temper. "Go wait in the kitchen then: I'll tell about everything soon's I come in. Well, now — wife —"

"What's the matter?" she laughed, an eye over her shoulder. "Nobody's looking that matters. I'm sure Frank don't mind. And as for Camden —"

Camden wasn't looking at them. Still standing with his hammer two-fisted and his legs spread, his chin down and his thoughts to himself (the dumbhead) he was looking at Blue Murder, staring at the other dumbhead, which, raised high on the motionless column of the stallion's neck, seemed hearkening with an exile's doubt to the sounds of this new universe, tasting with wide nostrils the taint of equine strangers, and studying with eyes accustomed to far horizons these dark pastures that went up in the air.

Whatever the smith's cogitations, presently he let the hammer down and said aloud, "So you're him, eh?"

Jim had put Blossom aside, saying, "Got supper ready? I'm hungry!" Excited by the act of kissing and the sense of witnesses to it, she fussed her hair and started kitchenward as he turned to his brothers.

"Well, what do you make of him?"

"Five hundred dollars," said Frank. "However, it's your money."

Camden was shorter. "Better put him in."

"All right; let them bars down while I and Frank lead him around."

"No, thanks!" The storekeeper kept his hands in his pockets. "I just cleaned up, thanks. Cam's the boy for horses."

"He's none o' my horses!" Camden wet his lips, shook his shoulders, and scowled. "Be damned, no!" He never had the right words, and it made him mad. Hadn't he told Jim from the beginning that he washed his hands of this fool Agricultural College squandering, "and a man-killer to the bargain"?

"Unless," Frank put in shyly, "unless Cam's scared."

"Oh, is Cam scared?"

"Scared?" And still, to the brothers' enduring wonder, the big dense fellow would rise to that boyhood bait. "Scared? The hell I'm scared of any horse ever wore a shoe! Come on, I'll show you! I'll show you!"

"Well, be gentle with him, boys; he may be brittle." As Frank sauntered off around the shed he whistled the latest tune.

In the warmth and light of the kitchen he began to fool with his pretty sister-in-law, feigning princely impatience and growling with a wink at the assembled neighbours, "When do we eat?"

But she protested, "Land, I had everything ready since five, ain't I? And now, if it ain't you, it's them to wait for. I declare for men!"

At last one of the gossips got in a word.

"What you make of Jim's purchase, Frank?"

"Well, it's Jim's money, Darred. If I had the running of his farm —" Frank began drawing up chairs noisily, leaving it at that.

Darred persisted. "Don't look to me much like an animal for women and children to handle, not yet awhile."

"Cowboys han'les 'em, Pa." That was Darred's ten-year-old, big-eyed.

Blossom put the kettle back, protesting, "Leave off, or you'll get me worried to death; all your talk. . . . I declare, where are those bad boys?" Opening the door she called into the dark, "Jim! Cam! Land's sake!"

Subdued by distance and the intervening sheds, she could hear them at their business — sounds muffled and fragmentary, soft thunder of hoofs, snorts, puffings, and the short words of men in action: "Aw, leave him be in the paddock tonight." . . . "With them mares there, you damn fool?" . . . "Damn fool, eh? Try getting him in at that door and see who's the damn fool!" . . . "Come on, don't be so scared." . . . "Scared eh?"

Why was it she always felt that curious tightening of all her powers of attention when Camden Bluedge spoke? Probably because he spoke so rarely, and then so roughly, as if his own thickness made him mad.

"Last call for supper in the dining car, boys!" she called, and closed the door. Turning back to the stove she was about to replace the tea water for the third time when, straightening up, she said, "What's that?"

No one else had heard anything. They looked at one another.

"Frank, go — go see what — go tell the boys to come in."

Frank hesistated, feeling foolish, then went to the door.

Then everyone in the room was out of his chair.

There were three sounds. The first was human and incoherent. The second was incoherent, too, but it wasn't human. The third was a crash, a ripping and splintering of wood.

When they got to the paddock they found Camden crawling from beneath the wreckage of the fence where a gap was opened on the pasture side. He must have received a blow on the head, for he seemed dazed. He didn't seem to know they were there. At a precarious balance — one hand at the back of his neck — he stood facing up the hill, gaping after the diminuendo of floundering hoofs, invisible above.

So seconds passed. Again the beast gave tongue, a high wild horning note, and on the black of the stony hill to the right of it a faint shower of sparks blew like fireflies where the herding mares wheeled. It seemed to awaken the dazed smith. He opened his mouth. "Almighty God!" Swinging, he flung his arms toward the shed. "There! There!"

At last someone brought a lantern. They found Jim Bluedge lying on his back in the corner of the paddock near the door to the shed. In the lantern light, and still better in the kitchen when they had carried him in, they read the record of the thing which Camden, dumb in good earnest now, seemed unable to tell them with anything but his strange, unfocussed stare.

The bloody offence to the skull would have been enough to kill the man, but it was the second, full on the chest above the heart, that told the tale. On the caved grating of the ribs, already turning blue under the yellowish down, the iron shoe had left its mark, and when, laying back the rag of shirt, they saw that the toe of the shoe was upward and the cutting caulk-ends down they knew all they wanted to know of that swift, black, episode.

No outlash here of heels in fright. Here was a forefoot. An attack aimed and frontal; an onslaught reared, erect; beast turned biped; red eyes mad to white eyes aghast. . . . And only afterward, when it was done, the blood-fright that serves the horses for conscience; the blind rush across the enclosure; the fence gone down. . . .

No one had much to say. No one seemed to know what to do.

As for Camden, he was no help. He simply stood propped on top of his legs where someone had left him. From the instant when with his "Almighty God!" he had been brought back to memory, instead of easing its hold as the minutes passed, the event to which he remained the only living human witness seemed minute by minute to tighten its grip. It set its sweat-beaded

stamp on his face, distorted his eyes, and tied his tongue. He was no good to any one.

As for Blossom, even now — perhaps more than ever now — her dependence on physical touch was the thing that ruled her. Down on her knees beside the lamp they had set on the floor, she plucked at one of the dead man's shoes monotonously, and as it were idly swaying the toe like an inverted pendulum from side to side. That was all. Not a word. And when Frank, the only one of the three with any sense, got her up finally and led her away to her room, she clung to him.

It was lucky that Frank was a man of affairs. His brother was dead, and frightfully dead, but there was tomorrow for grief. Just now there were many things to do. There were people to be gotten ridden of. With short words and angry gestures he cleared them out, all but Darred and a man named White, and to these he said, "Now, first thing, Jim can't stay here." He ran and got a blanket from a closet. "Give me a hand and we'll lay him in the icehouse overnight. Don't sound good, but it's best, poor fellow. Cam, come along!"

He waited a moment, and as he studied the wooden fool the blood poured back into his face. "Wake up, Cam! You great big scared stiff, you!"

Camden brought his eyes out of nothingness and looked at his brother. A twinge passed over his face, convulsing the mouth muscles. "Scared?"

"Yes, you're scared!" Frank's lip lifted, showing the tips of his teeth. "And I'll warrant you something: if you wasn't the scared stiff you was, this hellish damn thing wouldn't have happened, maybe. Scared! you a blacksmith! Scared of a horse!"

"Horse!" Again that convulsion of the mouth muscles, something between irony and an idiot craft. "Why don't you go catch 'im?"

"Hush it! Don't waste time by going loony now, for God's sake. Come!"

"My advice to anybody —" Camden looked crazier than ever, knotting his brows. "My advice to anybody is to let somebody else go catch that — that —" Opening the door he faced out into the night, his head sunk between his shoulders and the fingers working at the ends of his hanging arms; and before they knew it he began to swear. They could hardly hear because his teeth were locked and his breath soft. There were all the vile words he had ever heard in his life, curses and threats and abominations, vindictive, violent, obscene. He stopped only when at a sharp word from Frank he was made aware that Blossom had come back into the room.

Even then he didn't seem to comprehend her return but stood blinking at her, and at the rifle she carried, with his distraught bloodshot eyes.

Frank comprehended. Hysteria had followed the girl's blankness. Stepping between her and the body on the floor, he spoke in a persuasive, unhurried way. "What you doing with that gun, Blossie? Now, now, you don't want that gun, you know you don't."

It worked. Her rigidity lessened appreciably. Confusion gained.

"Well, but — Or, Frank — well, but when we going to shoot him?"

"Yes, yes, Blossie — now, yes — only you best give me that gun; that's the girlie." When he had got the weapon he put an arm around her shoulders. "Yes, yes, course we're going to shoot him; what you think? Don't want an animal like that running round. Now first thing in the morning —"

Hysteria returned. With its strength she resisted his leading.

"No, now! Now! He's gone and killed Jim! Killed my husband! I won't have him left alive another minute! I won't! Now! No, sir, I'm going myself, I am! Frank, I am! Cam!"

At this name, appealed to in that queer screeching way, the man in the doorway shivered all over, wet his lips, and walked out into the dark.

"There, you see?" Frank was quick to capitalise anything. "Cam's gone to do it. Cam's gone, Blossie . . . Here, one of you — Darred, take this gun and run give it to Camden, that's the boy."

"You sure he'll kill him, Frank? You sure?"

"Sure as daylight. Now you come along back to your room like a good girl and get some rest. Come, I'll go with you."

When Frank returned to the kitchen ten minutes later, Darred was back.

"Well, now, let's get at it and carry out poor Jim, he can't lay here. . . . Where's Cam gone now, damn him!"

"Cam? Why, he's gone and went."

"Went where?"

"Up the pasture like you said."

"Like I —" Frank went an odd colour. He walked to the door. Between the light on the sill and the beginnings of the stars where the woods crowned the mountain was all one blackness. One stillness, too. He turned on Darred. "But, look, you never gave him that gun, even."

"He didn't want it."

"Lord's sake; what did he say?"

"Said nothing. He'd got the log chain out of the waggon and when I

caught him he was up hunting his hammer in under that wreck at the fence. Once he found it he started off up. 'Cam,' says I, 'here's a gun; want it?' He seemed not to. Just went on walking on up."

"How'd he look?"

"Look same's you seen him looking. Sick."

"The damned fool!"

Poor dead Jim! Poor fool Camden! As the storekeeper went about his business and afterward when, the icehouse door closed on its tragic tenant and White and Darred had gone off home, he roamed the yard, driven here and there, soft-footed, waiting, hearkening — his mind was for a time not his own property but the plaything of thoughts diverse and wayward. Jim, his brother, so suddenly and so violently gone. The stallion. That beast that had kicked him to death. With anger and hate and pitiless impatience of time he thought of the morrow, when they would catch him, take their revenge with guns and clubs. Behind these speculations, covering the background of his consciousness and stringing his nerves to endless vigil, spread the wall of the mountain: silent from instant to instant but devising under its black silence (who-could-know-what instant to come), a neigh, a yell, a spark-line of iron hoofs on rolling flints, a groan. And still behind that and deeper into the borders of the unconscious, the storekeeper thought of the farm that had lost its master, the rich bottoms, the broad, well-stocked pastures, the fat barns, and the comfortable house whose chimneys and gable ends fell into changing shapes against the stars as he wandered here and there. . . . Jim gone. . . . And Camden, at any moment. . . .

His face grew hot. An impulse carried him a dozen steps. "I ought to go up. Ought to take the gun and go up." But there shrewd sanity put on the brakes. "Where's the use? Couldn't find him in this dark. Besides, I oughtn't to leave Blossom here alone."

With that he went around toward the kitchen, thinking to go in. But the sight of the lantern, left burning out near the sheds, sent his ideas off on another course. At any rate, it would give his muscles and nerves something to work on. Taking the lantern and entering the paddock, he fell to patching the gap into the pasture, using broken boards from the wreck. As he worked his eyes chanced to fall on footprints in the dung-mixed earth — Camden's footprints, leading away beyond the little ring of light. And beside them, taking off from the landing-place of that prodigious leap, he discerned the trail of the stallion. After a moment he got down on his knees

where the earth was softest, holding the lantern so that its light fell full.

He gave over his fence-building. Returning to the house his gait was no longer that of the roamer; his face, caught by the periodic flare of the swinging lantern, was the face of another man. In its expression there was a kind of fright and a kind of calculating eagerness. He looked at the clock on the kitchen shelf, shook it, and read it again. He went to the telephone and fumbled at the receiver. He waited till his hand quit shaking, then removed it from the hook.

"Listen, Darred," he said, when he had got the farmer at last, "get White and whatever others you can and come over first thing it's light. Come a-riding and bring your guns. No, Cam ain't back."

He heard Blossom calling. Outside her door he passed one hand down over his face, as he might have passed a wash-rag, to wipe off what was there. Then he went in.

"What's the matter with Blossie? Can't sleep?"

"No, I can't sleep. Can't think. Can't sleep. Oh, Frankie!"

He sat down beside the bed.

"Oh, Frankie, Frankie, hold my hand!"

She looked almost homely, her face bleached out and her hair in a mess on the pillow. But she would get over that. And the short sleeve of the nightgown on the arm he held was edged with pretty lace.

"Got your watch here?" he asked. She gave it to him from under the pillow. This, too, he shook as if he couldn't believe it was going.

Pretty Blossom Beck. Here, for a wonder, he sat in her bedroom and held her hand. One brother was dead and the other was on the mountain.

But little by little, as he sat and dreamed so, nightmare crept over his brain. He had to arouse and shake himself. He had to set his thoughts resolutely in other roads. . . . Perhaps there would be even the smithy. The smithy, the store, the farm. Complete. The farm, the farmhouse, the room in the farmhouse, the bed in the room, the wife in the bed. Complete beyond belief. If . . . Worth dodging horror for. If . . .

"Frank, has Cam come back?"

"Cam? Don't you worry about Cam. . . . Where's that watch?"

Far from rounding up their quarry in the early hours after dawn, it took the riders, five of them, till almost noon simply to make certain that he wasn't to be found — not in any of the pastures. Then, when they discovered the hole in the fence far up in the woods beyond the crest, where Blue

Murder had led the mares in a break for the open country of hills and ravines to the south, they were only at the beginning.

The farmers had left their work undone at home and, as the afternoon lengthened and with it the shadows in the hollow places, they began to eye one another behind their leader's back. Yet they couldn't say it; there was something in the storekeeper's air to-day, something zealous and pitiless and fanatical, that shut them up and pulled them plodding on.

Frank did the trailing. Hopeless of getting anywhere before sundown in that unkempt wilderness of a hundred square miles of scrub, his companions slouched in their saddles and rode more and more mechanically, knee to knee, and it was he who made the casts to recover the lost trail and, dismounting to read the dust, cried back: "He's still with 'em," and with gestures of imperious excitement beckoned them on.

"Which you mean?" Darred asked him once. "Cam or the horse?"

Frank wheeled his beast and spurred back at the speaker. It was extraordinary. "You don't know what you're talking about!" he cried, with a causelessness and a disordered vehemence which set them first staring, then speculating. "Come on, you dumbheads; don't talk — ride!"

By the following day, when it was being told in all the farmhouses, the story might vary in details and more and more as the tellings multiplied, but in its fundamentals it remained the same. In one thing they certainly all agreed: they used the same expression — "It was like Frank was drove. Drove in a race against something, and no sparing the whip."

They were a good six miles to the south of the fence. Already the road back home would have to be followed three parts in the dark.

Darred was the spokesman. "Frank, I'm going to call it a day."

The others reined up with him but the man ahead rode on. He didn't seem to hear. Darred lifted his voice. "Come on, call it a day, Frank. To-morrow, maybe. But you see we've run it out and they're not here."

"Wait," said Frank over his shoulder, still riding on into the pocket.

White's mount — a mare — laid back her ears, shied, and stood trembling. After a moment she whinnied.

It was as if she had whinnied for a dozen. A crashing in the woods above them to the left and the avalanche came — down-streaming, erupting, wheeling, wheeling away with volleying snorts, a dark rout.

Darred, reining his horse, began to shout, "Here they go this way, Frank!" But Frank was yelling, "Up here, boys! This way, quick!"

It was the same note, excited, feverish, disordered, breaking like a child's. When they neared him they saw he was off his horse, rifle in hand, and down on his knees to study the ground where the woods began. By the time they reached his animal the impetuous fellow had started up into the cover, his voice trailing, "Come on; spread out and come on!"

One of the farmers got down. When he saw the other three keeping their saddles he swung up again.

White spoke this time. "Be darned if I do!" He lifted a protesting hail, "Come back here, Frank! You're crazy! It's getting dark!"

It was Frank's own fault. They told him plainly to come back and he wouldn't listen.

For a while they could hear his crackle in the mounting underbrush. Then that stopped, whether he had gone too far for their ears or whether he had come to a halt to give his own ears a chance. . . . Once, off to his right, a little higher up under the low ceiling of the trees that darkened moment by moment with the rush of night, they heard another movement, another restlessness of leaves and stones. Then that was still.

Darred ran a sleeve over his face and swung down. "God alive, boys!"

It was the silence. All agreed there — the silence and the deepening dusk.

The first they heard was the shot. No voice. Just the one report. Then after five breaths of another silence a crashing of growth, a charge in the darkness under the withered scrub, continuous and diminishing.

They shouted, "Frank!" No answer. They called, "Frank Bluedge!"

Now, since they had to, they did. Keeping contact by word, and guided partly by directional memory (and mostly in the end by luck), after a time they found the storekeeper in a brake of ferns, lying across his gun.

They got him down to the open, watching behind them all the while. Only then, by the flares of successive matches, under the noses of snorting horses, did they look for the damage done.

They remembered the stillness and the gloom; it must have been quite black in there. The attack had come from behind — equine and pantherine at once, and planned and cunning. A deliberate lunge with a forefoot again: the shoe which had crushed the backbone between the shoulder blades was a foreshoe, that much they saw by the match flares in the red wreck.

They took no longer getting home than they had to, but it was longer than they would have wished. With Frank across his own saddle, walking their horses and with one or another ahead to pick the road (it was going to rain,

and even the stars were lost), they made no more than a creeping speed.

None of them had much to say on the journey. Finding the break in the boundary fence and feeling through the last of the woods, the lights of their farms began to show in the pool of blackness below, and Darred uttered a part of what had lain in the minds of them all during the return: "Well, that leaves Cam."

None followed it up. None cared to go any closer than he was to the real question. Something new, alien, menacing and pitiless had come into the valley of their lives with that beast they had never really seen; they felt its oppression, every one, and kept the real question back in their minds:

"Does it leave Cam?"

It answered itself. Camden was at home when they got there.

He had come in a little before them, empty-handed. Empty-headed, too. When Blossom, who had waited all day, part of the time with neighbour women who had come in and part of the time alone to the point of going mad — when she saw him coming down the pasture, his feet stumbling and his shoulders dejected, her first feeling was relief. Her first words, however, were, "Did you get him, Cam?" And all he would answer was, "Gi' me something to eat, can't you? Gi' me a few hours' sleep, can't you? Then wait!"

He looked as if he would need more than a few hours' sleep. Propped on his elbows over his plate it seemed as though his eyes would close before his mouth would open.

His skin was scored by thorns and his shirt was in ribbons under the straps of his iron-sagged apron, but it was not by these marks that his twenty-odd hours showed: it was by his face. While yet his eyes were open and his wits still half awake, his face surrendered. The flesh relaxed into lines of stupor, a putty-formed, putty-coloured mask of sleep.

Once he let himself be aroused. This was when, to an abstracted query as to Frank's whereabouts, Blossom told him Frank had been out with four others since dawn. He heaved clear of the table and opened his eyes at her showing the red around the rims.

He spoke with the thick tongue of a drunkard. "If anybody but me lays hand on the stallion I'll kill him. I'll wring his neck."

Then he relapsed into his stupidity, and not even the arrival of the party bringing his brother's body seemed able to shake him so far clear of it again.

At first, when they had laid Frank on the floor where on the night before they had laid Jim, he seemed hardly to comprehend.

"What's wrong with Frank?"

"Some more of Jim's 'expiriment.' "

"Frank see him? He's scared, Frank is. Look at his face there."

"He's dead, Cam."

"Dead, you say? Frank dead? Dead of fright, is that it?"

Even when, rolling the body over, they showed him what was what, he appeared incapable of comprehension, of amazement, of passion, or of any added grief. He looked at them all with a kind of befuddled protest. Returning to his chair and his plate, he grumbled, "Le' me eat first, can't you? Can't you gi' me a little time to sleep?"

"Well, you wouldn't do much to-night anyway, I guess." At White's words Blossom opened her mouth for the first time.

"No, nothing to-night, Cam. Cam! Camden! Say! Promise!"

"And then to-morrow, Cam, what we'll do is to get every last man in the valley, and we'll go at this right. We'll lay hand on that devil —"

Camden swallowed his mouthful of cold steak with difficulty. His obsession touched, he showed them the rims of his eyes again.

"You do and I'll wring your necks. The man that touches that animal before I do gets his neck wrang. That's all you need to remember."

"Yes, yes — no — that is —" Poor Blossom. "Yes, Mr. White, thanks; no, Cam's not going out to-night. . . . No, Cam, nobody's going to interfere — nor nothing. Don't worry there. . . ."

Again poor Blossom! Disaster piled too swiftly on disaster; no discipline but instinct left. Caught in fire and flood and earthquake and not knowing what to come, and no creed but "save him who can!" — by hook or crook of wile or smile. With the valley of her life emptied out, and its emptiness repeopled monstrously and pressing down black, on the roof under which (now that Frank was gone to the icehouse, too, and the farmers back home) one brother was left of three — she would tread softly, she would talk or she would be dumb, as her sidelong glimpses of the awake-asleep man's face above the table told her was the instant's need; or if he would eat, she would magic out of nothing something, anything; or if he would sleep, he could sleep, so long as he slept in that house where she could know he was sleeping.

Only one thing. If she could touch him. If she could touch and cling.

Lightning filled the windows. After a moment the thunder came avalanching down the pasture and brought up against the clapboards of the house. At this she was behind his chair. She put out a hand. She touched his

shoulder. The shoulder was bare, the shirt ripped away; it was caked with sweat and with the blackening smears of scratches, but for all its exhaustion and dirt it was flesh alive — a living man to touch.

Camden blundered up. "What the hell!" He started off two steps and wheeled on her. "Why don't you get off to bed, for Goll sake!"

"Yes, Cam, yes — right off, yes."

"Well, I'm going, I can tell you. For Goll sake. I need some sleep!"

"Yes, that's right, yes, Cam, good-night, Cam — only — only you promise — promise you won't go out — nowheres."

"Go out? Not likely I won't! Not likely! Get along!"

It took her no time to get along then — quick and quiet as a mouse.

Camden lingered to stand at one of the windows where the lightning came again, throwing the black barns and paddocks at him from the white sweep of the pastures crowned by woods.

As it had taken her no time to go, it took Blossom no time to undress and get in bed. When Camden was on his way to his room he heard her calling, "Cam! Just a second, Cam!"

In the dark outside her door he drew one hand down over his face, wiping off whatever might be there. Then he entered.

"Yes? What?"

"Cam, set by me a minute, won't you? And Cam, oh, Cam, hold my hand."

As he slouched down, his fist enclosing her fingers, thoughts awakened and ran and fastened on things. They fastened, tentatively at first, upon the farm. Jim gone. Frank gone. The smithy, the store, and the farm. The whole of Mill Crossing. The trinity. The three in one. . . .

"Tight, Cam, for pity's sake! Hold it tight!"

His eyes, falling to his fist, strayed up along the arm it held. The sleeve, rumpled near the shoulder, was trimmed with pretty lace.

"Tighter, Cam!"

A box of apples. That memory hidden away in the cellar of his mind. Hidden away clamped down in the dark, till the noxious vapours, the murderous vapours of its rotting had filled the shut-up house he was. . . . A box of red apples for the apple-grower's girl . . . the girl who sniggered and ran away from him to laugh at him. . . .

And there, by the unfolding of a devious destiny, he sat in that girl's bedroom, holding that girl's hand. Jim who had got her, Frank who had

wanted her lay side by side out there in the icehouse under the lightning. While he, the "dumb one" — the last to be thought of with anything but amusement and the last to be feared — his big hot fist inclosing her imprecating hand now, and his eyes on the pretty lace at her shoulder — He jumped up with a gulp and a clatter of iron.

"What the —" He flung her hand away. "What the hell!" He swallowed. "Damn you, Blossie Beck!" He stared at her with repugnance and mortal fright. "Why, you — you — you —"

He moderated his voice with an effort, wiping his brow. "Good night. You must excuse me, Blossie; I wasn't meaning — I mean — I hope you sleep good. I shall. . . . Good-night!"

In his own brain was the one word "Hurry!"

She lay and listened to his boots going along the hall and heard the closing of his door. She ought to have put out the lamp. But even with the shades drawn, the lightning around the edges of the window unnerved her; in the dark alone it would have been more than she could bear.

She lay so till she felt herself nearing exhaustion from the sustained rigidity of her limbs. Rain came and with the rain, wind. Around the eaves it neighed like wild stallions; down the chimneys it moaned like men.

Slipping out of bed and pulling on a bathrobe she ran from her room, barefooted, and along the hall to Camden's door.

"Cam!" she called. "Oh, Cam!" she begged. "Please, please!"

And now he wouldn't answer her.

New lightning, diffused through all the sky by the blown rain, ran at her along the corridor. She pushed the door open. The lamp was burning on the bureau but the room was empty and the bed untouched.

Taking the lamp she skittered down to the kitchen. No one there. . . .

"Hurry!"

Camden had reached the woods when the rain came. Lighting the lantern he had brought, he made his way on to the boundary fence. There, about a mile to the east of the path the others had taken that day, he pulled the rails down and tumbled the stones together in a pile. Then he proceeded another hundred yards, holding the lantern high and peering through the streaming crystals of the rain.

Blue Murder was there. Neither the chain nor the sapling had given way. The lantern and, better than the lantern, a globe of lightning, showed the

tethered stallion glistening and quivering, his eyes all whites at the man's approach.

"Gentle, boy; steady, boy!" Talking all the while in the way he had with horses, Camden put a hand on the taut chain and bore with a gradually progressive weight, bringing the dark head nearer. "Steady, boy; gentle there, damn you; gentle!"

Was he afraid of horses? Who was it said he was afraid of horses?

The beast's head was against the man's chest, held there by an arm thrown over the bowed neck. As he smoothed the forehead and fingered the nose with false caresses, Camden's "horse talk" ran on — the cadence one thing, the words another.

"Steady, Goll damn you; you're going to get yours. Cheer up, cheer up, the worst is yet to come. Come now! Come easy! Come along!"

When he had unloosed the chain he felt for and found with his free hands his hammer hidden behind the tree. Throwing the lantern into the brush, where it flared for an instant before dying, he led the stallion back as far as the break he had made in the fence. Taking a turn with the chain around the animal's nose, like an improvised hackamore, he swung from the stone pile to the slippery back. A moment's shying, a sliding caracole of amazement and distrust, a crushing of knees, a lash of the chain-end, and that was all there was to that. Blue Murder had been ridden before. . . .

In the smithy, chambered in the roaring of the falls and the swish and shock of the storm, Camden sang as he pumped his bellows, filling the cave beneath the rafters with red. The air was nothing, the words were mumbo-jumbo, but they swelled his chest. His eyes, cast from time to time at his wheeling prisoner, had lost their look of helplessness and surly distraction.

"Shy, you devil!" He wagged his exalted head. "Whicker, you hellion! Whicker all you want to, stud horse! To-morrow they're going to get you, the dumb fools! To-morrow they can have you. I got you to-night!"

He was more than other men; he was enormous. Fishing an iron shoe from that inseparable apron pocket of his, he thrust it into the coals and blew and blew. He tried it and it was burning red. He tried it again and it was searing white. Taking it out on the anvil he began to beat it, swinging his hammer one-handed, gigantic. So in the crimson light, irradiating iron sparks, he was at his greatest. Pounding, pounding. A man in the dark of night with a hammer about him can do wonders; with a horseshoe about him he can cover up a sin. And if the dark of night in a paddock won't hold it,

then the dark of undergrowth on a mountainside will. . . .

Pounding, pounding; thinking, thinking, in a great halo of hot stars. Feeding his hungry, his insatiable muscles.

"Steady now, you blue bastard! Steady, boy!"

What he did not realise in his feverish exaltation was that his muscles were not insatiable. In the thirty-odd hours past they had had a feast spread before them and they had had their fill. . . . More than their fill.

As with the scorching iron in his tongs he approached the stallion, he had to step over the nail-box he had stepped over five thousand times in the routine of every day.

A box of apples, eh? Apples to snigger at, eh? But whose girl are you now? . . . Scared, eh?

His foot was heavier of a sudden than it should have been. This five thousand and first time, by the drag of the tenth of an inch, the heel caught the lip of the nail-box.

He tried to save himself from stumbling. At the same time, instinctively, he held the iron flame in his tongs away.

There was a scream out of a horse's throat; a whiff of hair and burnt flesh.

There was a lash of something in the red shadows. There was another sound and another wisp of stench. . . .

When, guided by the stallion's whinnying, they found the smith next day, they saw by the cant of his head that his neck was broken, and they perceived that he, too, had on him the mark of a shoe. It lay up one side of his throat and the broad of a cheek. It wasn't blue this time, however, it was red. It took them some instants in the sunshine pouring through the wide door to comprehend this phenomenon. It wasn't sunk in by a blow this time; it was burned in, a brand.

Darred called them to look at the stallion, chained behind the forge.

"Almighty God!" The words sounded funny in his mouth. They sounded the funnier in that they were the same ones the blundering smith had uttered when, staring uphill from his clever wreckage of the paddock fence, he had seen the mares striking sparks from the stones where the stallion struck none. And he, of all men, a smith!

"Almighty God!" called Darred. "What can you make of these here feet?"

One fore-hoof was freshly pared for shoeing; the other three hoofs were as virgin as any yearling's on the plains. Blue Murder had never been shod. . . .

The Gory Gazette is addressed to people who like to solve and shudder as they read. It is entirely about Inner Sanctum Mysteries, and it will appear regularly in this magazine with news of the latest in death, deviltry, and detection.

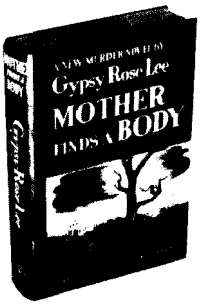
Since September, 1940, one Inner Sanctum Mystery has appeared each month. Probably the one most widely discussed was GYPSY ROSE LEE'S *The G-String Murders*, which broke modern mystery best-selling records. Also, the work of CRAIG RICE, ANTHONY BOUCHER, PATRICK QUENTIN, WILL OURSLER and many other popular writers is well known to mystery readers.

Current crop of Inner Sanctum Mysteries is a varied list.

Recently published is *Passing Strange* by RICHARD SALE, a novel of murder, medicine and the movie colony. It is recommended only to readers who can take uninhibited dialogue and shocking facts without sugar coating. Of the author's first mystery, *Lazarus #7*, the New York *Herald Tribune* said: "Bizarre, brutal, sardonically amusing, and well written."

Just published (September 11) is *The Hangman's Handyman* by HAKE TALBOT. Not since our first encounter with JOHN DICKSON CARR have we found a more skillful exponent of The Impossible Situation. MR. TALBOT not only challenges the most astute reader with this story of a patent medicine tycoon killed by a curse, but also he solves it in a completely rational and satisfying manner, with a couple of genuine shudders thrown in for good measure.

Looking ahead, October will usher in the second murder novel by GYPSY ROSE LEE. Of the author's writing skill, *Time Magazine* has this to say: "Lurid, witty and highly competent. MISS LEE'S Minsky background, rich show-business vocabulary and stagedoor gags make her book almost a social document." In her new book, *Mother Finds A Body*, the author has assembled a cast of out-of-work burlesque actors touring the country in a trailer. GYPSY herself is on hand to help collect red herrings, but it is MOTHER who gets top billing when she finds a corpse under the bed and buries it.



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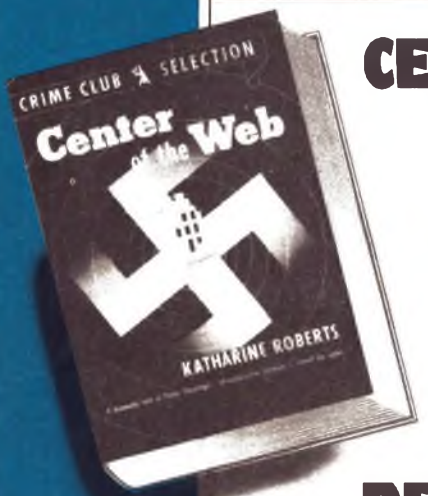

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