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FAMOUS DETECTIVE STORIES

All Stories New, No Reprints

In This Issue

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Suspenseful Short Stories

Special Features

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MARIE ANTOINETTE PARK, *Asso. Ed,* CLIFF CAMPBELL, *Asso. Ed.*

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My secret will be disclosed only to a few men in each area—men who will give me their word of honor not to give the secret to anyone else.

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She took a gun from her purse, and shot Harris twice...

Dr. Archer had the motive for killing old Walsh — but the method was all wrong for a man in Archer's position!

PATTERN FOR HOMICIDE

by Eugene Pawley

NICK HARRIS, private eye, was just a little bored by the caller in his Boston office. To be sure, she was good-looking, but she was neither young enough nor attractive enough to warrant prolonged study. She was smart, but not dressed expensively enough to hold forth the bait of a whooping big fee.

In fact, she came forth with a bribe; and when Harris refused, she took a gun from her purse and shot him twice in the chest. Then she was gone.

The police took over from there. Young Dr. Gordon, the medical examiner, made the usual examination and filed his report with the D. A. That, he thought, should wash it up; but it didn't.

The following morning, Dona Dean, his nurse, closed the door firmly behind her and leaned against it. She brushed a wisp of auburn hair back from her forehead and fixed narrowed green eyes upon him. "Lieutenant Cline is here," she said in a voice that relegated the police officer to the ranks of undesirable visitors. "I told him to wait."

Gordon gave her a crooked grin. In the two years that Dona had served him as secretary, nurse, and girl Friday, she had made it quite plain that she disapproved of his work as the

county medical examiner, and resented especially the demands Cline made upon his time.

"He said it was about the Harris case," she explained. "Shall I tell Mrs. Dodge to come in?"

"Mrs. Dodge?" the doctor raised a quizzical eyebrow. "She had no appointment."

Dona's smile was smug. "I know. But she came before the lieutenant; also, she is very wealthy and has connections which could be of help to you."

The doctor sighed aloud, but Dona was gone, so he smiled at Mrs. Dodge, who was a stout fortyish and very chic. But while he listened to her story—a story he often heard from women who had too much money and too much leisure—he thought of Cline and Nick Harris. The lieutenant, a solid-looking man in his early forties with keen gray eyes, looked a bit worried. Ordinarily, he kidded Dona; but this trip he made no reply when she pointedly reminded Gordon that this was his afternoon for golf.

"What about Harris?" Gordon asked when Cline sat down. "I thought you fellows just about had that one wrapped up by now."

"Hah!" Cline said with feeling. "I have one lousy lead, and I'm sort of afraid of it. I latched onto it this morning when I went to Nick's bank to check on the state of his finances and found out there was a deposit that came in by mail. It's postmarked six P. M. last night and is a check for four hundred and some dollars made out to Harris by a guy named Oliver Walsh."

Gordon stiffened in his chair, dark eyes thoughtful as he considered a name synonymous with the growth and prosperity of the city. "The Beacon Hill Walsh?" he said, knowing now why Cline looked worried. "Did you ask him about the check?"

"I went out to his place."

"What did he say?"

"He didn't; he's dead. Died between eight and ten this morning, the doctor says, from spontaneous cerebral hemorrhage."

"What doctor?"

"Archer. A young guy about your age."

Gordon had heard of Archer. He knew also that Walsh was close to seventy, had nearly died a few months back from a stroke or heart attack—he could not quite remember which—and was considered a semi-invalid whose death at any time was to be expected.

"Was Archer with him when he died?"

Cline shook his head. "No, but he's been attending the old gent for several months. There were two grandsons," he added slowly, as though he considered it important. "One's still in Germany with the occupation forces; the other was lost in the Pacific and his widow, Sandra, has been living with the old man. Also a guy named Jason Holmes, a nephew."

CLINE PUT a slip of paper on the desk, added a smaller one; the larger of these was a statement from Nick Harris. Gordon glanced at it and saw that it represented seven days' work at twenty-five dollars a day, a four-day hotel bill with the word, *Plaza*, in parenthesis beside it, and an item for a hundred and ninety-odd dollars for railroad, Pullman, meals, and tips.

"I found the bill in Walsh's desk while I was nosing around," Cline said. "This thing"—he touched the smaller slip, a Pullman stub from Boston to Chicago—"I found in Harris' pocket last night."

"No one at the house knows anything about it?" Gordon watched the lieutenant shake his head. "And what do you want me to do?"

"Well—I thought maybe you'd want to do an autopsy."

Raymond Gordon lit a cigarette and continued to play with the lighter, snapping the little arm that covered the

wick up and down. He didn't know he was doing it, for it was an unconscious habit when he was thinking hard.

"I doubt it, John," he said, finally; "from what I've heard, old man Walsh was overdue."

Cline watched Gordon somberly. The doctor was a lean hard-bodied man with good bones in his jaw and a way of holding himself that suggested competence and a nice co-ordination of mind and muscle. He had an easy unaffected manner, provided you did not try to push him around.

"Well, will you go out to the house with me?" Cline asked.

"Is the body still there?"

"Archer had signed the death certificate, but I asked him not to move the old man until I'd talked with you." Cline stood up. "He didn't like it much—Archer, I mean."

Gordon thought regretfully of the afternoon of golf he was going to miss. Instead, what he was going to do could prove most unpleasant for everyone. "Yes," he said. "I'll have a look."

THE WALSH home stood well back from the cobblestoned street, a massive stone structure surrounded by an iron fence. A colored houseboy took Gordon and the lieutenant to the second-floor suite where Dr. Archer and a young woman were waiting.

Archer was tall, blond, and very efficient-looking. He introduced himself to Gordon, his annoyance with Cline clearly apparent by the way he ignored the officer, and then presented Sandra Walsh, widow of the grandson lost in the war—a slenderly rounded woman of thirty, with black hair and a clear, ivory skin.

"In here, Doctor," Archer said. "It's utter nonsense, of course, but if the lieutenant wants to be difficult about it, we might as well get it over."

Gordon stepped into the bedroom. Cline, his face turning scarlet, followed quietly. Archer picked up a folder containing his history of the case and handed it to Gordon. "As you will see from that," he said, "Mr. Walsh's death was merely a question of time. He had an enlarged heart, high blood pressure, and arteriosclerotic condition."

Gordon was verifying the doctor's statements from the records. When he had satisfied himself, he proceeded with a cursory examination of the corpse. Finding no sign of violence upon it, he glanced at the bedside table and noted the sleeping pills.

Archer, as though reading his mind, said: "If you're wondering about an overdose, the answer is no. I brought that bottle of fifty the day before yesterday and only two are gone—one for last night and one for the night before. As for anyone committing a murder, when the man had not more than a few months to live—if that—it's ridiculous."

Cline's face was still red but his voice was even. "I want to know why he'd hire a private dick like Nick Harris and pay him four hundred bucks."

Gordon intervened by asking Archer the facts of Walsh's death. What he learned did nothing to help Cline's theory. Walsh had taken his sleeping-pill at nine-thirty the night before as was his custom. At eight that morning the houseboy came in to raise the shades, had heard Walsh mumble something, and thought he was talking in his sleep. Since he was under orders to leave after raising the shades and let Walsh get up when he felt like it, the houseboy had gone out, and not until ten o'clock did he discover that the old man was dead.

Gordon nodded and returned to the sitting room. Sandra Walsh continued to stare listlessly out the window as he examined the room, noticing now that the books which lined the nearby wall were nearly all detective stories. There were some reference volumes on the bottom shelf; books on criminology, legal medicine, police practice, and tox-

icology; and because he wanted time to think, he spoke about them.

"He must have been quite a detective-story fan."

"He was," Sandra Walsh said; "it was about the only pleasure he had left."

She glanced from Archer to Cline, and Gordon could see how very attractive she was in spite of the tired lines about her mouth and eyes. Then, the door opened and a man entered—a slim, thin-faced man of thirty-five or so, with sparse brown hair and glasses. When he was introduced as Jason Holmes, Gordon knew that this was the nephew Cline had mentioned earlier.

If Holmes was at all upset by what happened, he gave no outward sign of it; he glanced casually at Gordon and asked bluntly if he was going to do an autopsy. When Gordon said he did not know, Holmes shrugged.

"It's a lot of nonsense," he said. "The old boy simply died in his sleep, and anyone who says different is crazy—not that he didn't pick a good time for it."

He was staring at Archer as he spoke, and Gordon, seeing that look and the way the woman's mouth tightened, felt a sudden tension in the room where none had been before. Cline said: "A good time for whom, Mr. Holmes?"

"I was thinking particularly of Dr. Archer," Holmes returned. "Mr. Walsh was about to make a change; he seemed quite dissatisfied with the doctor's work."

"That's a lie," Archer said.

"Possibly a good time for Sandra, too," Holmes said, as though he had not heard. He took off his glasses and blinked pale myopic eyes. "Walsh didn't approve of the doctor's relations with Sandra."

"And what were those relations?" Cline wanted to know.

"We were in love," the girl announced simply. Then, sparks in her eyes, she turned on Holmes. "You should be ashamed. Not once did you try to make things pleasant for him; not once would you read to him, or—"

"That trash?" Holmes waved his glasses with scorn at the detective stories. "I should say not."

"And so *I* had to, night after night, because I knew if I didn't no one would."

"Don't be so noble about it." Holmes replaced his glasses; "I notice it didn't take you long to start painting your nails again."

DR. ARCHER spoke under his breath as he moved toward Holmes, his jaw hard and eyes stormy. Cline moved in front of him. "Take it easy," he warned.

Sandra had her head down and Gordon could see her face working. She looked at her red-painted nails. "Yes," she said in a small voice. "He didn't like painted nails; he spoke about it when I came here, and so I wore them plain. Then this morning—" She hesitated, a catch in her voice. "Oh, what difference does it make? You wouldn't understand."

Gordon cleared his throat. He still did not know what he should do, but he wanted to get out. He nodded to the lieutenant and announced: "I'll have the body removed to the morgue."

"You can't do that." Archer spoke quickly, his eyes resentful. "You've seen his record; you've no reason to doubt me as the attending physician just because some private detective no one ever heard of was murdered last night."

"Mr. Walsh heard of him," Cline interjected.

"If you insist on doing a post-mortem—" Archer began.

"I didn't say that." Gordon interrupted. "I want to make a thorough examination, and I can do it better at the morgue; I'll let you know if there's to be an autopsy."

The medical examiner played no

golf that afternoon. When he made a more thorough examination of the body, without finding any marks of violence, he came back to his office.

Cline appeared at three. "I talked to the Walsh lawyer," he said. "Jay Lasker. He's fuming at the idea of an autopsy, but he told me about the will, and all three of them had sweet motives."

"You're counting the girl in?" Gordon asked.

"I'm figuring everybody and you know it," Cline returned and went on to elaborate. "Holmes and the girl cut in for a third of about two million bucks, and the grandson in Germany gets the other third. I talked to the servants, and Holmes was right when he said the old man had trouble with Archer over the girl."

He pulled out the Pullman stub he had found in Nick Harris' pocket. "Dr. Archer came from Chicago; he went to school there, and he was in a spot to marry a third of two million dollars," he added grimly. "That's a sweet motive, son."

"What about Sandra?"

THE LIEUTENANT consulted his notes. He said the girl came from Washington and had met Walsh's grandson at a USO dance while he was stationed at Tacoma. They married, and she continued to live there until he was reported killed off Iwo Jima.

"Then she came to live with the grandfather," Cline said. "Been here ever since."

"She and Holmes didn't hit it off?"

Cline scowled. "Because she said he started making passes at her. That Holmes," he said; "I don't know. He's supposed to be a writer working on something to remake the world his way. He's been living with the old gent for five years and the servants could never figure why Walsh put up with him. Holmes stands to get a third of that dough, and if old Walsh got wind of something, and put Nick Harris to checking up on him—" He leaned forward. "The whole setup smells, Doc," he said. "What about the p. m. ?"

Dr. Gordon lit a cigarette. He knew that in a legal sense he was within his rights to perform or order an autopsy. He knew, too, that there were other than legal considerations.

"Jay Lasker is the Walsh attorney, and that guy carries a lot of weight in this man's town. If I do an autopsy and find out Walsh had died just as Archer says he did—"

"Lasker will sure throw that weight around," Cline finished. "Yeah," he said, and stood up. "I guess he could make it tough for a young guy like you." He hestitated, put on his hat. "However, it's entirely up to you, Doc."

Gordon's grin was humorless. "Get out," he ordered. "Beat it. I'll do that autopsy tonight."

Raymond Gordon had cause to view his decision with doubt several times before the afternoon was over. He had to listen to Archer's protests; he had to listen to Jay Lasker.

"I can't stop you," Lasker said, "but if you're wrong I can promise you more publicity than you ever had in your life—all of it bad."

Dona Dean added her arguments to the others when she learned what Gordon intended to do. Normally, her manner during office hours was one of strict formality; but occasionally she scolded and bullied him with the proprietary intensity of a woman in love—though it was unlikely that she had ever admitted such an interest, even to herself. She had argued before that he should give up the office of medical examiner, pointing out that he would be much farther ahead if he put the same amount of effort into his own practice.

"I think you're crazy," she said, "to risk your future just because Cline had a silly hunch."

Gordon wondered about this after she had gone, his mind going back inevitably to old Doc McGrath who, in

those tough early days when Gordon had first hung out his shingle, had suggested that he might like an assistant medical examiner's job on a fee basis. "You'll get a real chance to know anatomy," McGrath had said. "It might be something you'd like."

Gordon found that McGrath was right. The fees paid his office rent, and the knowledge gained helped him save lives in the Pacific. Coming back to find McGrath ready for retirement, it had seemed natural enough to accept the full responsibility, and though there had been times when he questioned the wisdom of his decision, he had never seriously considered giving up his work. That his own interest in crime might have influenced him was something he would have quickly denied.

IN THE HOURS that followed, he found himself wishing he had taken Dona's advice. Not until after eleven o'clock that night did he know for a certainty that Cline's suspicions were well founded. Oliver Walsh had indeed died of a hemorrhage—but not, as Archer had maintained, a spontaneous one brought on by natural causes. Walsh had been murdered.

The city maintained an office for its medical examiner on the second floor of the mortuary, and adjoining this was a conference room. Here, at ten o'clock the next morning, Dr. Gordon was to make known his findings to Lieutenant Cline and those he had summoned.

Jason Holmes sat indolently in his chair at one end of the white oak table, his myopic eyes veiled but suspicious. Sandra Walsh—in a simple black dress that accented her paleness and made her eyes enormous—sat at one side. Next to her was Dr. Archer, his mouth sullen as with hostile eyes he watched Gordon remove some photographs from an envelope.

Gordon gave it to them straight. He said Lieutenant Cline's suspicions had been confirmed. He said that Oliver Walsh had been murdered, though this was no reflection on Archer's diagnosis, since the type of wound would be clinically undetected.

"Given the same case history, I would have made a similar diagnosis," he said; "it took an autopsy to reveal the truth."

Archer reached for the pictures, stared at one and then another, his mouth white. Sandra Walsh's eyes were wide and incredulous as she watched Archer.

Jason Holmes shifted in his chair. "What was the cause of death?"

"Walsh was stabbed," Gordon replied, "with a thin round instrument like an awl or an ice pick. Stabbed here," he said and put his finger in front of and slightly above his ear. "The autopsy showed the brain wound, and when we shaved the hair we photographed the point of entry. Not over three-sixteenths of an inch in diameter," he said, "with a minute scratch an eighth of an inch from that."

He rose, collected the photographs and handed them to Cline, his lean face grave, as he studied briefly those around the table.

"He died yesterday morning," he said, "but in my opinion he was stabbed the night before, after the sleeping pill had taken effect. A younger man might have lived for days with that sort of wound, but in Mr. Walsh's condition, death came more quickly."

"But"—Jason Holmes swallowed hard—"there was no blood."

"A drop or two possibly," Gordon said, "which the killer wiped away some time before morning." He walked to the door. "I'll make my report and send a copy to the D. A.," he said to Cline.

The lieutenant followed him into the hall, asking the others to remain. "Now what, Doc?" he asked.

"Look for an ice pick or an awl—preferably one that has a rough spot

in the metal that crimps the handle to the blade."

"Sure." Cline scowled. "But what do you think? You must have some ideas; you generally do."

Gordon fashioned a wry grin. "I'm all out of ideas. You wanted an autopsy; you had an idea Nick Harris' murder was hooked up with Walsh and it looks as if you were right. Anyway, now you've got another murder."

Cline looked hard at him, half closing one eye. "Just like that, huh?" he said.

The medical examiner pretended he didn't hear. "My job is to determine the cause of death," he elaborated. "You and the D. A. are supposed to take it from there, and you know it."

AS THE DAY wore on, Dr. Gordon found it difficult to sit back and do nothing. It was all right while he was busy with an office full of patients; it was all right when Cline came in about noon with an ice pick which he had found in the Walsh kitchen and which had the proper length and the required rough spot on the metal crimping. But when Gordon had a chance to think over the things Cline had said, the seeds of worry grew like weeds in the fertile soil of his imagination.

For Cline was concentrating his efforts upon Dr. Archer, and his reasons seemed logical. "He's going to marry one third of two million dollars," Cline said. "To stop him, the old gent was going to fire him, and maybe—I admit I'm guessing on this—cut the dame off. Nick Harris was in Chicago checking on something, and Archer came from Chicago. Also, Archer had the sort of knowledge a guy would need to think up a murder like that; he never dreamed there'd be an autopsy."

Gordon made no comment at the time, and for the next two hours busied himself with a paper he was to read that evening at a dinner given by the State Medical Association. With this out of the way, doubt and uncertainty again began to crowd his mind and, not telling Dona Dean where he was going, he drove to the Walsh mansion.

There he talked with the houseboy and servants; he inspected the old man's suite again, and took a quick look at Jason Holmes' study. When he returned to the office he telephoned a local travel agency. Then he called a friend of his, saying he would be unable to attend the dinner and asked him to read the paper he had prepared.

Dona Dean, overhearing the last of his conversation, was horrified. But before she could protest, Gordon was phoning the lieutenant. "Still think Archer is your man?" he asked. "Have you booked him?"

"Not yet," Cline said. "Why? I thought you weren't interested."

Gordon ducked that one. He said he'd been thinking things over. "I think you've got the wrong man pegged," he said. "I don't know whether I can prove it or not. I'm not even sure I can—"

Cline cut him off with a growl. He had worked with Raymond Gordon often enough to respect his intelligence and ability. In the past, the medical examiner's knowledge and shrewd observations had helped break other murders, and Cline was not the type of officer who, once he had settled on a suspect, became blind to other aspects of a case.

"Never mind the prologue," he said gruffly. "Will you try—and what do you want me to do?"

Gordon told him without elaborating his own theory, and when he hung up he found Dona Dean standing before him. "So that's your reason you can't go to that dinner?"

The doctor had a difficult time meeting her gaze. He tried to pretend it was not important. "It'll probably be a lousy dinner, anyway. Look," he said. "I should be back by seven; we'll go out somewhere and get a steak."

"No," said Dona, "we will not." Then, because the things Gordon did were so important to her, she continued her scolding without shame.

"I should think it would be enough, the chance you took with the p. m.," she said. "You stuck your neck out and you got away with it. I guess it's a good thing you did," she added with some reluctance, "and I can understand that you felt it was your duty. But this other—well, you've said yourself your job was to determine the cause of death. If you go up there trying to play detective, instead of taking in that dinner, then all I can say is that you're just"—she groped for a word and found it—"just grandstanding."

Gordon pushed back the chair and stood up, his eyes averted so she could not see the hurt and disappointment mirrored there. "You're probably right, Dona," he said very quietly.

"But you're still going."

"Until I'm sure about Dr. Archer. I'm sort of responsible for putting the chap in the spot he is. Perhaps he's guilty; maybe the lieutenant can prove it. But if he's not, and he gets involved and maybe arrested, it will ruin his career whether he's guilty or not.... You can leave those letters I dictated on my desk," he said, "and I'll sign them when I get back. There's no need for you to wait."

THERE WAS a prowl car parked in the Walsh drive. When Dr. Gordon went upstairs he found Cline waiting with a police photographer and a plainclothesman. The photographer was setting up his equipment under the suspicious gaze of Jason Holmes, while Sandra Walsh watched without apparent interest.

Dr. Archer, who had been sitting on the arm of her chair, stood up when he saw Gordon, spoke coldly. "What is this?" he demanded. "Are you taking over the functions of the detective bureau, Gordon? Because if you are..."

The lieutenant interrupted, his voice steady: "I'd take it easy, Dr. Archer; I'm the guy that thinks maybe you're guilty, not the medical examiner. He took the trouble to come up here to see if he could prove I was wrong."

Archer sat down again, glanced uncertainly about. Then, some of his defiance and bluster remaining, he said, "What makes you think I didn't kill him, Gordon?"

"I don't think you would have been so crude as to use an ice pick," Gordon said. "It came from downstairs, from a kitchen drawer. I doubt if you'd even known that it was there and—"

"I didn't."

"I don't think you'd have used it anyway—unless you were trying to pin the job on someone else—because you have instruments of your own that would have done just as well. As a matter of fact, I doubt if any doctor in his right mind would be stupid enough to kill in that fashion. A smart attending physician could take the life of a man in Mr. Walsh's condition by simpler methods, and without fear of autopsy findings."

"I thought of that, but—" Cline paused, his gaze troubled. "Nick Harris has a Pullman stub from Chicago," he said. "Archer came from Chicago."

"What I want to know," Jason Holmes said, pointing at the photographer, "is what this fellow is supposed to be doing."

No one answered him. The others were watching the medical examiner, and he said, "All that stub proves is that Harris went to Chicago. But the hundred and ninety-odd dollars he had on his bill indicates that he did a lot more traveling. I checked with a travel agency and found that a man might go twice that far. Maybe to Washington. Harris wrote the word, *Plaza*, opposite his hotel charge. There is a Plaza Hotel in Tacoma."

Now, he turned to Jason Holmes. "You want to know what he's doing?" He indicated the police photographer. "He's going to take some pictures of that bottom shelf and the reference books Walsh kept there. I came up here this afternoon and checked your library. I notice you go in for Proust and Thomas Mann and Marx and Krafft-Ebing."

"I damn well don't read this junk."

"Somebody did," Gordon said. "Somebody took a particular interest in this book." He pointed to a heavy volume of legal medicine. "It's been used recently, because the top of it is clean, and the adjoining volumes have a thin coating of dust. That's what we're going to photograph first."

HE TOOK a deep breath and continued, "I've got a copy of that book in my office; most medical examiners have. It's printed on a heavy coated stock, the kind that takes fingerprints well. We'll photograph page 412, I think, because on that page is a picture of a man who died like Walsh died. It shows the tiny hole the ice pick made, a hole covered by hair that went undetected until the post-mortem examination. I think the fingerprints we'll find on that page will match yours, Mrs. Walsh."

For three long seconds no one moved. Then Archer jumped up, his face stiff. "No!" he cried. "Now wait!"

Gordon ignored him. He was watching Sandra Walsh's drawn gray face, the approaching hysteria in her hot bright eyes. He went on, his voice direct, controlled.

"We might even find the answer for those red nails you were in such a hurry to paint," he said. "There wasn't much blood, was there? A drop or two which you wiped from the wound. But there was blood on the weapon and you got a drop or so inside the nail—in the quick, where it wouldn't wash off and where you couldn't dig it out without making the quick bleed."

He said, "When the lieutenant came, I guess that stain worried you some—until you realized that no one would notice it if you painted your nails." He glanced at Cline and Cline was watching the woman. Gordon continued: "A microscopic analysis will tell us if I'm right about that, and—"

But he didn't have the chance to finish. The hysteria and panic he had seen growing in Sandra's eyes now took command. She came out of her chair with a catlike quickness, whirling away from the still-incredulous Archer, and turning toward the door.

Gordon recognized this wild desire to escape as the instinctive animal-like reaction of one whose mind no longer functions properly, and let Cline and the plainclothesman deal with it. Seeing the look of shock and horror on Archer's face, he knew that it was the young doctor, and not the woman who would most need help and sympathy.

DONA DEAN was waiting when Dr. Gordon returned to his office at seven-thirty; so were three reporters and a photographer who had heard about the autopsy. They wanted the details and asked if he had any ideas about the murderer.

Gordon said he had no comment. He also said he had given a full report to the district attorney and that any statement to the press would necessarily come from that source. "If you're interested in the police angle of it," he said, "why don't you have a talk with Lieutenant Cline? I understand he made an arrest just a few minutes ago."

The newspapermen got out fast, and when Dona closed the door, Gordon went into his office, put his hat on the desk, and sank gratefully into the chair. Dona came in and sat down opposite him. After a moment, she said, her voice a little ashamed: "And I

thought you were just grandstanding. I'm frightfully sorry."

Raymond Gordon glanced at her, seeing mostly the concern in her lovely eyes. He told her to forget it, and because he felt so weary and beaten and empty inside, he just closed his eyes and sat motionless. Dona went to the small refrigerator and began to take out ice. She added whisky and water and handed it to him.

"Take it," she said. "I guess a doctor has a right to drink after a day's work, just like anyone else.... Would it help to talk about it?"

Gordon drank gratefully. Before he knew it he was answering questions, and presently Dona had the whole story.

"And if you hadn't gone," she murmured at the end, "the lieutenant would have arrested Dr. Archer."

"I guess that he would," Gordon said, "but not for very long. When he got around to figuring out the Pullman fare and one thing and another, he would have had to let him go. But it would have been tough on Archer ...it's still tough," he said heavily, "but in a different way."

"For awhile," Dona said, "until he realizes how lucky he is. Until he understands how it might have been if he had married her.... Why?" she asked. "Why did she do it?"

"She was a bad girl," Gordon explained. "She ran away from home as a kid, and got in trouble with some guy, and wound up in a reform school. Later she married a soldier, and when he went overseas, she made the mistake of marrying young Walsh without the benefit of a divorce. She got by for nearly a year with the old man. Then he finally got wind of something and sent Nick Harris west to check up on her. Harris got the goods on her. That's why old man Walsh had the row with Archer. He wanted to break up the affair without telling the doctor the truth; and when Sandra saw she was going to get kicked out without a dime, she made up her mind to do something about it before Walsh called in his lawyer. She'd spent a lot of time reading about crime to the old gent, and she got the idea on how to kill him from that book on legal medicine.

"Once she had made up her mind, she knew she had to put Harris out of the way, too, because he knew the truth about her. She phoned him for an appointment and walked in on him with a gun in her bag. She shot him, searched his files for the carbon copy of the report he'd given the old man, and got out fast. Later she destroyed that copy as she destroyed the original, and if it hadn't been for Cline finding Walsh's check, she'd have gotten away with it."

Gordon drained his glass, put it aside, and with it he somehow put aside his weariness. He did not know whether it was the drink or the talking he had done which was responsible, but he felt immeasurably better. He recognized the emptiness inside him for what it was.

"Look," he said. "I'm hungry." He shook his finger at Dona. "It's not often I extend second invitations to dinner, but this time—"

"I accept," interrupted Dona, her voice relieved. "I'm starved."

She stood up and Gordon rose with her. When he saw her smile and the sudden radiance in her eyes, he knew that everything was going to be all right again.

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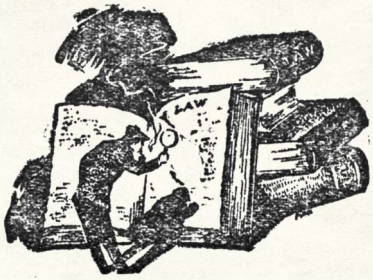

ANNALS OF CRIME

MOST UNNATURAL MURDERS

by G. A. Cevasco

THE ANNALS of modern crime are filled with scores of murders committed while the murderer was in a sound sleep. From all parts of the world reports of "dream murders" continue to come to the attention of criminologists and psychologists.

One of the most unusual cases of dream murder is that of Robert Ledru. Ledru, who recently died at the age of 85, was a famous French detective who was honored and retired with a pension —even though it was well known that he had, without cause, murdered an innocent Parisian businessman.

A little more than 50 years ago, Ledru was vacationing at a resort hotel just a few miles from the French seaport of Le Havre. One morning, after twelve full hours of sleep, he awoke feeling exhausted. How curious, he thought, as he arose and began to dress. Something else seemed strange: he wondered why his socks were off his feet and how come they were wet. It was his habit to sleep in his socks on cold nights; and the evening before being unusually crisp, he remembered distinctly wearing his socks to bed. Now, however, they were crumpled together on the floor, and, odder still, they were wet. He dressed, overcame his tired feeling, and pushed to the back of his mind the mystery of his wet socks.

Shortly after breakfast he received a wire from his superior in Paris. His instructions were to help the local police solve a baffling murder. The naked body of a man had been found on the beach at St. Addresse, which was but a short distance from the detective's hotel. The victim, presumably a night bather, had been shot through the head.

Ledru began his investigation. He learned from the local police that the murdered man was Andre Monet, a small Parisian shop owner who had

been enjoying a short holiday away from his business. A harmless nobody, Monet was known to have few friends, no enemies, and little in the way of capital. It seemed obvious that he was not slain for his money. After the shooting, his clothes had not been touched; for they were found neatly piled on the sand, just a few feet from his body.

Two clues were all Ledru had. One, the murderer's footprints left in the sand; the other, a ballistic report that the bullet had been fired from a Luger. The St. Addresse police were quick to dismiss both as nugatory, and so they had notified the Paris police. They explained to Ledru that the footprints were practically valueless because the killer had been in his stocking feet; that Lugers were a common weapon. "Even you, Monsieur Ledru, we see own one," they pointed out.

There seemed to be no motive for the killing; the murder of Andre Monet presented a challenge, and Ledru resolved to find the murderer.

He began with the better clue, the footprints. A careful examination of one print with his magnifying glass filled him with fear. He noted that one toe possibly was missing from the stockinged print, and he himself lacked a toe in his right foot. Before he drew his next breath he thought of his mysterious wet socks.

In haste he returned to his hotel. Once safely inside his room, he nervously took out his pistol, lifted a pillow from his bed, rolled it up, and fired into it. Examination of the grooves on this shell with those on the lethal bullet he had obtained from the local police confirmed his fear.

He hurried back to Paris to report to his superior. After shaking hands with the Chief of Police and exchanging a few words, Ledru laid the bullets and photographs of the footprints on the chief's desk. "I have the killer and the evidence but I lack the motive," the detective began.

"Ledru, Ledru," the chief exclaimed, "you are brilliant. How quickly you found the murderer. Who is he?"

"It was I who killed Andre Monet," the detective answered.

Ledru's superior first thought the detective was spoofing. When at last Ledru convinced him, the horrified chief, confronted with such conclusive evidence, placed his best sleuth under arrest. Only when all the facts were known and carefully weighed—in particular Ledru's story of his wet socks—was the theory accepted that Ledru, while walking in his sleep, had murdered Monet. But murder is the *willful* taking of the life of an innocent person, it was argued, and the detective did not will the death of the victim.

Ledru was set free and even granted his pension—although he was only thirty-five years old. In spite of his forced retirement he was held in high esteem. He moved to a small farm; and here for the next fifty years of his life, because of his homicidal tendencies, he slept continually under guard.

To this day in France the strange case of Robert Ledru is often debated, but the official record is clear. Ledru was the first and only dream murderer exonerated by the French Government.

ENGLISH criminologists are familiar with another dream murder, one unequalled in its brutality. Late one night a quiet, well-respected Englishman by the name of Francis Stockwell killed his wife and dismembered her body. When all the evidence conclusively demonstrated that Stockwell was alone responsible for the fiendish death of his wife—that he had done the terrible deed in his sleep—he went raving mad and was committed to an asylum.

American newspapers not too long ago carried the story of Jo Ann Kiger and her part in an almost unbelievable murder that happened in the state of Kentucky. A pretty teen-ager, she dreamt one night that burglars had

broken into her house and were murdering her mother, father, and six-year old brother.

She jumped out of bed, grabbed two revolvers, and blasted away, firing ten shots in all. Awakened by the noise she discovered to her horror that she had killed her father and brother, and that her mother, shot through the hip, was screaming out in pain. Inasmuch as Jo Ann was without motive, was known to have suffered from previous nightmares, and was a confirmed somnambulist, she escaped prosecution.

The shots and screams were more than enough to awaken Jo Ann Kiger from her dream state immediately after her act of violence, but some somnambulists are known to sleep through any act they may perform. Several years ago in upper New York State, a sleepwalker shot and killed his wife. Indicted for first degree murder, he swore at his trial that he was in a sound sleep at the time of the shooting and that he had not awakened until hours after. Since all evidence proved that he was the murderer, he seemed destined for the electric chair.

Would you as a juror believe that the explosion of a gun would fail to awaken a man, would fail to bring him back to consciousness? After his conviction, medical experts were called in. Their testimony stayed this dream murderer's execution; finally he was acquitted.

Psychiatrists now maintain that certain somnambulists can sleep through anything. The case of John Cooke well proves the contention.

A civil engineer of Denver, Colorado, John Cooke committed a violent act while he slept. When his alarm clock went off at the same time it did each morning, he awoke and related to his wife a peculiar dream he had had. He mumbled to her that he dreamt he had been surrounded by enemies and an evil spirit told him to escape by killing himself. He remembered picking up a knife and plunging the blade into his abdomen four times.

Still, he slept through what seemed to him to be only a nightmare. In reality he had actually stabbed himself just as he had in his dream. Only when he awoke was he aware of intense pain. His suffering lasted but a few minutes, however, for he bled to death.

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Only a miracle could save Martha from a lynch-mob, as Tom Mathews accused her of murdering her husband.

SPEAK OF THE DEAD

by Charles Beckman, Jr.

HE WAS a hawk-faced man with a leathery face deeply etched by weather. His hands, curled around the "Model A" Ford steering wheel, were calloused; his fingernails were dark-ringed from field work.

He drove out of the night mist, into a side street of the tiny village nestling in the Virginia hills and parked before a dimly lit tavern. He got out of the pick-up with slow, stiff movements and walked into the joint. The air drifted around him, a thick, muggy pea soup of stale smoke, cheap perfume, and flat beer. He sat at a stool before the counter.

The lights hurt his eyes. The noise of the television and the shrill laughter of a woman sitting next to him hurt his head. He wished the noise would stop.

The woman beside him turned, her knee brushing his. She glanced at him. She kept staring at him; her face turned sick, then she screamed. She pushed her fingers shakily up along her cheeks and screamed a high-pitched, sustained note like an ambulance siren.

The bartender put a bottle down and turned around. He looked at the hawk-faced man; a glass fell out of his hand, splintered on the floor.

The man sighed and stood up. His head throbbed. He ought to do something about his head, he thought. The image in the mirror on the other side of the bar stared back at him, a stooped figure dressed in a faded blue denim shirt and overalls. His face was dark-shadowed, eyes deeply sunken in black sockets. There was a tiny round blue bullet hole in the front part of his right temple and another on the left side where the bullet had come out. A

Suddenly they noticed—a bullet hole in the man's temple, a thin trickle of blood down his cheek . . .

thin trickle of blood had dried on his cheek.

The hawk-faced man with the bullet hole in his head turned and shuffled out of the bar. He walked down the street and the night fog swirled around him and enveloped him like a shroud...

* * *

Far up on the side of a hill in the Blue Ridge mountains, Samuel Lincoln rolled over in his sour-smelling bunk and stared out his cabin window at the setting sun.

"A pretty sight," he croaked. "A sight to stir the souls of men." His lips twisted as if they'd tasted something unpleasant. He struggled out of the bed, heavy and sick with a hangover, and went about the business of cleaning himself up. He had a revival meeting to conduct down in Millsborough tonight.

Done with the task of shaving, he went to the cabin door, sloshed the soapy water out of his pan.

He gazed down the clearing, at the red clay soil broken and waiting for the seeds he hadn't gotten around to planting. There were a lot of things he hadn't gotten around to these last four years. They were empty, barren years and the taste of them was bitter in his mouth. *The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away,* said the Good Book. Sometimes, though, it didn't make sense, even to a preacher. Especially when the thing taken away left a man empty of everything inside —including faith.

He suddenly became aware of someone stirring down at the fringe of the tall pines. A figure came running out of the twilight shadows, stumbling over the clods in the field.

Samuel made out that it was a

woman. A slender, fair-skinned woman with hair as black as the coming night. He dropped the tin pan, ran down to her.

She had fallen again. She was on her knees, sobbing his name when he reached her. Her thin cotton dress had been torn half off by the brush in the woods. Her face and hands were scratched bloody. Cold perspiration beaded her face, glued strands of her hair to her forehead. Her eyes, turned up to his, were wide and black as a trapped animal's.

"Pray for me, Sam," she whispered. "Ask God to help me..." Then she fell against him in a faint.

The Lord giveth...

SAMUEL took her up in his arms and carried her to the cabin and the warmth of her body against him tore open a wound that reached to the depths of his soul.

He paused in the cabin doorway, looked across the spread of hills to the setting sun. The shadows were in his eyes. "For four years," he mumbled, "I been prayin' in Your name and it's been a lie. If You brought her back to me just to cause me more hurt, I'll turn the lie into a curse—"

He choked; then he took her into the cabin his grandfather had hewn out of pine and chinked with red clay. He put her gently on a bunk, lit a kerosene lamp, then bathed her wrists and face with cool water from the spring.

Her eyes fluttered open. She began crying. She pressed the heel of her hand against her forehead and frightened sobs shook her.

Samuel looked down at the bruises on her arms and shoulders and the shadows in his eyes turned black. It was true, the tales he'd heard about Elijah Matthew's treatment of her. They said Elijah had gone insane, and was taking his madness out on his young wife.

A mixture of feelings stirred in him, compassion for her, hatred for Elijah and a kind of joy at her suffering because of the hurt she'd done him.

"They're sayin' I killed him, Samuel," she whispered through stiff lips. "They came to get me, but I ran away..."

A chill touched him.

He gripped her arms with his big, bony hands. "Say it slow, Martha. Tell me what's the matter."

She drew a shuddering breath. "They found Elijah this afternoon, out in the barn, shot through the head. They said I done it with his twenty-two rifle." She choked and clung to him. "God knows I hated him, Samuel. I paid a thousand times for the sin of marrying him. But I didn't kill him; I swear it! You got to hide me."

She was crossing the thin border into hysteria. Samuel held her down and washed her face with wet cloths until she was quiet. "I won't let 'em do you any hurt, Martha. You're safe here."

"But they'll come after me! Elijah's brother Tom's got the whole town stirred up against me. He's sayin' terrible things. That I was carryin' on with other men—that's why Elijah beat me." She shook her head. "None of it's true. Elijah had lost his mind; he kept saying somebody was after him, then he'd whip me. He hasn't gotten me a dress in over a year. Sometimes I didn't have enough to eat. I was afraid of him, Samuel...afraid of the terrible things in his crazy eyes—"

He patted her, stood up. "You'll be all right here until morning, Martha. I'll go down to the village and see what can be done to help you."

He put his black preaching coat and took down the worn, leatherbound Bible that he carried with him to his revival meetings. He did it without thinking, as his grandfather must have unconsciously taken down his long-barreled rifle before going into the woods.

He was a tall, gaunt man with bony

joints. Folks said he looked a lot like another man named "Lincoln"—Abraham, without the beard. He had a slow, persuasive way of talking that hypnotized a crowd and swayed them to the rhythm of his words.

He often thought he must be a good evangelist to make folks believe a thing he doubted himself...

He started up his battered old car and drove along a dirt lane that wound down the hill past thick woods and plow-furrowed clearings and other cabins like his own, spiraling thin streamers of smoke into the twilight air from their stone chimneys.

As he drove, he thought of Martha's slender white body, bruised and mistreated under Elijah Matthew's crazed hands. A hard ridge bulged around his jaw.

AN HOUR later he had twisted and bumped down the side of the mountain to Williamsborough, the sleepy village nestling in the valley where Elijah Matthews had his acres of rich farm land.

But tonight the town was not sleepy; there was a chill in the air more penetrating than twilight coolness. Tension had fallen over the frame buildings and dusty streets like a blanket of evil.

A crowd had gathered at the square. Up on the steps of the old Confederate monument, a man was yelling at them in a hoarse voice, stirring them into a milling, angry mob. From the crowd, Samuel heard the deep growl of bloodhounds. A heavy sickness lay in his stomach like a lump of wet clay. He rubbed damp palms on his coat.

He braked the flivver into a parking place, leaped out and shouldered his way through the crowd. It was Elijah's brother Tom up on the granite monument steps, stirring the crowd into a lynching mood.

"Elijah took that Jezebel into his home, give her more than she ever had in her whole life. And how did she thank him? By faithlessness and murder! My brother Elijah Matthews was a hard working, God-fearing man. Tonight he's lyin' in Tompson's funeral parlor and the woman that killed him is in the hills, getting further away every minute we stand here!"

A sullen roar swept up from the mob.

Samuel struggled through the last of the crowd, up to the steps. His voice rang above the noise of the mob.

"Tom Matthews, you're sinning in the face of the Lord!"

A momentary hush fell over the people. "It's th' Reverend Samuel Lincoln!" somebody whispered.

Samuel turned toward them. *"Vengeance is mine saith the Lord,"* he quoted solemnly. He lifted a large, bony hand. "Don't you people realize you're settin' out to commit a sin as bad as murder? You're going to sit judgement and execute a human being...that's the work of the state and its laws. *Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's!"*

An angry murmer rippled through the crowd. A big farmer shook his fist at Samuel. "Fine lot th' law is doin'. Sheriff Tewely and two deputies are out ridin' around the country in a jeep, as if they expect her to be settin' on the side of the road!"

Samuel pleaded with them, but he felt the tide sweeping him under.

"We know why you're stickin' up for her," Tom Matthews sneered. "You was courtin' her when she married my brother; you been in love with her all these years. Probably, you was one of the men sneakin' around to the back door when Elijah was out sweatin' in the fields..."

Samuel leaped at the fat, sneering man. He felt satisfaction as the bones of his fist smashed Tom Matthews' curling lips. The farmer might have been fat, but he wasn't soft; he stumbled back against the monument, shook his head like a stunned pig. Then, with a bellow of rage, he came

at the evangelist, his arms swinging like pistons.

Samuel hadn't gotten the kind of training at revival meetings that Tom Matthews had in dancehall brawls. He went down under the crushing fists. Matthews kicked him once, stepped over him. Then the tide swept down the street...a sullen, rumbling tide like dark water following the eager baying of blood hounds.

Samuel lay sprawled in his own blood in the dust of the street. In a few minutes, he struggled to his knees and swayed there.

The night had closed around him. In the east, there was a bloody tinge above the pine topped mountain crests, all that remained of a dying day.

The hills had given him life and now they were taking it away from him. In those hills he had roamed as a boy, trudged behind his father's plow and first felt the call of his work. And it was the hills he had come back to after his schooling, to meet Martha and know a fire so deep and consuming that it wrecked him.

She was a lovely girl with milky skin and a body that would drive a man out of his mind, wanting her. But there was a woman's knowledge in her eyes. "No, Samuel—all my life I've known what it is to be poor. We've lived in a shack and scratched a bare living out of the side of a hill." Her lips whispered under his, "I won't be a poor preacher's wife. Elijah Matthews has asked me to marry him. He's a rich man with a big farm; he can give me what I want..."

She'd struggled out of his arms that night, shaking, because she was young and wanted him, too. Then she'd gone away to marry Elijah.

Now he was on his knees in the dusty road and the mob was following the blood hounds that would lead them straight to his cabin. And they wouldn't stop until they'd lynched her.

FROM FORCE of habit, his head bowed and his lips moved. He had seen miracles. Cynic though he was, he couldn't blind his eyes to the crippled Parkerson boy at Davidville last summer who had come to the revival, prayed, and walked away without his crutches. Or the time the Taylor woman had called him to her husband's bedside after the doctors had given him up. They'd prayed all night and the next morning he was still alive. He was alive today, well and hearty, tending to his farm.

He hadn't pretended to understand those things; he had shrugged. But the memory of the light in the eyes of those people stayed with him.

He knew now that only a like miracle would save Martha's life.

When he had the strength, Samuel stumbled to the car, swung it out to the road. Alone, he was no match for the mob headed by Tom Matthews and his bloodhounds. He had to find the sheriff who was somewhere back in the hills on one of the countless winding roads.

He had only driven two blocks when a man came running out of a doorway, waving him down.

It was the undertaker, Jeb Tompson. He was bareheaded and his face was white as putty, his eyes glazed and bulging.

He clawed at Samuel's shirt. His teeth were chattering. "He—he—" he pointed toward his funeral parlor and giggled. He clung to Lincoln, trying to get a grip on himself. Finally he chattered: "I was d-driving back from Clinton a few minutes ago. Saw a Model A comin' at me down th' road. I gave it a c-close look because it was just like the car I keep back of the shop. It was dark and went by fast, but I woulda swore it was Elijah Matthews sittin' behind the wheel." He gulped.

"Course, I told myself I was just imagining things. B-but when I got back, I went into the back of the shop

where I had Elijah stretched out on a table. And—" his voice went up to a squeak "—he wasn't there!"

Samuel shook the frightened undertaker. "Had you done anything to the body?"

Tompson shivered. "Hadn't touched it. Went over to Clinton for supplies this afternoon right after Tom brought him in—"

"Come on." Samuel half lifted the shivering man into the car beside him, turned and headed toward Clinton, five miles away.

THREE AND a half hours could be a long time to a man following bloodhounds through tangled brush. It could be an eternity to a man in a car, trying to get back to the woman he loved before an insane mob tore her to pieces.

When Samuel Lincoln finally got back to his cabin with two other men in the car beside him, he saw the flickering glow of a dozen torches around the field. He heard men's voices and a woman's scream. His blood turned to ice water.

He rammed the flivver to a halt, leaped out and stumbled over the broken field. They had Martha up by the cabin on a little mound of earth. The hounds were straining on leashes, baying at her. Tom Matthews was holding the struggling woman while one of the other men threw a rope over a pine tree limb above the hummock.

When Samuel was close enough, he saw her white face in the flickering, smoky torch light. It was a contorted thing, filled with animal fear. Her eyes were black, her lips twisted.

He got up on the mound beside her, faced the men.

"Hey, it's the preacher again!"

Tom Matthews' angry bellow drowned the other men's voices. "He's no better'n she! He was hiding her here in his cabin. Like I said, they were carryin' on behind Elijah's back, an' him half out of his mind with hard work and worry. They planned out this murder between 'em!"

The crowd of sweating men roared, surged forward.

Samuel Lincoln, lifted his hand. It was a precarious moment; some of the men had shotguns and their fingers were itching.

Samuel knew these men better than they knew themselves. They were simple people; emotion swayed them quicker than reason. When he preached it was in a dramatic, theatrical manner. Sometimes he'd cry out and sometimes his voice would drop to a whisper. Sometimes his voice would break and other times he'd chuckle.

Now he had to preach the best sermon of his career, and he had to do it the right way. One wrong move, a single ill-chosen word and those shotguns would blast out his life and Martha's before he could lay the truth before them.

A simple statement of the truth might only inflame them and they'd kill him before he could back his words with evidence.

He chose the more dramatic way. His voice rung out across the fields and woods like a bell. "You people have blinded yourselves in your sin ...you've blinded yourselves to the power of the Lord. He said to his deciples to go out preachin' and babtizin' and healin'. Even raisin' from the dead, if needs be..."

He pointed down to the edge of the clearing. "Look down yonder, you sinners, and fall on your knees and repent!"

A HUSH settled over the crowd. Then an unbelieving whisper stirred through them. One of the men dropped his gun and cried out. Tom Matthews' rough hands fell away from his brother's wife. He moved around to the edge of the mound, squinting down to where the torches spread an uncertain light over the

clearing. His face turned the color of a dirty white rag. His slack lips shook.

Elijah Matthews was walking slowly through the crowd, followed by Jeb Tompson. He came up between the petrified mob, up to the mound of earth. The torches flickered over his grey face...over the bullet holes in his temples...

"Raised from the dead!" a man breathed and fell to his knees.

Elijah stood there a moment, then pointed a finger at his brother. "This is your evil doing," he whispered hoarsely. "You found me in the barn with the gun in my own hands; you knew I'd shot myself. But you coveted my lands. You've always been a greedy man, Tom Matthews, without enough gumption to work for what you wanted.

"You took and put the gun in the house, carried me to the funeral parlor and roused the town against my wife. With us both dead, the lands would have fallen to you."

Elijah stood there a moment longer, swayed and crumpled to the ground.

His brother, Tom, stared down at him with bulging eyes; gibberish spilled from his slobbering lips. Then he turned and ran for the woods. When he stumbled, he kept going on his hands and knees.

It would have taken a stronger man than him to have faced the dead come back from the grave.

There was a medical explanation for what had happened to Elijah Matthews, Samuel thought. A doctor could have traced the course of the bullet, showing how it missed any of the vital centers of the brain; people had been shot through the head before and lived to tell about it.

Elijah had been knocked unconscious for a while from the shock of the bullet, had came to in Jeb Tompkins' funeral parlor, and wandered out, got in Jeb's old car and driven to Clinton.

In the excitement of finding his body and Tom's stirring up the town against Martha, no one had bothered to see if Elijah was completely dead. He'd certainly looked that way—stretched out white and still with the bullet hole through his head. Jeb Tompkins, who was also the coronor in Millsborough, hadn't planned to examine the body until he returned from Clinton.

That, at least, was the medical explanation for what happened. But Reverend Samuel Lincoln preferred to think it was a miracle that came out of his prayer when he knelt in the dust of the road at Millsborough.

Martha's fingers bit into his arm. "But I *did* shoot him," she whispered through stiff lips. "We were in the barn. He flew into one of his insane rages; he picked up a pitchfork. He'd of killed me, Sam. I did it without thinking... I grabbed up the rifle and shot him—"

Samuel held her hand. "Quiet, Martha. I know what happened; he told us on the way over here. I reckon he had gone completely insane. Somehow, though, the shock of the bullet cleared his mind. When we told him a lynching mob was after you, headed by his brother, he said the only way to stop them was to say he'd shot himself; it was the truth about Tom's wanting you lynched so's he could get the land."

She looked down at Elijah's still figure. "Is—is he—"

Samuel nodded sadly. "Yes, he's dead now. The strain and the trip over the rough roads finished him. I reckon he really must have loved you a lot before his mind went haywire. The Lord spared him just long enough to save you."

She covered her face. "Oh, Sam—" she sobbed.

He comforted her. "You're not to blame, Martha; you had a right to protect yourself from an insane man. Elijah doesn't blame you—neither does the Lord."

Now, more than ever before, he saw a pattern behind things. "The Lord moveth in strange ways," he murmured. He turned to the mob, which was sober and frightened now. Faced with something they couldn't touch or see, they were looking for comfort and reassurance.

"I reckon a brief service wouldn't be out of place," he told them. He turned his face to the east where a new moon was creeping above the mountain tops. It shed a pale light over the preacher's tall, gaunt figure. His voice rang out above the pines in a way it never had before.

"I will lift mine eyes unto the hills..."

There was a singing inside him like the voices of a great Cathedral choir.

★

CARELESSNESS and CLEVERNESS

Special Feature by J. J. Mathews

OUTSIDE the service entrance of Wardman Park Hotel, in Washington, D. C., was parked an armored money truck owned by Brink's. Its four-man crew, headed by Richard V. Simkins, were having lunch. When they finished they went back to their car and got a shock of their lives—the sum of $65,000 in $5, $10, and $20 bills had mysteriously vanished! No gang with machine guns had come up and fought a pitched battle for the money. Neither had a giant with a crowbar or a torch gone through the armor of that car. The car was intact, and more than $100,000 in large bills were still in that car.

What had happened? There was always the slim chance that something had gone wrong at one of the pickup destinations. Brink's was notified and then the police were called in on the case.

When it comes to handling criminals, Major Robert V. Murray, chief of police of Washington, D. C., is one of the ablest men in the country. It didn't take too much figuring to determine that someone must have had a key to that truck and followed it. The Major remembered that two years ago, one Ray Eugene Farmer had been discharged as a Brink's guard for lending his uniform to members of a gang that planned a department store holdup.

So the word went out to get Ray who was now a bakery wagon driver. He was picked up and questioned for nearly seven hours. Then he confessed the crime and led detectives to Glen Echo Amusement Park, situated in Maryland. There under two inches of earth was found the $65,000 in thirteen packages which he had made. How did he work out his plan? When he had worked for Brink's he had a duplicate key made to the truck. This he guarded carefully for some future time. He was driving his bakery truck and parked it in front of the Wardman Park Hotel. Then he stood in the shadow of a hallway and watched for the arrival of the truck. When the guards left it for a bite to eat, he went into action. Within half a minute, he had opened that truck gotten the money, and closed the door. Then he later went to the amusement park and buried his loot. Was he clever or dumb?

Here was a married man, with two kids, and a job. As a bakery salesman he was earning a salary of about $80 a week. What did he expect to do with the money? Keep it for years and then spend it? He didn't figure on the good memory of the Major, who remembered that incident about the uniform. The planned holdup never took place; Ray wasn't a member of that gang, but he lost his job. Maybe it seemed easy, but he will have a long time to do some thinking about his actions.

★

Foop! Why should our quivering mass of crack-brained cowardice, J. Fenimore Yost, have been sent to protect a gal who apparently wasn't in danger? Yoicks! Who cares? Roxy Rusk was a stripper deluxe, and Yost could only get to see her on business, as her legal beagle. Ho-ha! He did; he stayed to see the show, and then—murder!

STRIP TEASE MURDER

A J. FENIMORE YOST STORY

by Alan Ritner Anderson

IT WAS 11 P.M. of a moonlit night in June and the open road beckoned. J. Fenimore Yost groaned in chagrin as he was forced to drive his station wagon at a piddling thirty miles an hour, because the police insisted that all his cars have a gadget that turned off the ignition when the car reached that speed.

"Zounds!" he bleated. "A toothsome female about to be murdered and J. F. Yost to the rescue in slow motion." He patted his basketball stomach and felt the heft of the .45 tucked there. Two hunting knives from his notable collection were sheathed from his belt over his hips, and each side pocket of his coat held a full quart of Guggengust's Best Gin—bottled bravery for the occasion.

"Ho-ha!" he chortled. "What a dish to rescue from a morgue slab! Roxy Rusk, the nut-brown stripper deluxe. King sized, too; stalked by a jealous female, no doubt. What man would want to chill a heat wave like Roxy?" Thoughts of her made him drool and he wiped his mouth with the back of his hand.

Varicolored lights smeared the horizon and he topped a ridge to see the *Oasis* below. It was a bungalow type roadhouse with a vast parking area surrounding it. The lot was comfortably filled with expensive cars. The *Oasis* was aptly named because there wasn't a drinking place within five miles.

"Tallyho and pip-pip!" cried Yost as the car picked up speed on the downgrade and did a brisk fifty with a dead engine.

He parked out back where the shadows were deepest. He swilled the rotgut gin with relish, parked the two bottles on the floor because to pack your own booze rated the heave-ho. "The moment is fraught with peril," Yost

"I can explain everything," Yost bleated. "I'm here as counseler-at-law, first class with merit badges!"

warned himself. "Ha! Roxy is over her peeve or she wouldn't have sent for me by special messenger. But are the others? After all, I did set off a smoke bomb in the dressing room corridor and flush out Roxy and the chorus cuties in their birthday suits. Egad! I timed it perfectly. Of course, it was no reason for me to grab a fire axe and chop a hole in the middle of the dance floor; and how did I know the customers would go chicken and desert the place?"

Yost teetered gently as he talked it up. He was forty-six, a squat, pot-bellied little man with a fat red nose and a bald skull that looked as if it had been sprayed with pink lacquer. His tuxedo looked as if he'd slept in it for a week, and his general appearance was that of an off-duty clown out for the evening. Actually Yost was the finest lawyer in the state and grossed a hundred thousand a year to prove it.

He went to the front of the car and studied the note in the glow of the parking lights. It was typed. *Come at once! Someone is trying to murder me.* Roxy Rusk's signature was black and bold. And genuine; just three days before she had signed the divorce papers in Yost's office.

"What am I afraid of?" Yost asked himself. "I paid the bill." He sighed woefully. "Seven hundred and ten dollars not including the pig knuckles and hardtack. Egad! I was took."

HE STRAIGHTENED up and marched around to the front of the *Casis*. The doorman was Gus Appleby, a six-five two hundred and fifty pound ex-footballer who had an interest in the place.

"A jolly good evening, Gus my boy!" cried Yost. "I've come to inspect the new chorus."

"Beat it!" Gus ordered, glowered and bent slightly from the hips.

Yost edged away because he was not nimblefooted by any means. "Come! Come! My good man!" he said in his best courtroom manner. "I am here cold sober—at least moderately sober—and I am here in my professional capacity as an attorney-at-law, a defender of the downtrodden, the champion of the meek and lowly."

"Herb Catlin send for you?" asked Gus darkly, referring to the big owner and front man.

"I do not betray the confidence of a client," declared Yost loftily.

Gus hooked a thumb at the entrance, said, "You'll be watched, J. F."

Yost pranced into the foyer and faced off with a big picture of Roxy Rusk's act. She had a novel gimmick; she wore a matador's hat, a cape, held a red flag in her hands. The midget was realistically costumed as a little bull; and in avoiding the charges of the mock bull, Roxy did more than flash flesh—she flashed her nut-brown charms in motion and the effect was spine tingling.

"Yuk-yuk!" Yost snorted. "When she did it at the Bijou I left teeth marks in the brass rail of the upper box."

He about faced clumsily and went to the opposite wall to study the picture of the new chorus. Roxy and the singers were a fixture, but the twelve-girl chorus was on the circuit and replaced every three weeks.

"Yuk-yuk!" he cried. "No pony chorus this time; these females are all as big and brawny as Roxy. Egad! Six blondes, six brunettes. Bleach and dye jobs, no doubt, but..."

Gus came in, asked, "Who you talking to?"

"Me," Yost admitted. "My psychologist says it is a manifestation of my off-beam personality; he's the one who urged me to take up collecting to get my mind off booze, gambling, and women."

"I hear tell you're collecting knives," Gus said. "In fact, I seen a picture of one of yours on the hobby page of the Sunday paper. It's got a corkscrew blade. Why?"

"Ah, the knife I got from the white-eyed Indian in exchange for a ride in my speed boat. And I don't know why the dizzy blade."

Yost entered the roadhouse. The lights were low and a bright spotlight beamed on the sultry-voiced singer. The table section was comfortably filled but not crowded. Yost ambled to the deserted bar for a quick drink of vodka.

"Bland!" he groused. "No character."

He skirted around in back of the tables and came to the potted palms that screened the entry to the dressing rooms. Taking no chance at getting intercepted, Yost dropped to hands and knees and scurried into the hallway. He stood up blowing slightly.

ROXY'S DRESSING room had a big star on it. Yost thumped with gusto. A male voice bid him enter. He did so warily, his muscles tensed for a back-stepping retreat.

Herb Catlin had been a stevedore in his youth, and he still looked capable of carrying a piano up a ladder. "You!" he exploded.

"I can explain everything," Yost bleated. "I'm not frolicking tonight;

I'm here as a counselor-at-law, first class with merit badges."

"That's different," Herb admitted.

"Where's Roxy?"

"Here," she rasped, as she stuck her head over the top of the candy striped screen in the corner of the room. "See here, J. F., if Mrs. Belcourt hired you to needle me about that mink coat, you tell her that her ever-loving husband gave it to me, and I got the lunkhead to sign a paper saying as much."

Herb Catlin lost interest and left the room. Roxy came out from behind the screen and Yost was distressed to see that she wore a wine colored dressing gown.

"Zounds!" he gloomed. "That robe could wrap a small buffalo."

"Push the divorce, Yostie!" she urged. "I'm anxious to shuck that Harry Zygant and marry a bundle of money."

"Takes time," he pointed out; "it's not like Mexico."

"Too hot, Mexico," Roxy said. "I owe that country plenty though; I got my routine from watching a bull fight."

"Psst!" Yost hissed. "Who's trying to murder you?"

Roxy's dark eyes got big, then narrowed suspiciously. "What's the gag?" she wanted to know.

"I was at Liver Lips playing the pinball machine when this street urchin came in and gave me your note. I rushed home for a gun and a couple of knives and sallied out here to save your life."

"Nuts! I didn't write you a note."

"This is typed, but you signed it. Here, look!"

He gave her the note. Roxy studied it with a fierce frown. "I didn't do it," she declared; "I can't type, and haven't a machine—but that signature sure looks like mine."

"I'm a dolt!" Yost cried. "How could anyone know I was going to Liver Lips? Egad! I've been shadowed and suckered into something."

Roxy fished a cigaret from her pocket and lit it, then touched the lighter flame to the note and laid it in the big ash tray. The letter went up in smoke.

"That lets me out," said Roxy comfortably. "If you came out here to have somebody shoot your brains out little ole Roxy isn't going to get wired in."

Yost shivered and shook and his false teeth rattled. "Don't say that!" he implored. "You know I'm yellow."

"Ha!" Roxy cried. "Sharpshooter Yostie walks into the trap like a silly sheep."

"Bah! Like my nut doctor says, I'm a woman-crazy, gin swilling, crap shooting jerkel. Any one of the three overcomes my native caution."

YOST LEFT because Roxy was big enough to throw him out. He went to the bar for another vodka. The lights were up and the couples were dancing. He looked around to see if there was anyone there he knew, but the indirect lighting was devised to shadow the faces of the customers.

Yost wandered out to the lobby to study the picture of the new chorus. "Floop!" he gloomed. "Small sized Amazons, all of them and I don't like dancing on stilts."

Gus came in, warned, "Stop talking to yourself!"

"What day is it, Gus, my boy?"

"Wednesday," said the doorman, hurried out to open the door of a fat Cadillac.

Yost trotted out to watch the patrons arrive. They were elderly and he lost interest. He sneaked around to a corner of the roadhouse and went into a huddle with himself.

"I'm looking through the wrong end of a telescope," he assured himself. "Roxy is wrong. I wasn't lured here, I was lured *away* from someplace. Wednesday, eh? Bingo night at the South Side Chowder and Marching Society. Hum! Last week I couldn't read

my cards and kept yelling 'Bingo' just in case I really got it. Seems like they threw me out."

Keeping him away from the highly-profitable bingo game seemed a logical explanation, and Yost felt vast relief. He sneaked along the west wall of the building and came to the window to the chorus dressing room. The pane was painted black on the inside but Yost was always hopeful that it would peel or flake. It hadn't.

"Bah!" he groused. "I'll hunt up a research chemist and find out what I can do to the outside of a window to remove paint from the inside. A blow-torch, maybe. Or a brick delivered side-arm."

The next window was to Roxy's dressing room and was raised a good foot. Yost dashed there and peeked. The room was empty, and he sighed in resignation, muttered, "This isn't my night."

His thirst for Guggengust's reared up and he hurried out to the station-wagon. He swilled a big drink, choked and sputtered. Then he saw that the top of the rear seat wasn't erect but folded down into the body of the car. "Not me," he avowed.

He peered over the top of the front seat. Roxy sprawled face-down wearing her dressing robe. The ebony hilt of the knife stuck out from the left side of her back. Even in the feeble light Yost recognized the weapon. "Zounds!" he groaned. "The cork-screw dagger the white-eyed Indian gave me for a ride in my speedboat. Framed for murder. Egad! I should have stood in bed.

"Floop!" he moaned. "I've got to think fast. It's about time for the chorus to show. Then comes fifteen minutes of dancing before Roxy's act comes on." He shed a few tears when he realized that he'd never see Roxy's nut-brown body again. His trenchcoat was on the front seat and he flipped it back over the body in rear.

BACK IN the *Oasis,* Yost hotfooted to the bar and flattened his nerves with a triple vodka. The beefy chorus was on prancing high wide and handsome. The drink fried his brains and he went to the rear of the table section to watch the high kicking chorus. "Bravo!" Yost bawled. "Bravo! Bravissimo!" A lot of couples hushed him up and he retreated behind the palms.

"The killer's still here," he whispered. "That for sure. I'm too solidly wired for the kill. Why should he leave? I'm the goat. Beside, if he left before Roxy's famous flesh-flashing, all the hired help would remember—because no man ever walked out without gandering Roxy's act."

The chorus line backed out kicking and Yost was so near he felt the air from their prancing legs. He had to look up at their gaudy faces. One of them slapped his bald skull and he chortled in high glee. The chorus vanished and the house lights came on as a dance number urged couples to the floor.

"Who did it?" Yost asked himself. "Who gave the speedboat ride to the white-eyed Indian? You, that's who. But who told you to go fishing in Maine. The nut doc, that's who. To get me off booze. Ha! A tasty beer the white-eyed Indian brewed from those jumbo thistles and fish bones."

Herb Catlin came up worried and concerned, gripped Yost's arms and shook him awake, asked, "Where's Roxy?"

Yost came out of his vodka stupor and his brains lit up like a pin ball machine. "Oh, Roxy," he said carelessly. "She took it on the lam. Mrs. Belcourt had her black police dogs along and Roxy hitch hiked a ride west with a traveling salesman."

"Ye Gods!" Herb cried. "These cheapskates will want their cover charge back if Roxy doesn't show."

Yost belched and his brains caught fire again. "Don't go into a tizzy, Herb

old boy!" he urged. "Roxy wears a half mash along with the cape, flag and slippers, doesn't she?"

"Certainly; she's slightly cockeyed."

"The new chorus!" Yost cried. "Egad, Herb, six of them are strapping big brunettes, and a couple of them are stacked up as fancy as Roxy."

Herb snapped his fingers in triumph. "A ringer!" he said. "Of course. Why Sara's not only a dead ringer for Roxy but did a solo dance number. But the act? Roxy and the midget practiced it for hours and hours."

Yost massaged his bald skull. "A trifling matter," he said. "The customers want to see what's under the cape and behind the flag. So tell the dwarf-midget in the bull outfit to clown it up. Ho-ha! Have him gore her hither and yon, but gently. Tell him to grab the flag with his hoofs and chase her around the dance floor umpteen times. Why, you can double the cover-charge with nary a peep."

Herb thumped Yost's back, cried, "Sensational! Absolutely sensational." His face darkened with worry and he added anxiously, "But the vice squad?"

YOST'S BRAINS were in overdrive, he said, "A fig for the blue noses! Let them levy charges and I'll defend you for free. Why, you'll get a zillion dollars worth of publicity, with foxy J. F. Yost demanding a courtroom demonstration."

"But if I get padlocked?"

"Nary a chance. I've got a defense all ready to fire. The dwarf-midget, see! Like my witch doctor would say, he's a bundle of frustrations. Night after night Roxy has been making ducks and drakes of the little rascal. He's always the loser; in fact, he never even scores. So he blew a gasket and went off his trolley like those droll bus drivers who take their passengers to Florida."

"J. F., you're a genius," cried Herb admiringly. "Sara will snap at the chance, and the midget will eat it up. J. F., you saved my life."

"Think nothing of it," said Yost airily, about-faced and went to the bar to see what sort of brain waves another triple vodka would dredge up. It sizzled his brain and the next thing he knew he was outside hiding behind a genuine tree in the parking lot.

"What am I doing out here?" he asked himself. "Zounds, I should be under a ringside table awaiting the notable flesh-flashing to come. That dwarft-midget will make it a night to remember."

Yost waddled to the rear of the lot for a poke of Guggengust's but the sight of the car refreshed his memory with a nerve jangling suddenness. "Egad! My memory stripped gears and I've been operating on my subconscious," he told himself, had a drink just for the record.

He pondered a moment, said, "The killer is there. He'll expect an announcement that Roxy can't appear. Instead, the band will blare and the dwarf-midget will dash out as the bull and a meaty lush brunette will come out as a matador. The killer gets a high voltage jolt; he'll think he's nutsy. Then human nature will assert itself and he'll have to come out here and make sure he *did* chill Roxy—and foxy J. F. Yost has trapped a killer."

He took another drink to celebrate, and checked his .45. "Egad!" he cried in alarm. "If I stay here the killer will have me like a duck in a shooting gallery."

Where to hide? Yost looked around owlishly, then snickered and kicked off his shoes, pushed them under the car. He climbed up on the hood, then up to the stationwagon roof where he bellied down facing the *Oasis*. He gripped the .45 in his right hand.

Time dragged. Yost began to get edgy when the house lights went off and the blue spot stabbed the gloom as the band dished up some spirited music

from "Carmen". There was mild applause as the mock Roxy made her entrance. Then, abruptly, women shrilled and men gasped; half the stunned band stopped playing, then got back on the beam, but raggedly.

"Caramba!" Yost groused, feeling that the musical background called for a Spanish comment. "Probably the juiciest sight since Lady Godiva took her canter, and I'm being silly trying to trap a killer." There was a burst of wild clapping mingling with shrill wolf whistles. "The vice rap for sure," Yost gloomed.

HE SHUT up and began to shiver; feet crunched gravel close at hand. The little man in the tux wore a snap-brimmed hat, turned down all the way around. He advanced with stealth, now and then pausing to look around. A riot of sound filled the air as the mock bull within ran amuck.

The man eased to the door of the stationwagon and opened it wide. He ducked into the car but his feet stuck out as he knelt on the seat to look into the rear of the car and view the mortal remains of Roxy enshrouded by Yost's trench coat.

The little lawyer came alive. He stuck his head over the roof line and bawled, "Avast!" You're under arrest. Come out with your hands up!"

The door slammed and Yost was considerably nonplussed because it hadn't gone according to his mental script. He got to his feet and scratched his bald head. "Egad!" he gloomed. "A pretty kettle of fish."

He heard the muffled explosion and saw the hole appear in the roof at the same time. Something whistled by his face. "Halp!" he bawled in his foghorn voice. "Halp! I'm being shot at." He danced left just as another hole appeared. He moved over the first hole as the third bullet smashed through the center of the roof.

The shrill of the siren was close at hand and Yost surmised that the killer had phoned the state police to tip them off about the murder—probably shortly after the crime, because the police barracks was twelve miles away.

The killer dashed out of the car and sprinted toward the rear of the *Oasis*. Yost gripped the .45 with both hands and closed his eyes. He shot the clip as fast as he could and heard tinkling of glass. He opened his eyes and saw that the big picture window had shattered into the dance floor. The police car, siren silenced, skidded around the rear of the parking lot and the blinding beam of the spotlight focused on Yost who pointed dramatically at the rear of the roadhouse.

The light swung that way and caught the killer pulling frantically on the door knob to the kitchen. The car sped there and a cop got out with a Tommy gun. Yost climbed down and found his shoes. "Naturally they recognized me at once," he avowed. "Nobody but humpty dumpty has a shape like me, and all the state police know me because of the speech I gave at their picnic, plus the thousand bucks for their retirement fund."

He dashed over to the rear of the building and saw the culprit between a corporal and a trooper. Yost recognized the murderer at once. "Corkey Joe!" he cried. "You ingrate! So this is what I get for giving you the key to my apartment and five a week to empty the waste baskets."

Cokey Joe had the shakes. "I'm a heel," he admitted. "I was going to confess as soon as I used up the ounce of pure heroin I got paid off with."

"Fess up!" ordered Yost sternly. "It's for sure you stabbed Roxy in the brisket with the knife I got from the white-eyed Indian. But who hired you?"

"I ain't talkin' till I see my mouthpiece."

YOST looked at the cops and gestured silence as he cried, "Egad!

Are you daff, Cokey? Who but foxy J. F. Yost would defend you?" The little lawyer's brains sizzled as he sought to wrap it up solid.

Cokey asked, "Are you telling me to spill, J. F.?"

"Not a whit!" Yost declared. "I got it blueprinted. Harry Zygant—that's who hired you. He's still Roxy's legal husband, and she hadn't gotten around to dealing him off the juicy insurance policy Mee Berg sold her when she got that fat settlement from husband number three, the big pickle and relish man."

The corporal asked, "Where's the body?"

"In my car," Yost explained. "Harry had me wired for this frame solid, but he didn't figure what a fix of pure powder would do to Cokey after he came down off it."

The corporal turned to the trooper, said, "Take the suspect to the car and wait; I'll phone in from the *Oasis*."

Yost trotted after the corporal and they entered the *Oasis*. Waiters were sweeping up the glass on the dance floor with push brooms. The bar was deserted, and the only person at a table was Herb Catlin who sat with his head in his hands.

"Hum! No customers," Yost mused worriedly. "Everybody who comes here is pure chicken."

Police-protected J. Fenimore Yost went over to Herb's table, announced, "A slight case of murder. Roxy got chilled."

It didn't register. Herb had other worries. "Sara and the midget got jugged," he groaned. "A vice squad man was here on a spot check."

"I see the customers went chicken again," said Yost. "Don't fret a fret, Herb my boy! I'm in business solid. Cokey comes from a fine family with dough, and Harry Zygant is well heeled."

Herb looked up dolefully, then his eyes brightened with pleasant expectancy. Yost turned his head just as the cop went out, and Gus came in to take off his uniform coat.

Yost's feet churned the floor and his soles went hot as he skidded into the dressing room corridor. The door to the chorus room was ajar and he barreled it open, slammed it shut and bolted it.

"A thousand pardons," he apologized, "but I'm Rusterholtz the fire-escape inspector."

He dashed to the window and raised it. He slyly slipped out a knife and scraped a peep hole in the black paint. Chortling happily at future prospects, he climbed out of the window and reeled away snorting softly and blowing bubbles. After all, he'd collect a handsome fee from Herb Catlin on the vice rap, and he decided to buy a folding chair so he could be a Peeping Tom in comfort.

★

The chief was sure that this parrot would finger a thief...

AN OFF-TRAIL MYSTERY YARN

by Francis C. Battle

THE COURT OF AJA PING

THREE armed warriors menacingly escorted us to Aja Ping's grass hut and forced us to sit on the ground. The chief sat Indian-fashion and regarded us intently as only an African chief can.

"I regret this has happened," he spoke slowly. "A stone has been stolen from one of my warriors. You two white men are accused of the crime."

Connely took the initiative and spoke up. "I suppose we have nothing to say! We're guilty because you say so and that's all there is to it!" His face was turning red under his sandy hair.

Aja Ping's black eyes narrowed. "We have good law here," he answered.

"Oh, sure, sure," Connely replied sarcastically in a tone I've often heard in court. He was quite a dramatic lawyer back in San Diego.

"There is justice in my village," Aja Ping defended. "A stone has been stolen. The guilty one is he who wishes what is not his; the thief must be caught and punished."

"Where is your proof that we are the thieves?" Connely challenged. "Search us if you will!"

Aja Ping remained silent, pensive.

Triumphantly Connely continued. "You have no justice here. Law is your word, whether you are right or wrong. Your people are angry because two white men have frightened game out of the jungle; but I explained that we were lost and firing our weapons would bring help. We are sorry about the game."

The old chief nodded his head, but in Africa that didn't mean he was agreeing. The three warriors with their oval-shapped spears watched carefully. Their black eyes reminded me of a dog's when you hold a piece of meat in front of its nose. At the moment I felt uncomfo[illegible]
had Connely talk me into this wild safari looking for a gold mine.

But that was Connely, an impulsive boy of forty. He'd do anything for money. Probably that's what made him a famous lawyer in California. No case was too difficult, or too minor; a buck

was a buck. Then when he ran across a map of a supposed lost gold mine in Africa, he was off to make some more money. And because I like him, I went along—although our lawyer-partnership said nothing about a safari into the jungles of Africa or meeting characters like Aja Ping. And after weeks of hopeless wandering and getting lost, I finally talked Connely into returning home.

Doubt spread across the old chief's wrinkled face after Connely's outburst. "How is justice in your village?" the chief asked.

CONNELY rose and for a moment I thought he was back in court. "In my village a man is believed innocent until there is proof—definite proof—that he is guilty."

I felt like applauding.

"Ka," the chief muttered. "Mean nothing. How you find guilty man in your village?"

"We investigate," Connely told him with his hands. "All the evidence is discussed and matched to the crime. Then several men form a jury so that each man can see for himself whether the accused man is guilty or not."

A smile parted Aja Ping's bulbous lips. "Ha. Take long time for justice. Warrior no have time wait; he must hunt and fish and plant corn. If he innocent, court waste him time."

Connely's face was red as meat now. I hoped he wouldn't blow up. "But that isn't justice!" he protested. "How do you know you pick the right man?"

"Many ways," Aja Ping said. "You will see yourself justice of Aja Ping court."

The chief rose and spoke to one of the guards. The man slipped through the doorway. Then the old chief turned to us. I got up and stood beside Connely. "Maybe white man would like to show how he find thief and prove he not the one."

I raised an eyebrow.

"Fine," Connely answered without hesitation.

I wanted to kick him for that. "We're not detectives; we're only lawyers," I whispered to him. He heard me but didn't acknowledge my warning.

"Come. All men of village are here now, for it is night. My men are many, but you will find guilty one."

"And if we don't?" I spoke up. I had to say something.

"Then maybe you guilty—if you cannot find thief." There was a cat-ate-the-canary smile on his ugly face.

OUTSIDE, the village was alive with burning fires and moving figures coming to the open court in front of the chief's hut. In the background the women and children waited to see what was going to happen. There must have been over fifty warriors gathered in the compound, and each looked exactly the same to me with their fuzzy hair and weird painted bodies.

Connely seldom became flustered. He was always nonchalant in court. But now, in the firelight, I saw beads of perspiration along his forehead. His mouth was a tight line. The chief was still smiling. He raised his bony arm for silence, and it came almost instantly; he told the village of the crime. Then he turned to Connely. "Find thief!"

Connely seemed to slump all in one place. He aged twenty years. "It—it'll take time," he said. "Weeks of questioning and—"

"Ka. No time. When sun come, warriors must go and hunt and fish for their families. Do now!"

"I can't, damn it!" Connely swore; "I just can't pick any man and say you are the guilty one!"

"I can," Aja Ping said simply. "Man will be thief, too. If I prove this, then you will agree that Aja Ping has good justice?"

Connely thought for a moment. "If you can do it, I will."

"Good! Come with me."

We followed the chief to a small hut that served as a smoke house and smelled it. In front of the hut Aja Ping gave orders to one of the guards with the dog-like eyes, and he disappeared into the night.

Presently the man returned with a large parrot. Aja Ping took the bird and went inside of the hut. After a moment he emerged and spoke to his men. Then, he translated for us. "I told my warriors, and I tell you, that an innocent man has nothing to fear; only the thief will shake with fright when he enters the hut."

"Why?" Connely asked suspiciously.

"Because I have spoken to the bird and he will tell me who stole the shiny stone."

"You what! You mean that bird will detect the thief and tell you?" Connely laughed.

Unruffled, Aja Ping nodded his head. "When guilty man touch feathers, bird will talk and scream to tell me here is thief."

At a signal, all the men lined up. One by one they entered the hut and emerged. As each man left the hut, Aja Ping would shake the man's hand because the bird had not screamed. Reluctantly Connely and I filed in the rear.

I was next to last man in. Connely was behind me. Inside the grass hut, I saw the bird on a perch. One leg was tied to the stand. I went to the bird and stroked its feathers as instructed. It didn't make a sound. It was a filthy bird; my hand was dirty. Outside, Aja Ping greeted me and shook hands. In a few minutes Connely shook hands with the chief and the test was over.

CONNELY began, "Well, mighty chief, the bird didn't speak once—doesn't he know your language?"

"He good bird," Aja Ping said.

"—just like your justice and trials. They don't work!"

Connely was smiling now; he was his old self.

Aja Ping ignored the last remark. He spoke to his guards. They left and returned shortly with a frightened man. "*You, thief!*" Aja Ping accused.

The man fell on his knees. In his native tongue he began a long wail begging for mercy. The blade of one of the warriors' spears helped the accused to produce the shiny stone. I guess Connely was as startled as I. Aja Ping glanced in our direction and smiled; the unfortunate man was led away and we were free to return to our guest hut.

We were too intrigued to allow the matter to be forgotten. Out of fifty men, and without asking one question, Aja Ping had found the guilty man. How? And what had the parrot to do with it?

Of course Aja Ping would not tell us his secret, but Connely was determined to learn the answer. He examined the bird carefully. Then we went home. He threw himself into a coma and for most of the night all I heard were incoherent words. In the morning I was surprised to see the sun and learned that I had slept. I woke Connely up.

"Well, did you figure it out?" I asked anxiously.

I got the usual satisfied smile. "Of course." He began to lace his boots.

"How?"

"The bird's the key," he told me. "You see, Aaja Ping is a master when it comes to phychology. Remember that speech he gave about the innocent man having nothing to fear, and the guilty one would shake with fright?"

I nodded my head.

"Each man caressed the bird with confidence because he knew he was innocent and the bird would not cry out—all except the guilty one. He never even touched the bird."

[*turn to page* 98]

Joey was just about ready to jump...but he'd wait a little while to be sure if he really had to.

HEAVY, HEAVY, HANGS OVER YOUR HEAD - - -

by Jim Harmon

THE YOUNG man stood on the ledge and stared down at the insect-like people on the sidewalk below him. They were all staring back up at him; the toy cars seemed to slow down as if they didn't want to miss his jump. He ran a trembling hand through his damp hair, and seemed to wonder if he should give them the satisfation of witnessing his suicide.

It was a chance; it was almost as if I could read his mind. I shouldered past the gaunt-faced police captain and put my head through the seventeenth floor hotel window. The wind in my face and the thought of the distance to solid concrete made my head spin a little. Then for the first time, I got a look at the face of the boy who was going to throw himself to his death. He shouldn't die, I thought; I'd been thinking that all along, of course, but it was now for the first time that I really felt it. He was young, healthy, intelligent—he should live. Maybe you think I couldn't tell that from his face. Maybe *I* couldn't, but I thought I could; that was what was important.

So I said, "Don't give them the satisfaction, Son."

He looked at me with the eyes of the hunted, and edged a little closer towards empty air. He didn't have to warn me not to come closer.

"Some of them would like you to

jump, you know," I continued quietly. "It would be a cheap thrill for them, but it would cost you the rest of your life. Do you want to make an exchange like that?"

"Sure," he said, facing into the wind, "sure; I know nobody cares if I live. Do you have to remind me? Why don't you tell me how much they want me to go back in and let you cops haul me off in a straitjacket?"

"Some of them don't want you to die, Son. Some of them are praying for you now, or wishing awfully hard. But those are the ones you want to hear about. You want to hear how sorry everybody will be when you die; it's your revenge on the world. But it will just be a big kick to a lot of people down there."

He ran his hand across his eyes once, but he wouldn't let himself cry. "*Shut up.* Shut up, will you?"

I shook my head. "No, I won't shut up. We both know I'm stalling for time; as long as you listen to me talk, you won't have jumped."

His eyes became wild again. "Then I'll stop listening, and *jump.*" One of his feet moved half over the edge.

THE WIND was whistling in my ears and my heart was too strong in its rhythm. I tried to keep my voice calm. "No, Son, you won't jump until you've had a chance to make up your mind. That's what you're there for, isn't it? I know you've got guts enough to jump if you were sure you wanted to. You're out on that ledge trying to make up your mind now, and I know you won't jump until you're sure."

The young man let the air out of his lungs, slow and hard, and leaned back against the brick wall. His back really must be to the wall, I thought. He turned his face to me, and looked me in the eyes. "You're honest, aren't you? You talk straight; how come you got to be a cop?"

I smiled back at him as straight as I could. "I'm not police, Son; I'm a magazine freelancer with a press card. I used to be a reporter."

He stood up quickly. "You're one of the thrill-seekers, aren't you?" he demanded sharply. "You're just waiting for my jump, too; you got a lot of room to talk."

"It will be a big story either way," I said fast. "But just as a personal matter, I'd rather you stayed alive."

He looked back down into the street. "Story. Story, huh. I suppose you'd like to get all facts. You want a *big* story. Okay, Mister, I'll give you one." He looked back into my eyes, and the look wasn't nice. "I'm up here because the cops want me for the murder of the girl I was going to marry."

It wasn't an unusual story, although the boy seemed to think it had never happened before in the world. "Did you do it?" I asked. I didn't know whether it was the right thing to say, but he seemed to like me to be honest with him.

He looked far over the edge, swayed for a moment, and started his headlong plunge. I thought for an instant, but he recovered his balance. He stood erect with both hands clenched. "I don't know; I just don't know." His voice was hardly audible over the street sounds.

"Drunk?" I said.

He laughed shortly, without humor. "Reefers. You'd think a guy as old as I am would know what a girl meant when she asked him to try a 'new kind' of cigaret. You'd think I'd know."

I wet my lips, and thought. "Son, would you like me to find out whether you killed her or not?"

He looked hopeful for a moment, but the look faded as quickly as the neon lights that had just been turned on to flash their code. "Ask the cops; they can tell you how I killed her."

"Maybe the cops are wrong. Maybe you didn't kill her. Maybe I can find out."

The wild look was in his eyes. "Get

away from me! You're mixing me up. Get away..." He paused. "But if you want to try to find out, I'd like to know if I'm still here... You heard me—get away!"

He was being pulled in two directions by me; towards hope and exasperation. I pulled my head inside quickly.

It was good to be breathing stale again. The uneasy feeling in my head had spread to my stomach.

THE GREY-FACED police captain came to me. "I don't know how you got in here, but I guess I won't throw you out. You've got further with him than any of us have been able to do. Was that straight what you told him?"

I straightened my tie, after the mention of the word. "Absolutely straight. I'm not a good actor, and that boy can spot a phoney a mile away. I'm going to see if I can't find something to help him. Who is he, and who's the girl he's supposed to have killed?"

The captain looked at me oddly for an instant. "Let's see that press card." I handed him my billfold. "Holder: Harry Fielding. City Editor: Harry Fielding. Freelance, hmm." He gave it back to me. "Is this off the record?"

I nodded. "If you say so."

"We don't know his name or who the girl is, and we can't get him to talk."

It hit me right between the eyes. "Don't you have any bodies to fit the description?"

The captain smiled grimly. "A dead girl—a woman's body between 18 and 35? Plenty. But his girl's body may not have been discovered yet. He won't say *how* he killed her or when; or where—this city or across the country. Shot or strangled. Today or last year. And if he was goofed up, he may not have even killed her. He may not even have *had* a girl."

I was numb. I kept remembering the young man's face and my promise. "Maybe—maybe I can still help him," I muttered.

But I didn't think so.

THE CROWD was still watching the small figure high above them and waiting, waiting, as I walked slowly into the hole in the wall with the sign that said: *Hamberger Heaven.*

The place was a cramped corner shop across the hustling, narrow street from the hotel. The trolly tracks were idle and I could see the fancy glass front of the hotel and the dirty bricks above it. I couldn't see the man poised on the ledge seventeen floors up, but I knew he was still there by the upturned heads.

Inside, an eager group of young people were spilled over a booth near the window making book on when he would do it. I looked away from them and put my elbows on the hard polished counter. At the other end, a young man was talking to an older Negro about politics or the Yankees. Beyond them at a table, a hard-faced, unattractive woman in evening dress sat with two smooth escorts.

The hamberger had disappeared without leaving any particular impression, and I became aware of the thick white mug with brown stain in the bottom. As the waitress in a nice starched blouse moved past, I said, "I'd like another cup."

She stopped and looked at me for an instant. "You mean another cup of coffee." The tone was too subserviant.

I nodded, and made a note not to eat here again. She was used to people asking for *clean* cups. This wasn't my town any more; I'd been away too long to know the right spots. The West Coast had been different. And Taos with the wise Indians waiting for the white man to go away and let them live as they had always lived. What was the name of that little town in Kansas where I'd tried being married for awhile? It didn't matter; I'd just been away too long to help either myself or

the boy who was counting on me just a little, maybe.

I tossed a half dollar on the counter to take care of the sandwich and both cups of coffee, and started to get up before the second cup came. Before I could clear the stool, a big hand caught my sleeve. "Hey, when you think he's going to do it?"

I expected one of the high schoolers from the booth as I turned, but the man was older. Still, he was dressed as a high school boy might be. Then I noticed his long haircut, and his poor eyesight unaided with glasses, and I knew he considered himself a tough operator. "Maybe he won't do it," I said finally.

He laughed shortly. "He'll do it all right; he's got his mind made up. You can count on Joey to do it."

Just like that. The name. I grabbed at it. "You know him? You called him 'Joey'."

He looked suddenly restless. "No, I don't know the crazy guy. Did I call him 'Joey'? Just a name, Joey—I call everybody that, Joey. Except dolls, of course. I call them 'Mabel'."

"You're lying," I told him. "Do you want to tell me who he is now, or down at the station house?"

His restlessness almost exploded into a run, but he thought better of it. "You a cop?" Then he shrugged. "Joe Koleman. Lives down on South Gary. It's in the phone book."

THE STREETS unwound before me, and I kept a hard grip on the steering wheel. I was sucking on a cigaret but somehow it didn't help ease the tension. I flipped on the car radio. Keeping an eye on the road I juggled the dial. Music and voices ripped past and I finally settled on what I wanted. I was pretty sure a local station would cover the thing.

"...up there. It's his third hour, Ladies and Gentlemen. Will the police be able to lure him in? Will he finally jump? I tell you it's a great human interest story. Everyone around me has their eyes glued on that far speck, waiting breathlessly. Earlier, I was talking with Fire Captain Will Tucker. He says that in his twenty years with the Fire Department he has known these suicides to stay up there for ten and fourteen hours before they jumped, and others to leap off in the first five minutes. I tell..."

I snapped it off. I was at the address I got from the phone book. After some leg-straining steps, I was knocking on the painted door in the dim hall. There was an interior shuffling, and it was opened by a pretty brunette in an office shirt and blouse.

"My name is Harry Fielding," I said. "I'd like to know who you are."

She looked a little surprised. "I'm Mary Koleman—I live here. What is it you want?"

I took a deep breath. "Your brother is in serious trouble, Miss Koleman." There was a resemblance, and the boy had spoken of marrying a girl as if it was the first time.

She was still cautious. "What kind of trouble?"

How do you tell a girl her brother is on the ledge of a seventeenth floor hotel room, trying to straighten out something inside of him, and failing to do it, will jump? I don't know. I tried.

"Come in," she said hollowly.

As I stepped inside, I saw the man. Handsome to a woman, I knew, well-dressed, but a bit too old for her.

He motioned me to a chair. "My name's Markle—Ted Markle; you came to find out something about Joey."

Mary looked anxious. "We can't stay here talking—"

I didn't sit. "This is important, too, but I'll make it fast. It comes down to this: do you know any girl friend of Joe's who is missing?"

"What do you want to know for?" Markle asked. He didn't like me.

"I said it was important," I replied.

Mary suddenly came back into my

sight with a tan coat, slipping it on. "Lois Johnson is the only girl Joe dates; she lives on the fourth floor. Is that all? I'm going to Joe." With that, she was out the door.

Markle stood up. "I hope you find what you're looking for. I'll lock the door as we go out."

I nodded, and walked out with him. The conversation had went fast, but maybe I had what I wanted. I left Mary's boy friend at the door, starting for the stairs and the fourth floor.

THE DOOR to Lois Johnson's apartment was locked but the door and the lock were old. I looked up and down the dark passage, seeing the Koleman boy's face in my mind. Taking in a deep breath, I slammed my fist hard against the door above the knob. The old lock sprang with a loud click. The door opened with a thin creak and I slipped inside.

The room was dark. Green window blinds were pulled down behind faded lace, masking the outlines of dated furniture. I groped for a pencil flash in my coat pocket but it was missing. The cigaret lighter was the next best thing. I didn't want to handle the light switch. The flickering flame didn't make the flat any more cheerful. It revealed the girl's body on the sofa.

She was young and pretty, and her silk dress was a daring invitation which she maybe hadn't meant. One of her nylons had been used to garrote her. It was twisted violently around her abused throat, but her face was strangely peaceful—abnormally so. Then I saw her tightly-clenched fist with the thumb leaving a careful hole. The hand full of aces—a marijuana stick—the fist holding all the smoke so none of it would be lost. I looked back at her relaxed, not quite smiling face, and the one bare leg looking as white and as lifeless as marble. She had been killed just as she had reached the peak of her high.

With an effort, I turned away. The sight of Lois Johnson made my stomach and my spine uneasy, but I had long ago trained them to ignore such scenes, and just let my eyes and my mind do the necessary work. I wasn't proud of that passive acceptance; somehow it made me feel unclean and inhuman. But it had to be that way.

I walked across the room to the telephone on a small table. Carefully and routinely, I dialed a number and said, "I want to report a murder."

After a few questions and their written answers at the other end, as the police traced the call, I was allowed to hang up. I kept looking at the phone to keep from looking at the dead girl.

As I stood there like that, a sound came from behind me. With the trace of a primitive fear, I spun around towards the body, but she lay as lifeless as ever. The sound had come from the door.

I sighed. The police. At times like this, seconds can be many minutes. Then a new thought struck me. The police wouldn't delay in coming in. With an almost reflex action, I took a few running steps and dived behind the sofa where I crouched breathlessly.

The door inched open sending a shaft of grayish light knifing through the green shadowed darkness. A figure darted through the light quickly, and the door shut in the darkness again. I made out the intruder's back as he went through several table drawers noisily and started to scatter books from a single narrow shelf.

I relaxed enough to breathe and think. The old one about the murderer always returning to the scene of his crime was largely a fallacy, but this character was looking for something. And to do it with a corpse in the room, that something had to be important. Incriminating evidence, maybe.

That meant Joe Koleman was going to kill himself for something he didn't do, if the police didn't find the prowler here. He wasn't going to wait around

long, that was certain. I decided to do it then. It was risky, but he might not stay long enough for the police to arrive, and I might be able to delay him that long.

I held my breath again and creeped around the sofa towards the door and the light switch. I muttered obscenities to myself as I went. I had even lost the position of the prowler in the room; I might be running right into him. At least, I had made the door safely. I stood erect and pawed for the switch.

THE LIGHTS came on with a blinding suddeness. The intruder let out what was almost a squeal of panic. Through my blurred vision, I made out who it was—the snappy dresser from the *Hamberger Heaven* who had given me my lead. His eyes darted about the room, settling on me, then darted away to suddenly rest on the corpse. He gasped and the color drained from his face, even his lips. He slid to the floor noiselessly. It was the first time I had ever seen a man faint.

I went over to him and slapped his pockets and shoulders. He wasn't even carrying a zip-gun. I jerked him to a sitting positon and slapped his face a few times.

His eyes sprang open, and instantly, he was struggling to get to his feet. "I didn't do it! I didn't!"

I shoved him back down. "The boys from the station house will be here soon and you don't have time to wipe all the fingerprints you scattered around this place, so you might as well relax. If you didn't kill her, what were you doing here?"

His eyes kept going back to the corpse of the girl. "I was just hunting for a stick, Mister. Lois always had some mary-jane on hand. I needed one to take off the edge. I didn't know she was croaked, *honest.*"

He seemed to be too scared to be lying but some of his kind were clever liars. I had a knife scar from trusting one hoodlum because he was a kid. "Were you hopped up when you did it?" I asked. "You might get off with second degree."

He pawed my coat. "I didn't do it, I didn't do it! I just wanted a stick, I should've known; I should've known I wouldn't get one here, anyway. Not with Lois' source drying up. She was lucky to con enough to keep the taste in her mouth. I didn't have no reason to kill her."

The word "con" struck home. The way he had used it meant extortion or threat.

I grabbed his wrists. "Who was Lois conning for smokes?"

"You know I can't tell you," he whimpered; "he fixes me up, too."

Desperately, I dug out my billfold and flipped it open under his nose. "Take a look at the press card, Kid. I'm not police; your supplier may have information that will keep you out of the chair. Now, who is he?"

He whimpered and held his head. "Okay, okay, his name is Ted Markle. He's got a room at the Whitmore. Lois—she told him she'd stoolie if he cut her off. But he didn't give her enough. I should of *known* I couldn't get any *here.*"

I let him drop to the floor on his crying jag, and left him there with the corpse.

IN THE CAR, I thought it out as I jammed my foot down on the gas. I tried the radio, but all I could get on the local stations was music and soap operas. They wouldn't keep a suicide attempt on the air continuously, I told myself; just spot relays. But I kept remembering the men and women I had seen perched on water towers and roofs. Five minutes, five hours, a day, and they jumped. I tried to remember one that had turned around and come back, but I couldn't. So I thought it out.

Ted Markle was Mary Koleman's boy friend. Her brother, Joe, was go-

ing with the girl who was blackmailing dope out of Markle. Markle got Lois to get Joe on the stuff, too, so he could set up a frame. While they are both out on the stuff, Markle killed Lois. Joe woke up with the body and thought he did it. I had to prove to him that Markle did.

I was coming in sight of Ted Markel's hotel. It was shabby and ill-kept compared to the hotel where Joe Koleman was standing alone above the eager crowd.

The door and lock to Markle's hotel room was too new to spring as easily as I had the door to Lois Johnson's flat. As I worked at the lock with a pipe cleaner, I smiled at the way the clerk had been impressed with my press card. The latch clicked back and the door opened with a turn of the handle. This was too easy, I thought.

It was. Markle stared at me coldly as I stepped inside. The man was a killer, I kept thinking. "Hello," I said, "I thought you'd be with Mary at the hotel with Joe."

He kept staring. "The cops wouldn't let me in; only the immediate family, y'know."

I nodded. "I found Lois dead in her flat, Markle."

He looked surprised. "Well, that's why the kid's trying to give himself the count."

Suddenly I was mad. "The cops know *you* did it, Markle!"

He was a badly frightened man. "I can't help it if she took an overdose!"

"That's not the way the cops see it."

Markle ran a trembling hand through his neatly combed hair. "The cops, yeah, cops; they been waiting to pin something on me." The tremble went out of his body. "You ain't going to do it, Fielding or whoever you are. Not to me!"

In an instant, he was across the room clawing open a drawer in the desk. I could guess what was in it. I started running towards Markle just as he got his hand inside the drawer. Before he could get it out, I drove my knee against the handle with all my weight behind it. I braced myself like that for the duration of a long breath. Markle's howl almost drowned out the clatter of an object falling inside the compartment.

I grabbed Markle by the lapels with both hands and threw him away as hard as I could. He collided with the floor where he lay stunned. Pulling open the drawer, I brought out the .357 Magnum and leveled it at Markle.

I looked at the fear on his face and at the gun in my hand, and I began seeing something a lot clearer.

"Listen," I said, "listen, Markle. If you know what's good for you, you're going to do just like I say..."

THE FIRE department was below Joe Koleman in the street when our car pulled to a stop at the barricade. They had men with nets in the streets and a fish-net-appearing thing strung between windows on the floor below Joe, but I knew all of them with their red engines blocking traffic weren't doing much good. It was up to me. I eased into a *No Parking* area and shoved Markle towards the car door.

Inside the room, after countless pass inspections, we found Mary Koleman crying and the gaunt-faced old police captain dangerously near exhaustion.

"Ted," Mary said as she went to him, "I'm so glad they finally let you through."

Before he could answer, I said, "Captain, you'd better put this man under arrest; he has a confession to make."

Mary looked up at Markle in shock and wonder. The captain was too tired for any such emotions. "Well, what's he done?"

I licked lips that were suddenly too dry. "He's going to make his confession to Joe."

I took Markle by the arm and led him over to the window. Unceremo-

niously I shoved his head outside and leaned through myself.

Joe still stood there, looking as if he hadn't moved in the hours I had gone. His face was more starkly white in the glare of the searchlights. Then his haunted eyes found me.

"I told you to go away, Reporter!" he screamed. "Go on, or I'll jump."

"Joe," I said, "I told you I'd find out something for you. I did. Your sister's boy friend wants to tell you something." I glanced over to Markle. "Make it good, if you want any part of your skin left."

Markle's eyes looked more haunted than Joe's. He turned to the boy on the ledge. "It was my fault, Joe; about Lois, it was *my* fault!"

Joe looked desperate. I knew his soul must be tearing apart in two directions. "No! I did it—you're just saying... I—but I *couldn't* have. *You* must. No, it's all a trick— Oh, I don't *know*, I don't know—"

AFTER HALF a day of strain, he gave up. His body shook with dry sobs and he staggered about aimlessly on the narrow ledge. I caught a glimpse of the firemen moving below, but I knew they would be too late. Joe Koleman stumbled about six feet from me when his foot went over the edge. I knew that his fall had began and that it soon would be over.

But he fell towards me, with his hand clawing for the life his mind said he wanted to end. The length of his body and groping arm bridged the six foot gap, and I grabbed for him with both hands. My right fist clenched on empty air. Only my left hand caught his clutching fingers. My shoulder wrenched with the pain of holding him for an instant. Then I grabbed his shirt with my other hand.

Markle helped me drag him back into the room.

The police captain and I stood and watched while Mary and a patrolman led Joe off to the city hospital observation ward, and another patrolman took Markle off to the city jail.

"I told Markle I'd do what I could to get him a light sentence for co-operating," I said. "What do you think?"

The captain rubbed his tired eyes. "I don't know, Fielding; seems straight first degree from what the boys phoned in. They want to talk to you about the Johnson girl and that punk, you know."

I smiled, but there wasn't any humor in it. Just the bitterness of fifteen years of sharing other people's misery. "Markle's not a murderer, Captain," I said. "Legally, there's a difference from peddling dope and committing the murder. I'm afraid there's no way around it; Joe Koleman really did kill that girl."

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SPECIAL FEATURE

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MURDER WITHOUT RECOURSE

by Harold Gluck

ON THIS particular sunny day, you are the happiest fellow in the entire country. Your best girl informed you an hour ago that she would become your wife. Just now, you are walking along the main street of your home town. You are whistling a familiar tune. Not paying much attention to people around you. You are thinking of an engagement ring, a car, a honeymoon, and little house in the country. And then it happens! A series of shots and you crumble to the pavement.

When you open your eyes, you are in a hospital room. Your girl tells you the terrible news; you will never be able to walk again. Seems there was a fellow who had spent some time in the hospital for the criminal insane, run by the state. He went on a shooting spree. Killed four people and wounded three. You and the rest were total strangers to him. You are going to have a lot of doctor bills. Can you sue the state and recover? Let's look at a recent case and see what happened.

On March 5, 1950, on a street in Brooklyn, one William Jones—then nineteen years of age—stabbed and killed Frank St. George, a perfect stranger, without provocation or apparent motive. Jones had been released on March 1, 1950, from Matteawan State Hospital for the Criminal Insane. Claimant's theory of the liability of the state is that the doctors and psychiatrists at Matteawan negligently made an erroneous diagnosis of the true nature of Jones' mental illness, and pursuant thereto improperly released him. Upon that theory the Court of Claims has granted judgment for damages for the death of St. George and from that judgment the state appeals.

On February 23, 1947, Jones—then aged sixteen—was sentenced as a wayward minor for a term of three years and entered Elmira Reception Center where he remained until June, 1947. He was then transferred to the hospital section at Clinton Prison to determine if he had a tubercular condition. In December, 1947, he was transferred to the vocational institution at West Coxsackie.

About the end of October, 1948, the authorities at Coxsackie began to suspect some mental disturbance in Jones, and on December 20, 1948, the institution physician commenced proceedings which resulted in his examination by Dr. Patry and Dr. Cooper, who diag-

nosed his case as "psychosis with psychopathic personality. Paranoid episode." He was thereupon committed to Matteawan on December 23, 1948, and remained there until March 1, 1950, when his original term of three years expired; he was then released in the custody of his mother. He returned home with her and lived in her home until the tragic events of March 5, 1950.

In this five-day period, he had been out with some of his friends; consumed some whiskey; apparently had some difficulty with some of his associates; became excitable; thought people were laughing at him and talking about him; once started to return to Matteawan, but returned home. On March 5, 1950, he came running into his mother's apartment looking for a weapon, and finding none, went out again. Immediately thereafter, he entered a restaurant, seized a bread knife and ran down the street, stabbing seven persons as he went—four of them fatally, including Frank St. George. This is a brief sketch of the background preceding the fatality.

During all of his stay at Matteawan, Jones' condition was consistently diagnosed as psychosis with psychopathic personality. Looking backward after the tragic events of March 5, 1950, it is undisputed that the proper diagnosis should have been schizophrenia, paranoid type. It is this erroneous diagnosis which is the crux of this litigation.

THERE IS no claim or suggestion that the staff doctors who had Jones in charge at Matteawan were incompetent or unqualified. Claimant urges that Matteawan was overcrowded and understaffed, and that the diagnosis of Jones' condition was made upon inadequate observation and information. There is a contention that some incidents in his behavior were not recorded, and that some things that were recorded were not presented at the staff meetings.

The record discloses, however, that a great deal of attention was given to Jones. He was personally interviewed and examined by the superintendent about ten times during his stay there. Voluminous reports by attendants and doctors recording even minor incidents were presented to the staff meetings; his history at Coxsackie was before the staff, and his case was considered at great length at several staff meetings during his stay there of about fourteen months. If an incident affecting Jones was omitted, it was of the same nature and part of the same pattern as the voluminous material before the staff meetings. The record discloses entirely adequate material in the case record of Jones for purposes of diagnosis, and one of claimant's experts so testified.

About the last of August, 1949, according to the testimony, the staff had reached a conclusion that Jones had sufficiently recovered to be considered for release, except that his sentence had not expired. The doctors did not consider it for his best interest to return to Coxsackie, so he was continued at Matteawan until his term expired on March 1, 1950. In the interval the record indicates that his condition was closely observed and despite some incidents, the doctors felt he was improving.

It is impractical and unnecessary to set forth in detail the case record of Jones at Matteawan. At times it shows him to be quiet and co-operative, engaging in sports and getting along well with others. At times it shows an assaultive disposition, with numerous instances of disobedience, quarrels, scuffles and altercations with other inmates—many of which were provoked by the other inmates. The record does not disclose that in any of these occurrences was any injury inflicted upon anyone; most of the difficulties would appear to be petty and such as might occur among any group of boys confined together, even normal ones.

Of course, Jones concededly was not normal, nor were his fellow inmates.

The diagnosis of mental cases is not an exact science. As yet the mind cannot be X-rayed like a bone fracture; diagnosis with absolute precision and certainty is impossible. One of claimant's experts readily admits having made mistakes in diagnosis, yet says of Matteawan doctors "they made a mistake." It has been recognized that insanity is difficult of detection and frequently is cunningly concealed. Of necessity it must be a matter of judgment by those qualified to pass judgment. It was the duty of the staff doctors at Matteawan to treat Jones, and to use every effort to improve his condition, not just to confine him.

The modern concept of handling cases of mental illness is treatment, not simply incarceration. The objective is to return the patient to society—which should be done as soon as, in the judgment of properly-qualified doctors and psychiatrists, it is likely to be safe for others and helpful to the patient. Believing as they did, after observing Jones, discussing his case and reading voluminous reports from attendants, the doctors could not have justified his detention had he sought habeas corpus on March 1, 1950. As indicated, there is no suggestion that the staff doctors were not competent and qualified and properly educated and trained; and there is no suggestion in the record that they were not sincere and conscientious in making their diagnosis.

THUS THE issue is narrowed to this; are the doctors, or is the state which employs them, legally responsible in damages for an honest error of professional judgment made by qualified and competent persons? We think this question must be answered in the negative. It has been so held in malpractive cases of all types for years. Future human behavior is unpredictable, and it would place an unreasonable and unfair burden upon the state if it were to be held responsible in damages for everything that a person does after he has been discharged or released from one of its state institutions—even though the release was through an error of judgment—unless there is something more present than is contained in the record.

There is no case in New York which has heretofore imposed liability under the circumstances presented here. To sustain this judgment would be to extend liability beyond any point heretofore reached,which we are unwilling to do.

An innocent person was killed for no reason at all, yet that is one of the risks of living in modern society. Many innocent people lose their lives, or are injured by insane persons who have never been committed to an institution; or by criminals; and by accidents of all sorts and descriptions for which no one was in any way responsible.

To sustain this judgment would have a more far-reaching effect than the money damages. In its practical aspects, it would mean that the state could release no one from any state mental institution without being under the risk of liability for whatever he did thereafter, and the result would necessarily be reluctance to release, and the unnecessary confinement of persons who would benefit by release. Tragic as the occurrence was, there is no legal basis for liability of the state.

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If Dr. Jaeger had killed, he would never kill again; someone had carefully amputated his hands. And this culprit would strike again and again whenever anything pointed his way.

NO HANDS FOR MURDER

by Harlan Clay

FEATURE NOVEL OF EERIE MYSTERY

NOTHING about Mr. Ainley suggested the tragedy. In truth, Mr. Ainley's conversation, for several minutes, deliberately avoided the purpose of his visit.

He was a man of impressive personality—tall, sturdily proportioned, aggressive. With his winged collar and graying hair, with his dominant and forceful manner, he somehow resembled the ideal of a general in civilian attire. He sat with his knees far apart, an ebony cane rising between them to support his hands; and he frowned.

There was something c u r i o u s l y searching in that frown.

"You don't," he observed with a hint of interrogation, "appear very busy."

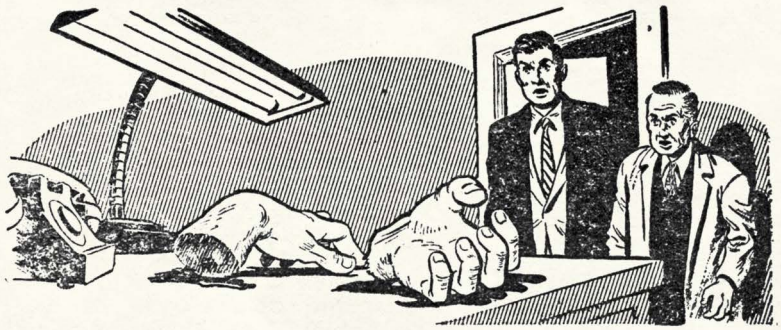
Lee Stanton, leaning back in his swivel chair, laughed in genial candor. "Well," he admitted, "I have plenty of time for meditation. But I've been in business only two weeks, and the news hasn't reached the headlines yet."

"Expect to make a go of it, eh?"

"Nothing has happened yet to dim the future."

Mr. Ainley transferred his frown to his hands. After a moment's silence he conceded, "I suppose it can be done, all right—though being a private detective strikes me as a queer sort of job for Bart Stanton's son."

"Queer? That depends on the angle from which you view it. I'm sure there's nothing queer about detecting to the Pinkertons, for example."



A pair of severed human hands rested on the desk.

"Oh—" hastily, "—I'm not disputing the wisdom of your profession. I'm just—wondering." Mr. Ainley peered levelly across the desk. "Have you had many clients since you started?"

Lee Stanton smiled. "Including you," he answered, "one."

Mr. Ainley was not amused. Rather curtly he grunted. "Don't count on me, Lee," he advised, and his voice fell to a mutter. "I'm not very sure that you'll want to undertake my case. As a matter of fact, I'm not even sure there is a case."

"That in itself, Mr. Ainley, sounds quite mysterious and enticing."

"It concerns—" The man's lips tightened, and he spoke metallically. "It concerns—my son."

Instantly Lee Stanton's smile vanished. He straightened and regarded his visitor gravely. That swift transition of mood seemed to add several years to his countenance; and with the change came an unexpected air of quiet competence. "I'm sorry," he said softly. "I didn't understand."

"That's all right, Lee." Ainley lifted one hand from the cane, wearily, to wave it in a brief gesture of condonement. There was no longer anything martial about him; he looked suddenly worn and exhausted, as if he had discarded a pose. When he spoke again, it was in heavy, plodding syllables. "Would you—would you care to undertake a case connected with Martin's death?"

"If I can be of service to you, certainly."

"You—you'd have to go up to Dr. Jaeger's sanitarium, where Martin died."

LEE STANTON leaned forward and clasped his hands on the desk. He eyed his client keenly, with a direct gaze that was at once troubled and questing. "Do you mean," he asked in a low voice, "that there was something questionable in his death?"

"I—don't know." Mr. Ainley became visibly uncomfortable. He altered his position sightly, and his words were hesitant. "I don't know, Lee. If I were positive...." He paused, and for an instant something ugly brooded in his eyes. But it disappeared, and he finished flatly: "That's what I want you to learn. I want you to investigate the circumstances of his death!"

"But certainly, Mr. Ainley, you must know what those circumstances were!"

"I know only," the tall man said in a slow, cold monotone, "what Dr. Paul Jaeger chose to tell me."

"Oh....I see...."

"And somehow I—I don't believe the man. I've never wholly believed him, even though I haven't a single point of tangible, legal evidence to support my feeling. And lately, Lee, that doubt has been gnawing at me more insistently than ever. It—it tor-

tures me. It tears at me. I—I just can't believe that Martin, with his paralyzed leg, could have climbed a fifteen-foot fence; could have eluded the nurse and the doctors; could have jumped to those rocks; could have—"

Ainley stopped suddenly, barely rescuing himself from a plunge into confusion. From his breast pocket he drew a silk handkerchief and touched it to a forehead that had become moist. The mounting excitement that had rushed through his tones abruptly collapsed, and he swallowed quite loudly. As he replaced the handkerchief, he apologized.

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean to—let go like that. If you're to understand the case, perhaps I'd better start by giving you the essential facts about Martin."

"Please do." Lee Stanton's brows were contracted. He still leaned forward on the desk, watching his caller with an intensity of attention that was almost disconcerting.

"Well—" Mr. Ainley wet his lips. "You knew, of course, about Martin's trouble?"

"The superficial facts."

"H'm. But not their cause, eh? ... Well, I'll explain. His trouble was due, Lee, to an accident. It happened when Martin was a child of five. He fell from a second story window. Fell to a pavement. And broke his little body so terribly that we—we didn't think he'd live. Sometimes—" Mr. Ainley lowered his head and scowled blindly at the floor, while his words sank into a husky whisper. "Sometimes I feel it might have been better if—if—"

But he did not complete the thought. After a second he looked up abruptly, blinking slightly, as if some sound had snatched him out of revery. When he resumed his account, it was in steady, coherent phrases.

MARTIN AINLEY'S dreadful fall, he said, had wrecked not only his body.

"Not that he was ever violently insane or dangerous," Ainley declared. "It was simply that his mind didn't grow. It remained as hopelessly paralyzed as his leg. When he was twenty, a year ago, he used to mumble childishly, like—like a baby in a state of constant wonder. I did everything I could for him, Lee; everything that was humanly, thinkably possible!"

"I know that, Mr. Ainley," Lee murmured gravely.

"I had him examined by every specialist I ever heard of, before the war. I took him to Vienna, to Zurich, to Stockholm. Once, in a kind of despair, I even traveled with him to Calcutta, where some native fakir had built up a reputation of sorts for doing wonders with hypnotism. But nothing helped. No doctor could change him. They all agreed that his brain was beyond hope.... And then, a year and a half ago, I heard of Dr. Paul Jaeger."

Mr. Ainley drew a long, deep breath, and his gaze crossed the desk to meet and hold Stanton's.

"They said he was a wizard, this Jaeger. That he had done remarkable, miraculous things with such cases. And so I took Martin to him. Jaeger made no promises. Neither did he say there was no hope. He simply advised me to leave the boy at his sanitarium for a year. There was nothing to lose, Lee, and so I did leave him. I—I would have done anything that offered hope!"

Again the silk handkerchief appeared to dry Mr. Ainley's forehead. But now it did not return to his pocket; he held it clasped over the knob of his cane.

"While Martin was at the sanitarium," he continued, "I saw him twice a month, but I never noticed a change in him. Still, Dr. Jaeger was doing his best, he assured me, and I wanted to give him a chance. I didn't like the

man, Lee—there was something about him that always made me uncomfortable. He—he was the sort of fellow you don't want walking behind you in the dark, if you understand what I'm trying to express.... Nevertheless, I couldn't allow personal prejudice to interfere with Martin's chances, so I left the boy at the sanitarium.

"Well, just about a year ago, Dr. Jaeger telephoned me to come up at once. Martin had died...." Once more that long, slow breath. Mr Ainley's fingers on the cane twitched. "The story I got from Jaeger himself was this:

"Every day, the weather permitting, his patients were taken out into the grounds of the sanitarium for air and exercise. Martin, because he was neither violent nor dangerous, was allowed more freedom than the others. The boy used to sit quietly under a tree, staring out over the sea; or he'd hobble around among the flowers. The sanitarium, I must tell you, stands on Pine Point, a small promontory on a rocky part of the Maine coast. Its grounds are surrounded by a fifteen-foot-high wire fence, so that the inmates can't very well get out, even if they try to.

"Well, this day was beautiful. And very warm. So Martin was allowed to come out again after supper. He sat watching the sea through the wire fence. It grew dark, and Dr. Jaeger himself was seated on the veranda, smoking and watching Martin across the flower garden. After a while the doctor glanced down at some letters in his lap."

Mr. Ainley paused to steady his voice. He was quite calm when he went on: "Dr. Jaeger says he heard a sound that made him look up. There was a moon, and by its light he saw something that brought him to his feet in horror and amazement. Martin, with his hands and left foot, had climbed the wire fence and was straddling its top!

"The doctor rushed toward him, calling. Martin looked around and—and lost his balance. He fell over the other side of the fence. Fell to the rocks below and smashed his head on them. He—he was dead when Jaeger reached him.... That's Jaeger's story—and I don't believe it!"

- 2 -

THIS REPORT of a death that had occured a year ago held nothing to hint of reasons behind it, Lee thought. When Mr. Ainley had finished, he asked slowly: "And why, exactly, don't you believe it?"

"Concrete reasons are hard to give, Lee."

"Is it, perhaps, because you distrust Dr. Jaeger's very personality?"

"Ye-es, that's part of it, I suppose. But there are other points."

"Such as?"

"Well, consider. Nobody witnessed Martin's death, except Dr. Jaeger himself. He explains that by saying the entire staff of the sanitarium was in the dining room at the time, at supper. Even old Harry Andrews—he's a sort of gatekeeper who is usually somewhere about the grounds at all hours—was inside, eating. So it's only the doctor's word we have."

"Didn't he call anybody when he saw Martin fall?"

"He says he was too excited to remember whether he shouted or not—which is another statement I find hard to believe."

"Exactly what does he say he did?"

"He told me that he rushed out through the gates, went to the rocks, and found Martin dead. He picked the boy up and carried him indoors, then

called for the others. When they arrived, they saw Martin on the floor of the hall, his head battered."

Lee Stanton frowned at a pencil on the desk.

"How much," he asked thoughtfully, "did Martin weigh?"

"About a hundred and fifty."

"Is Dr. Jaeger a strong man?"

"No!" snapped Mr. Ainley decisively. "Not according to his appearance. He's slight, thin, effeminate. He'd have had a hard time carrying Martin all that distance from the rocks across the grounds into the house. It's probably a hundred yards. And why should he have done it when it would have been so easy to summon help?"

Lee glanced up quickly. He asked: "Did you, by any chance, put that question to Dr. Jaeger?"

Mr. Ainley shook his head rather stiffly.

"No," he confessed. "At the beginning I was too deeply shocked by—by everything to think very clearly about matters. It wasn't until a few days after I had taken the body home and buried it that I began to feel clear-minded enough to analyze Jaeger's statements. By that time he'd gone."

"Gone?"

"To Europe. He sailed a week after Martin's death, leaving the sanitarium in charge of an assistant, Dr. Crayne. That's another thing that puzzled me: Why had Jaeger left so quickly?"

"I suppose you investigated that?"

"Oh, yes. I visited the sanitarium again and talked to Dr. Crayne, as well as to a few others. Ostensibly Jaeger went to do research work in Berlin."

"On impulse?"

Mr. Ainley frowned. "No-o," he admitted almost reluctantly. "He'd been planning to go for some time, all right. In fact, his passage had been booked for more than a month."

SLOWLY Lee Stanton straightened in his chair. He stared away through the window into the dazzling blue of a summer sky—a New York sky stabbed by the peaks of a hundred aspiring towers. His own office, fifty-four stories above the turmoil of the streets, detached, isolated, sun-flooded, commanded one of the most magnificent views in the world; and yet he saw nothing now save the disturbing problem Mr. Ainley had brought.

Suddenly he said: "But there must have been blood on the rocks!"

"Blood?"

"Where the doctor found Martin."

A queerly bitter smile twisted Mr. Ainley's lips. "Who knows?" he muttered. "Even the tides favored the doctor's story. The tide was rising that evening. By the time somebody's curiosity forced him to go down to the rocks, the water had splashed over most of them. If there had been blood-stains, they had been washed away."

As Ainley went on, Lee gathered a clear impression, though a rather hopeless one, of the futility of his client's doubts. Even granting their logic, one could find in them no substantial grounds on which to challenge Dr. Jaeger's statements in a court of law. They offered not one piece of actual evidence to disprove anything the physician had maintained.

Nevertheless, Stanton could keenly appreciate the uncertainty which for a year had been harassing Mr. Ainley; and this perception was not free from a tinge of uneasy sympathy. His visitor's suspicions, ugly though they might be, were indubitably reasonable; Dr. Jaeger's declarations had been far from convincing to anyone who knew Martin Ainley.

Had that crippled boy really been able—even under the influence of some insane impulse—to climb a fifteen-foot fence? Truly a remarkable thing to do with a paralyzed leg.... But admiting that he had done the thing, would it have been logical for the frail Dr. Jaeger to carry that hun-

dred-and-fifty-pound burden without attempting to summon assistance? Especially since help was so near and so easily procurable....

Stanton's frown deepened.

This was scarcely the kind of case with which he had anticipated launching his career as an independent detective. He fingered his pencil thoughtfully and wondered, of a sudden, why Ainley had delayed active investigations for a whole year.

When he uttered the query, his visitor fumbled in his wallet and finally drew from it a small newspaper clipping. As he offered the slip of paper across the desk, Mr. Ainley muttered: "Well, Lee, to tell the truth, I hesitated about doing anything because —because my ideas were so vague. They lacked a background of facts. I distrusted myself, distrusted my suspicions. That held me back. I suppose I'd still be hesitating if I hadn't found this in the shipping news column of the *News* this morning. Read it."

The clipping was very brief:

> Among the arrivals on the *Majestic* yesterday was Dr. Paul Jaeger, the noted alienist, returning from a year's sojourn in Berlin. Dr. Jaeger said he planned to remain in New York only a day and would then proceed to his Pine Point Sanitarium at Shag Harbor, Maine.

Stanton tapped the edge of the slip of paper on the desk. His client was saying bitterly: "When I saw that, Lee, it acted like a whiplash. My doubts rushed back. My brain was in a storm. Here, at last, was Jaeger himself! Here was a chance to—learn things! I knew I'd have to act at once, if only to quiet my conscience."

Very quietly and directly Lee Stanton asked: "Do you think that Dr. Jaeger murdered your son?"

Ainley paled. His hands rubbed the knob of his cane. "I haven't dared," he whispered, hoarsely, "to put my thoughts so—definitely!"

"But can you think of any motive the man might have had for killing Martin?"

"No! That's what makes me so uncertain of myself. I—I can't."

Stanton raised his brows slightly and regarded the clipping. And presently he inquired: "Did you ever take the matter up with the police?"

A sound that might have been a derisive snort came from Mr. Ainley. "Yes. I talked to Pottle, all right—Ellery Pottle. He's police chief up at Shag Harbor. But he couldn't see anything tangible in my idea. Of course, he asked a few people at the sanitarium a few questions. Made some pretense of bustling around just to satisfy me. But nothing ever came of it. That's why I want my own investigator on the case. Once and for all, I want to know if Jaeger's story can be disproved! Anything is better than this torturing doubt!... Lee, will you go?"

For a few seconds, Lee Stanton sat staring into the burning, anxious eyes of the man across the desk. Then, absently, he picked up the telephone: "Miss Hoyt," he said to the stenographer in the outer office, "please reserve a Pullman chair on the morning train to Shag Harbor, Maine."

IT WAS nine-thirty the following evening—the 23rd of August—when young Lee Stanton stepped off his train, suitcase in hand, and drew in his first intoxicating draught of Maine air. It was a tonic, tingling, delicious, and revivifying. The pungency of pine flavored the salty tang of the sea wind and spoke to him of romance and languor rather than of tragedy.

He went directly to a hotel.

By the time he had washed and changed a few travel-soiled clothes, however, it was almost ten—rather too late, he decided, for an initial visit to the Pine Point Sanitarium. And so he sat on the arm of a chair for a moment, lit a cigarette, and drew from

his pocket a slip of paper which he had studied a dozen times on the train.

The paper offered a list of names which Mr. Ainley had furnished; the names of all, excluding patients, who had been at Pine Point Sanitarium on the night of Martin's puzzling death.

He read it again, slowly:

Dr. Paul Jaeger.
Dr. Bertrand Crayne—assisting physician.
Theophile Ullmann—business representative.
Miss Leonore Woodfield—nurse.
Mrs. Edna Amdorf—head housekeeper.
Harry Andrews—groundkeeper.
Mary Pitt—cook.
Sam Pitt (her husband)—handyman.
Grace Deal—waitress.

These were the people who might help in the solution of the nebulous problem....

Stanton gazed for a while at the wall, and the cigarette between his fingers sent up a long spiral of smoke to twine about his dark, somewhat unruly hair. For several minutes he remained motionless, pondering.

Suddenly Lee looked at his watch. It was five minutes after ten.

He rose with abrupt vigor—a tall young man who filled his gray suit snugly. He took his hat and went out in search of Police Chief Ellery Pottle.

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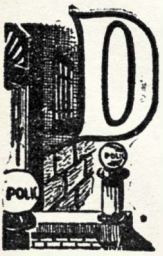

DR. PAUL JAEGER—lean, swarthy as an Arab, and tensely nervous—sat alone in his office at the Pine Point Sanitarium.

He was at his desk, frowning over a sheaf of papers that recorded the past year's history, financial and scientific, of his institution; and it seemed quite obvious, from the angry brilliance of his eyes behind their pince-nez, that matters, during his absence, had been far from satisfactory. Once, as he glanced over a bill, he snapped: "Idiot!"

Save for the localized glow of the desk lamp, the room was dark. And though it was scarcely half-past ten, the chamber, indeed, the entire building—was hushed as it might have been in the hour before dawn. Only one sound flowed through it, again and again, rhythmically, and unnoticed because of its very recurrence: this was the ineffably weary swish of the sea as it threw itself upon the rocks of the shore.

Dr. Jaeger heard nothing.

His scowling, aquiline features, splashed by the light of the lamp, offered a startling combination of highlights and black shadows. It was a curious face, that; perfect in the symmetry of its lines, and yet too perfect to be handsome. His hair was dark and smooth and as glossy as the plumes of a raven; save at the temples, where it was astonishingly white.

But now, watching him, one would be more apt to observe his hands than his countenance.

They were remarkable hands—inordinately long and thin and tapering. The hands of an artist or a prestidigitator. Their grace was that of a woman. And whenever they moved forward into the lamplight, with a kind of fluid ease, they were like the triangular heads of serpents. They had a trick of picking things up deliberately, as though the thumb and index finger were the stiff prongs of pincers.

Dr. Jaeger had just lifted a sheet of paper when the light on his desk was extinguished....

An instant he sat in utter blackness, too deeply startled to stir. He had heard nothing except the faint click of a wall switch behind him. No footsteps; not even a breath.

With a start that threw the pince-nez from his nose he whirled around

in his chair. But his movement was too late.

He had a momentary, uncertain, glimpse of a figure sheathed in white —an almost diaphanous wraith that sprang upon him from the door. Then something crushed down over Dr. Jaeger's mouth and nostrils, pressed there fiercely, furiously, by a hard, strong hand.

He tried to scream, but the sound was smothered under the gag. Already a sickly odor was oozing through the office—an odor not at all strange to the lean physician. It was the nauseating smell of chloroform....

Only once, at the very beginning, did Dr. Jaeger attempt to struggle. But another hand thrust him down into the chair ruthlessly; and before he could make a second effort, he slumped forward, unconscious.

There had been scarcely a sound.

Dr. Jaeger sprawled across the papers on his desk, his long arms limply outstretched. Perhaps it was a prank of nature that sent a shaft of moonlight through the window to illumine his slender hands. Those hands lay quite still now, their palms pressed flat on the desk, their nails gleaming like rosy pearls in the square of moonlight.

For a time the white-clothed figure beside him stood utterly still. Its eyes shone weirdly over the top of an operating mask. Its fingers rested stiffly on the doctor's bony wrists.

Then that figure, as noiseless as the specter it resembled, turned slowly to open a cabinet of surgical instruments. There was only the pale diffusion of moonlight to guide the searching fingers. But they groped from shelf to shelf, white-gloved and deliberate, until they gathered all they sought: tourniquets, scalpel, saw.

The figure in white went back to the desk, bent over it, and rolled up Dr. Jaeger's sleeves.... The luminous dial of a small clock between two inkwells gaily indicated twenty minutes to eleven....

Outside the sea sighed its endless monody, splashing and swishing and grumbling to the rocks. Within the sanitarium there was hardly a sound.

When the clock pointed to two minutes after eleven, the white figure moved around the desk to pick up a telephone.

Several moments of intense silence passed before the operator answered.

Then that figure beside the doctor spoke very softly, its masked mouth pressed against the transmitter:

"Please have an ambulance sent to the Pine Point Sanitarium immediately. There's been an accident."

There was no pause for a reply. The telephone went back to its bracket. And the figure in white swiftly crossed the office, quietly swung open the door, and stepped out as soundlessly as it had arrived.

MISS LEONORE WOODFIELD opened a door that gave upon the upper porch of the Pine Point Sanitarium. On the threshold she paused an instant to gaze through a curtain of pines at the round, golden moon that hung over a shimmering sea. She stood entranced by the beauty about her.

She was still in uniform, though more than an hour had passed since she had retired to her room. And her slender, white-clad silhouette, as she leaned motionless against the balustrade, seemed an exquisite thing carved of Carrara marble.

For a long time she stared thoughtfully at the sea; listened to the sad monody of waves splashing on rocks. The grounds beneath her were quite dark, for the pines robbed them of moonlight. But in the window of the small outhouse beside the entrance gates a light still shone. She could look into it and see old Harry Andrews, the groundkeeper, smoking his pipe and turning the pages of a newspaper.

The peace of the night lulled her; wrapped her in an enchanted spell, so that she scarcely heard another porch door softly open behind her.

Indeed, she was not aware of the man who had emerged from that door until he said, with pleasant astonishment: "Hello, Leonore! Didn't expect to find you out here with the owls."

She whirled around, startled. Then, uncertainly, her lips trembled into a smile. "Oh—hello, Doctor! You—came like a ghost!"

Dr. Bertrand Crayne laughed. He walked toward the girl with an easy, comfortable stride. He was a tall man, rugged, and rather too heavily developed for his thirty-four years. A dark suit seemed to blot out his body, like a skillful bit of camouflage, and left his countenance detached, as large and round as the moon.

"Insomnia?" he asked.

"No. I was reading. I just came out for a breath before going to sleep."

"Well—I'm glad you did."

Her brows arched. "Why?"

"In the first place, Leonore"—again he laughed, softly now— "because I always like being alone with you. In the second, because I want to tell you I'm leaving here in a week. I'm through."

Miss Woodfield was amazed; and when she questioned him, Dr. Crayne shrugged.

"Had a hot argument with Jaeger," he explained. "And he fired me. I'm just staying on until he can find somebody to replace me."

"But that's ridiculous, Doctor! Why, you—you've actually run the place for him this past year!"

"Yes," he agreed dryly. "I've run it down—according to J. When he discovered I had only four patients on the list, he flew into one of his tantrums."

"That's not your fault!" the girl protested.

"Thanks. But Jaeger, unfortunately, doesn't agree with you. Calls it gross mismanagement. So I'm through."

They stood silent, the nurse incredulous, the doctor faintly sneering at the moon. From somewhere in the night floated the drone of a racing automobile. As it came nearer, the sound grew through a slow, throbbing crescendo, challenging the rhythmical music of the waves.

"I'm not sorry," Dr. Crayne muttered with a trace of bitterness. "It'll be a relief to get away! This place gets on one's nerves. That moaning idiot in Number 4.... That laughing woman in Number 2.... God, I don't know how I've endured it this long! Living in a madhouse.... Caged in behind that fence.... And now that Jaeger is back. He's no man to work with, Leonore. He—"

DR. CRAYNE stopped—in wonder. Down beyond the gates a long, black automobile had halted, its motor humming angrily, its headlights glaring at the groundkeeper's house. The doctor peered curiously, and Miss Woodfield momentarily forgot his savage indictment of the sanitarium as she, too, watched the car.

They saw Harry Andrews throw aside his newspaper and hurry out inquisitively. Indistinct voices rose through the darkness, and presently old Andrews came running toward the house. Halfway across the garden he saw the couple on the upper porch; and he halted to call in surprise: "Anybody phone for an ambulance?"

"Why, no," Dr. Crayne answered, startled.

"But they got an emergency call!"

"Not from here, Harry."

"Yes, sir!" Andrews insisted. "The call came from the Pine Point Sanitarium, those fellers say!"

Dr. Crayne stared widely at Miss Woodfield; but her amazement equalled his. And in that moment another figure appeared on the porch a tall, gaunt man who had evidently

been roused from his bed. For he was still binding the cord of a dressing gown about his pajamas.

"What's up?" he demanded; his voice was deep and sonorous; somehow it invariably—and correctly—suggested a scowl. Theophile Ullmann, who kept the books of the institution and supervised its extra-clinical business, was a surly type of man, usually ugly of temper. Perhaps so many years of service in the sanitarium had curdled his humor, though those who had known him in the far past asserted that he had never been of a particularly pleasant disposition.

"You phone for an ambulance?" snapped Dr. Crayne.

"I? Certainly not. What for?"

But the doctor ignored the query. He glanced back at Miss Woodfield, uneasily.

"Think Jaeger might have done it?" he whispered. "He's still down in his office, you know."

"Why don't you run down and ask?"

"Not I!" snapped Dr. Crayne. "I've seen enough of him for one night."

Miss Woodfield shrugged her slim shoulders. "All right," she said. "I'll go down."

She left the porch. The two men on it did not speak. Both scowled at the ambulance, while Harry Andrews hurried back to swing open the gates.

And then, suddenly, there was a sound that sent terror through the very night.

A scream—a mad, piercing shriek from the throat of Leonore Woodfield!...

Dr. Crayne gasped and swung around. He darted toward the door, with the gaunt Ullman racing behind him. They dashed downstairs and through a dark corridor toward Dr. Jaeger's office.

In that far room there was light now. And as they ran toward it, Miss Woodfield lurched out.

She came as though some unspeakable horror were at her back—eyes dilated and flooded with agony; arms extended; face as white as her uniform. She tumbled forward into Dr. Crayne's embrace and tried to talk. But her words were incoherent; and before he could shake her to her senses, she collapsed and sank limply in a faint.

The doctor stood there, holding the girl's listless body, stupefied. He saw Theophile Ullman rush past him into the office. At the same time Harry Andrews, with the ambulance physician, crashed through the front door.

Ullman reappeared almost instantly.

His countenance was ghastly and he leaned against the wall as though the strength had suddenly slipped out of his legs. In his deep-set eyes raged a horror which he could not transfer to words.

He stammered hoarsely: "Go—go in there, Doctor! Go in! He's—he—" The gaunt man paused and shut his eyes. A visible shudder rippled through him. Not until the ambulance doctor had passed him did he look up again. Then, in tones deeper and more hoarse than ever, he said, "So-somebody better call the—the police!..."

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THOUGH it was after eleven, Lee Stanton still sat on the porch of Ellery Pottle's modest home. The little chief of police—known to children of Shag Harbor as "Pickwick" because of his absurd paunch and shiny, blooming cheeks—shook his head decisively.

"Personally," he declared, "I think

you're on a wild goose chase, Mr. Stanton. As far as I've been able to find out—and I poked around plenty—that Martin Ainley died exactly like Doc Jaeger said. I don't care what Mr. Ainley thinks; he's just been worked up, like, over the thing."

"Still, he has some very disturbing reasons for doubting the story."

"Has he?" Pottle scoffed. "Well, he never could tell me *why* Jaeger should want to lie about it."

"The obvious reason," quietly said Stanton, "would be to conceal the murder of Martin."

"Pa-ah! Excuse me, Mr. Stanton, but that's absolutely ridiculous. Jaeger may be a queer duck, but he wouldn't kill somebody he's trying to cure. Where's the motive for butchering an insane lad?"

"That's one of the things," said Lee in that same steady tone, "I'd like to investigate."

"I'm afraid you'll get nowheres. I've gone over the whole situation a dozen times. We've got to believe that Jaeger told the truth. He was pretty badly broken up about it himself last year. Things like that don't give his sanitarium a very good reputation."

"Nor do things like unconvincing explanations of—"

Stanton, however, did not finish the phrase, for unexpectedly a telephone trilled somewhere in the house. In surprise, Chief Pottle glanced at his watch. Then he muttered something and hurried inside.

When he emerged again, his eyes were round and his words were rapid in agitation: "Say, talk of the devil! Something's happened over to the sanitarium!"

Lee sprang to his feet. He snapped an impulsive query, but Chief Pottle could offer scant information. Buttoning the jacket of his uniform with nervous fingers, the plump official peered about the porch for his cap.

"Don't know just what it is," he answered, his voice thumping. "Whoever phoned was pretty wild. Yelled something I couldn't catch about Dr. Jaeger and said to come right over. . . . Wait'll I back my car out of the garage, will you? . . . Want to ride out with me?"

The question was superfluous. Lee went—feeling a queer, insuppressible surge of excitement. As they drove through Shag Harbor they stopped to pick up two policemen. Then they rushed on, out beyond the town limits, along the black, twisting shore road that led to Pine Point.

"GOOD LORD!"

On the threshold of Dr. Jaeger's office the ejaculation escaped Chief Pottle in a horrified whisper. His portly figure grew rigid, and he crushed back his breath, while slow moisture gathered on his forehead.

Lee Stanton, standing beside the official, uttered no sound when they made the discovery. But his face went suddenly gray; he swayed slightly; and for an instant he felt quite sick.

The office was brilliantly illuminated; too brilliantly, for the ceiling lights were numerous and dazzling. Dr. Jaeger himself had already been removed, by ambulance, to the Shag Harbor Hospital. So it was not the victim of this unforgettable crime that Stanton saw; instead he stared, in a kind of hypnosis, at something incalculably more appalling.

On the desk, now profusely littered with crimson-spotched papers, lay—

Dr. Jaeger's hands! . . .

Long, slender, tapering. Yellow as wax, yet streaked vividly with red. The hands of a woman, one might have said. Their nails pointed, meticulously polished. Lifeless hands, amputated at the wrist! . . .

Lee Stanton's eyes were flaming as he looked up at Theophile Ullmann, who stood on the other side of the desk.

"That's the way we found them," the gaunt man whispered hoarsely.

He was the only one in the doctor's office. The rest of the sanitarium's personnel—with the exception of Dr. Crayne, Miss Woodfield and Mrs. Amdorf, the housekeeper—was huddled in shocked silence in the hall. Ullmann, still wore the dressing gown he had hurriedly drawn over his pajamas. His sunken cheeks were colorless caverns under feverish eyes, and his wealth of gray hair was crazily disheveled.

CHIEF Ellery Pottle at last managed to control his breath and voice. "What a hellish thing to do!"

"And there's no trace," savagely responded the gaunt Ullmann, "of the devil who did it!"

"Didn't anyone hear something?"

"Not a sound!"

"You say Miss Woodfield was the first to see him?" Chief Pottle peered back into the semi-darkness of the hall, where pallid faces hung like tragic masks. "Where is she?"

"She's upstairs in her room," Ullmann explained in that deep, rasping voice. "The sight broke her down. The housekeeper, Mrs. Amdorf, is tending her."

Stanton, meanwhile, was sending a quick, searching survey around the office. He had not yet moved from the threshold beside Pottle. And though he had no official standing at this inquiry, its terrible tension swept formality aside. He asked Theophile Ullmann: "Were both those windows open like that when you found Dr. Jaeger?"

If the gaunt man was surprised to hear questions from this stranger, he did not permit his feelings to affect the promptness of his reply. "No," he said. "When we came in here, this room reeked of chloroform. Dr. Jaeger must have been given a heavy dose. It was almost impossible to stand in here. I opened the windows myself. It's better now."

"You mean," Lee pressed with a sudden contraction of brows, "that both windows were closed completely?"

"And locked, yes." Unexpectedly, then, a tall man jabbed a bony index finger at the desk. "But look here, Chief," he directed sharply. "You haven't seen this!"

It appeared, first, as if he was indicating the scalpel and the small, sharp saw that lay beside it. When Stanton and Pottle stepped forward however, they discovered that the long finger was tapping upon a series of words which had been carefully scratched on the surface of the desk: Apparently the sentence had been indited with the point of the scalpel.

> These hands that so much harm have done shall do no more.

"That—that's a strange one!" whispered Pottle, in something like awe. "You wouldn't think a man could give time to a thing like that after committing such an act!"

"Why not?" burst from Ullmann. "Didn't he give time to a call for an ambulance. Whoever he is, the man has no more emotions than a—a beast!"

After a moment Pottle looked up to ask: "Where's Dr. Crayne?"

"He rode with the ambulance to the hospital."

"Has he any idea of who could have done this?"

"He said he hadn't."

Stanton was still staring at the hideous laden desk in silence. Dr. Jaeger, he knew, was not dead. If, by some miraculous chance, he recovered, he himself would doubtless be able to furnish the name of his assailant. But if he did not recover.... Lee looked up at the corpulent Pottle, and his jaws were unusually hard set. "Chief," he said, "one thing seems fairly clear from the appearance of this desk!"

Pottle's eyes narrowed. "What's that?"

"I don't think the—operation was performed by a very skillful surgeon. If you will look at those incisions—"

Whatever Lee intended to say, however, was suddenly checked. With startling shrillness the telephone on the desk had begun to ring. Theophile Ullmann was nearest the instrument. He snatched it up with a hand like a claw.

"Hello!...Yes, Ullmann speaking!"

The others stood silent, watching the gaunt, gray-haired figure. They could distinctly hear the cackle of a staccato voice against his ear. They saw his face grow limp, the lips parting.

And though the voice in the wire still clattered, Ullmann lowered the telephone and sent a haggard stare from Police Chief Ellery Pottle to Lee Stanton.

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THOUGH he had been an independent private detective for only a fortnight, Lee Stanton, at twenty-eight, was not precisely a novice in the study of crime. His apprenticeship in that field had been served, as Mr. Ainley so well knew, under the expert guidance of the late Bart Stanton.

His father had been district attorney in New York for four years; and before occupying that office he had achieved considerable distinction as a criminal lawyer. Perhaps the greatest heritage that had descended to Lee was the profound knowledge of crime and criminal psychology the elder Stanton had gathered in a short, spectacular, and eminently successful career. For the son, as secretary and aide to the father, had witnessed and frequently assisted in the solution of many an underworld problem.

To this affair at the Pine Point Sanitatium, therefore, Lee brought a certain measure of experience and professional discernment. He confronted the case with an air of efficient purpose that caught and held the attention of Chief Pottle.

Nevertheless, it occurred to Lee that his primary mission in Shag Harbor had wandered into an uncharted and perplexing by-path. "I'm not quite certain," he confided to the police chief, rather hesitantly, "of just what my position in all this has become."

It was some fifteen minutes after the telephone message, and they had managed to recapture some degree of calm. Having completed a preliminary inspection of Dr. Jaeger's office, they were moving together down the murky corridor, between lines of closed doors. Strange, those doors; each was possessed of a small aperture, perhaps four inches square, through which one might peer into the patient's quarters beyond. As he saw them, Stanton's eyes darted from one to another with sudden interest.

"What do you mean—your position?" demanded the chief.

Lee started. "Why," he explained, I came here to investigate what Dr. Jaeger reported about Martin Ainley's death. Under the circumstances, however, I'm not sure whether Mr. Ainley would want me to continue; whether he'd consider it worth while."

"You in a hurry to get away?" the official snapped with unexpected irritation.

"No, certainly not!"

"Well, then, I wish you'd stick with me awhile."

Stanton grimly smiled. "I was hoping," he said, "you'd suggest it."

At the far end of the corridor, beside the exit to the porch, they paused to formulate some definite plan of campaign. They were alone here, and it was possible to speak candidly. The stout little chief drew a long, deep breath and shook a worried head.

"It's as rotten a mess as I've ever

struck," he muttered. "We'll have to get the coroner over here first thing in the morning."

"Perhaps," Lee discreetly suggested, "if you sent for him immediately—"

"Can't. Doc Henderson, who's coroner, went over to Portland this afternoon. He couldn't get here till tomorrow anyhow. And Doc Platt, who's his assistant, is down with a bad leg.... No, Stanton; we'd better get along with our own—"

ABRUPTLY, in amazement, Ellery Pottle stopped. He jerked his head around to gape back over his shoulder.

For the corridor was suddenly filled with sounds so desolate, so unnerving, that they sent a veritable shiver through the corpulent official. Moans....Moans of deep, unspeakable sadness that issued from some door near the office. A man's eerie cries rising almost to sobs, sinking, welling again, dropping back to groans....

"Good God! What on earth is that?"

Theophile Ullmann appeared at the office door to call in his profound voice: "Don't mind him, Chief. It's the patient in Room 4. He's apt to keep it up all night."

"Lord!" whispered Pottle. "Do we have to work with that going on?... Come, Stanton, let's get outside a minute! I—I've got to get my senses settled!"

The weirdness of the sound somehow reminded Lee of ancient morbid melodramas—scenes set in darkness, with chilling cries emanating from some inscrutable distance. And yet he shuddered slightly as he followed Pottle into the cool, pine-scented air of the porch. Those dolorous ululations of the poor imbecile in Room 4 continued. Indeed, they were destined to continue almost to dawn—a mad obligato to a night that was to be crowded with mad endeavor....

He said: "I'm afraid we won't accomplish very much out here, Chief. If we're to get anywhere, we'd better begin by questioning the people who were in the house this evening."

"In a minute," Pottle agreed, wiping a palm across his forehead. "First off, I—I want to decide just where we're heading and what we've got to work on. You know, I—well, this thing has sort of taken my wind away. I haven't had a murder case in twelve years."

HE GLANCED obliquely at the young man from New York; and there was something half fearful, half faltering in the look.

"That's why I asked you to stick with me," he said. "You—you look like maybe you've got some ideas."

"Not ideas, exactly, Chief. Merely observations I've managed to make." Stanton peered at the moon and frowned. "And they may be wrong."

"Let's have 'em, anyway. You started to say something, awhile back, about the operation not having been performed by a very good surgeon—"

"That's the way it appeared, yes."

"What makes you say that?"

"The scalpel work was very bad. Jagged, careless incisions. Tissues torn rather than cut. Did you notice it?"

Pottle swallowed. "As a matter of fact," he confessed awkwardly, "those —those hands kind of got me. I couldn't look—so close."

"I couldn't stand it very long myself," Lee answered, his frown deepening. He was still staring at the moon that floated among the pines.

"And yet," Pottle mumbled, shaking his head uncertainly, "I don't see how anybody except a doctor—even a surgeon—could have attempted an operation like that. Maybe—well, maybe the bad surgery was done purposely, as a—well, as a blind!"

"That's hardly consistent with the rest of the evidence."

"What evidence?" Pottle challenged, raising his round head in surprise.

"I don't think," Stanton thoughtfully averred, "that the murderer intended actually to kill Dr. Jaeger. If he had wanted that, he wouldn't have left the tourniquets on the arms to stop the flow of blood. Moreover, I don't see why he should have chosen so complicated a way to kill. And finally, he wouldn't have called for an ambulance."

"But we're not sure yet," Pottle quickly put in, "that it was the murderer who called."

Lee shrugged. "No," he agreed. "I'm basing the assumption on the fact that nobody else here admits telephoning."

"H'm....Well, go on. You were saying—"

"That if we grant the murderer didn't intend to kill Jaeger, we've got to concede he wasn't an experienced surgeon. A good surgeon would have employed his skill to keep Jaeger alive. A crude job would have been out of the question."

On this point they pondered in silence for several moments. Lee watched clouds beginning to creep across the moon, heard the swish of the sea on rocks—without being quite conscious of either. His thoughts were still gathered about those hideous hands on the doctor's desk.

"That message—" he murmured, almost inaudibly.

"It sounds," instinctively whispered Pottle, "as if somebody was trying to punish Jaeger for something those hands did...." And presently, in slow syllables, he repeated the sentence: "*'These hands that so much harm have done shall do no more!'*... Queer, that. Swings along like—like a line of poetry."

"Yes," said Stanton, "like poetry—" And then, after a pause: "If we could trace back the history of those hands—"

"To tell the truth," Pottle muttered, "none of the people we've seen here—except maybe the patients—look to me as if they were so damn' savage."

"We really haven't spoken to them yet, Chief."

"Well—" abruptly. "Let's!"

As they turned to the door, an anguished moan welcomed them. A moan that was bitter and desolate and unnerving....

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"THESE," said Theophile Ullmann succinctly, "are the people who were in or about the house at the time of the crime."

He indicated the awed and shaken group that had gathered in the small reception room for the inquisition. Most of them sat about in a pallid circle, though Ullman himself stood before a great, empty fireplace, his gaunt figure seemingly strangely shapeless in the voluminous folds of his dressing gown. Stanton, slightly withdrawn, sat frowning with curious intentness; he had perched himself on a window sill, and from this position he could watch every countenance in the room. Chief Pottle remained near the door, with the two uniformed policemen he had brought with him, standing at his back.

At Pottle's request, Ullmann became a sort of master-of-ceremonies, presenting those who were about him. Even Miss Leonore Woodfield had managed to regain sufficient composure to attend this hearing, though the girl still looked wretchedly upset and ill. Her hands, Lee noticed were jerkily ruining a handkerchief in her lap.

She was the first whom Ullmann introduced. Then he went on:

"This is Mrs. Amdorf, our head

housekeeper.... This is our cook, Mrs. Pitt.... And Sam Pitt, her husband, who does the odd jobs about the place....And Harry Andrews, the groundkeeper; though Harry was in his lodge near the gates, not actually in the house. Besides these people, gentlemen, there were the patients—four of them. And that accounts for all."

"Except, of course," quietly and pointedly said the chief, "Dr. Crayne and yourself."

"Naturally," the gaunt man agreed rather stiffly. "Dr. Crayne and myself."

Lee Stanton straightened slightly. The others glanced at him, and he asked in some surprise: "Do you mean this small group comprises the entire staff of the sanitarium, Mr. Ullmann?"

"The entire resident staff, yes."

"Oh, you employ outside help?"

"Only two maids who live in town. They come in by the day to help Mrs. Amdorf. But they had left this evening by six or six-thirty." He paused an instant, as some recollection brought a new frown to his bony face. "Also," he said, "we have a waitress, Grace Deal. But Grace is on her vacation this week. Went to see her people in Kennebunkport. Mrs. Amdorf is temporarily taking her place here in addition to her own duties."

Lee, however, distinctly remembered the list of the old personnel which Ainley had given him; with that in mind, he pressed: "But surely Miss Woodfield isn't your only nurse."

Ullmann rigidly nodded. "The only one."

"Isn't that rather unusual?"

The tall man drew together his heavy brows.

"No. When we had more patients," he explained, "we had a larger staff. There were times when we employed as many as eight nurses. But for the past couple of months Miss Woodfield has been able to manage very nicely alone, since there are only four patients. They're not particularly difficult cases. Dr. Crayne was good enough to assist her whenever necessary, and she got along quite well. ... Didn't you, Miss Woodfield?"

"Quite well," she whispered, nodding blankly to the wall.

Stanton accepted the explanation without comment. For the time he withdrew his questions from the inquiry; but he watched the proceedings with alert, oddly troubled intensity.

Chief Pottle sent a curt rattle through his throat. He still confronted the tall man at the fireplace.

"First," he said briskly, "I'd like to find out just what Dr. Jaeger himself did this evening. I guess you can help us there, Mr. Ullman."

THEOPHILE ULLMANN nodded coldly. "To a certain extent," he agreed. "As far as I know, this is what happened: After dinner—at about seven—Dr. Jaeger walked in the garden for a short time, alone. Then he went to his office, where Dr. Crayne and I joined him. He began going over the records of the past year. He arrived here only this morning, you know, after having been in Europe for a year; and I may tell you that he was—mmmm—highly dissatisfied with what he found.

"At nine o'clock—possibly a few minutes later—I left Dr. Jaeger and Dr. Crayne together in the office. I was tired and had a—a severe headache. So I left the discussion to them and went to bed. I believe I was asleep before ten, and I slept until the arrival of the ambulance awoke me."

"I see. Do you know if the sanitarium had any visitors tonight?"

Ullmann shook his cadaverous head. "None," he said, "that I know of."

Suddenly, then, before Pottle could turn to anyone else, Lee bent forward to interject another quiet query of his

own: "Mr. Ullmann, how long have you known Dr. Jaeger?"

The gaunt man's lips moved wryly, and his answer was astonishing. "Some thirty-odd years."

"Really! Then you know his history quite well?"

"Quite," Ullmann dryly admitted. "We were children together in Munich, long before we came to America.... But if you're seeking the reason for this crime in the past, I'm afraid you're on the wrong track. It—well, it can't be!"

"Why not?"

"The doctor never made enemies."

Lee did not dispute the point; neither did he press the discussion now. But when he leaned back, it was with the resolve to draw many more facts from this stern old man. Alone, he imagined, Ullmann might prove much more communicative than before this gaping audience. Certainly somewhere Jaeger's history must lie the reason for those words: *"These hands that so much harm have done...."*

Catching a sudden, suspicious glance from Theophile Ullmann's eyes, the young investigator wondered whether he had thrust at a delicate spot.

Chief Ellery Pottle cleared his throat, turned now to the housekeeper, Mrs. Amdorf.

A TALL, lean woman dressed in severe black, she faced the chief with a tight frown. From the very beginning, even before she spoke in that sharp hostile voice of hers, Lee disliked the woman. There was about her attitude something harsh and bitter; something almost cruel. She stood with her hands clasped, her pointed chin lowered, and eyed her inquisitor with a suggestion of cold defiance.

"I don't know a thing about it!" she said curtly.

"All the same," tactfully said the chief, "you can help us a lot, Mrs. Amdorf, by telling us what you were doing all evening."

"I was in my room."

"All evening?"

"Practically. I went up as soon as I finished my work. That was at half-past eight."

"And you didn't come down at all?"

"Not—" She stabbed an oblique, almost contemptuous look at Miss Woodfield—"until I heard the nurse scream."

"But during all that time you were awake?"

"I was sewing."

"Did you hear anything strange in the house? Any sounds that you couldn't account for?"

Mrs. Amdorf uttered something that might have been a snort. "No," she said. "My room is in the rear of the third floor. I never hear much."

She proved to be a poor, abrupt witness, with little to contribute—save a series of eloquently dark glances and expressions; and in the end Chief Pottle left her to begin with Harry Andrews.

A middle-aged, thin-haired man with wide, worried eyes, the groundkeeper; his manner was at once anxious and almost pathetically eager. He was large and loose-jointed, and Stanton fancied that he might have profited enormously from a bath. For the soil in which he worked seemed to fill his pores and line his nails; and his baggy old suit was generously spotted. In contrast with Mrs. Amdorf, he offered a certain vague relief, for he seemed honest and willing to tell even more than was asked of him.

"I was just a-settin' in the lodge by the gates, smokin' an' readin' most of the evenin' sir," he asserted. "And there wasn't a sound in the house, sir—not one as I could notice!"

"During the evening, did you go into the house at all?"

"No, sir—that is, not since supper."

"Do you keep the gates locked?"

"Yes, sir. Always. We've got to keep 'em locked, sir. They were Dr. Jaeger's orders."

"Did you admit anyone tonight? Any visitor—anyone from outside?"

"Oh, no, sir! Visitors ain't allowed after five."

Chief Pottle hesitated, then peered toward Lee. If no one had come to the sanitarium this evening, the crime must be fixed on one of these residents .... And yet, of course, there was always the possibility of an outsider's having climbed unseen over the fifteen-foot wire fence....

Stanton asked: "Andrews, from your position in the lodge, could you look into the window of Dr. Jaeger's office?"

"Why—" the groundkeeper nodded emphatically "—yes, sir, I sure could."

"Did you?"

"Well, I reckon I did, once or twice. I saw the doctor at his desk, once with Dr. Crayne; and later he was alone, reading papers."

"Now think, Andrews. Didn't you see anybody else?"

"No, sir." He pondered a moment, frowning at the floor, then shook his head with certainty. "No, sir, I didn't."

"Perhaps you noticed the light go out."

"No, can't say that I did. I wasn't looking that way. In fact, I didn't know the light was out till I went out to the ambulance; but I reckon I hadn't looked toward the office window for maybe half an hour before that."

Harry Andrews' loquacious testimony, though it continued to flow for some time, revealed nothing further; and finally Chief Pottle questioned Miss Leonore Woodfield.

The pallid girl had little to say.

At nine-thirty, she whispered unsteadily, she had made a final round of the patients' rooms. As a matter of convenience, all four of these were in the corridor outside Dr. Jaeger's office. The door of that office was closed at the time, but Miss Woodfield heard Dr. Jaeger and Dr. Crayne talking. To what they were saying, however, she granted little attention, since her own task occupied her. When she finished she went up to her room, where she sat down to read.

HAD SHE heard any strange sounds? No—only Dr. Crayne coming up the stairs; at any rate, she had imagined it was Dr. Crayne's step she recognized, though she had not troubled to see. When was this? She was not sure; shortly after ten, perhaps. Later—at about eleven—Miss Woodfield had tired of reading and had stepped out on the upper porch for a breath of air before going to bed. There, quite unexpectedly, Dr. Crayne had joined her, and they had conversed until the astonishing arrival of the ambulance. Had she, from her position on the porch, seen anyone in the grounds? Anyone moving about? No—no....

Mary Pitt, the enormously corpulent cook, was next to be interrogated; and she spoke emphatically both for her sturdy, flat-faced husband and for herself.

"Our room is behind the kitchen, in the wing. An' after me and Sam got the dishes done and the kitchen tidied, we went into our place for the night. First, Sam went over the papers, then we played cribbage. We plays cribbage every night. We was still playing when Miss Woodfield screamed, and that's the first we heard of anything. I can't tell you anything else."

"Nor me," grunted Sam, and sent an ugly hand back through his mass of disheveled red hair. He was a muscular glant, and Stanton surveyed his tremendous figure interestedly. It was so visibly, so ostentatiously capable of vast, brutal exertion....

Suddenly a moment of silence was shattered by another long, melancholy

moan. It filled the entire house with its terrible anguish. The cry of that patient in Room 4 was so startling that Chief Pottle whirled around, colorless.

"Good Lord!" he rasped. "Those howls are enough to drive anybody crazy! Can't you stop him?"

"I'm afraid not," softly said Ullmann. "That, you see, is the poor man's malady."

Pottle, however, swiftly controlled himself. And when he turned back to those in the room, it was to mutter: "Well, we've got everybody's story now—everybody's e x c e p t Dr. Crayne's." But his narrow, darting eyes seemed to add, "Only Heaven knows how many of you have been lying!"

"DR. CRAYNE," said Theophile Ullmann as he stepped forward from the fireplace, "ought to be back from the hospital very soon. Until then—"

"Until then," Pottle rapped out, "Mr. Stanton and I will have another look around the office."

"For—fingerprints, perhaps?"

For an instant, as he spoke, something strangely sarcastic glowed and vanished in Ullmann's eyes. Lee Stanton, rising from the window sill, saw it distinctly; it was as if behind those sunken eyes the gaunt man had chuckled.

"The desk," Pottle was saying, "is full of fingerprints!"

"Exactly!" Ullmann's quick agreement was startling. "It just occured to me that everyone of us was in the office this afternoon. Dr. Jaeger interviewed us individually. And I suppose we must all have left our marks. That is why I mentioned the fingerprints. They're apt to be—misleading."

"Don't worry," the chief advised dryly, "about our being misled.... Now, if you people will wait here, Mr. Stanton and I will have a look at—"

"Oh, Chief." The detective ventured the interruption in a low tone. as one offering a sudden suggestion. "Perhaps you ought to try to interview the patients."

At that, Miss Woodfield instantly rose as though she had been jerked out of her hair. "That's useless!" she cried.

"Why?" Lee softly inquired, regarding the girl in mild surprise.

"Because they're all irresponsible."

Over Stanton's countenance, then, flowed a reassuring smile. "But I'm sure," he said, "the chief has no intention of putting them into a witness stand. You see, Miss Woodfield, one of them may have been awake at about eleven. He may even have looked through the small aperture in his door out into the corridor."

"Impossible! All of them were asleep."

"How can you be sure?"

The girl hesitated. "Well, I don't actually *know*," she admitted. "But when I went to Dr. Jaeger's office to—to ask about the call for an ambulance, I had to pass the patients' rooms. There wasn't a sound in any of them."

"I see.... Did you, by any chance, look into their rooms?"

"No-o. But—"

"Then don't you think it's quite possible you may be wrong?" Lee's assuaging smile persisted. "There's a chance, it seems to me, that one of the patients may have been disturbed by what happened in the doctor's office. He may have got up and peered into the corridor; may have seen somebody pass. On that chance, we really ought to try to make them talk. What's your opinion, Chief?"

Pottle started. "Absolutely," he agreed. "I'm sorry we've got to bother them, Miss Woodfield, but I'm afraid we're in no position to overlook anything."

Before this advance of concerted determination the nurse was compelled to surrender. She yielded with an ineffectual motion of her hands.

"Very well," she sighed wearily. "I'll bring you the keys to their rooms."

She turned and walked out, a trim, stiffly erect figure in white. Those who waited stood uneasily silent, exchanging odd glances. For a while the only sounds in the sanitarium were the miserable wails of the man in Room 4.

And then Miss Woodfield returned.

Returned with eyes wide in frightened amazement. She seemed to have been running, for her breath leaped from her in short, agitated spurts. "The keys!" she gasped. "They're gone!"

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THERE was an interval of absolute hush, almost, one felt, of suspended animation. Then sternly: "Gone," demanded Ellery Pottle, "from where?"

"From the drawer in Dr. Crayne's desk—where we always kept them!"

The chief frowned suspiciously from one astonished countenance to another. "Any of you know about this?"

But no one replied....

As Lee Stanton studied that circle of faces, a hundred thoughts surged into his mind. He heard Miss Woodfield stammer that she found the drawer of Dr. Crayne's desk open; no, nothing else appeared to have been disturbed. When the chief asked who knew where those keys were customarily kept, he was met with the disarming acknowledgment that practically every member of the institution's staff shared the information! It had never been a secret.

Of course, as Mr. Ullmann suggested, Dr. Crayne himself might have pocketed the keys, quite innocently and for a reason he would satisfactorily explain on his return.

This possibility Lee granted. But on the other hand, he told himself, if the doctor had not taken them, then, in all probability, someone in this room was lying. And what cause, save one that would be incriminating, had any of them to lie?

Slowly he peered around at them all; sought to weigh the more obvious peculiarities of their characters. Ullmann, Mrs. Amdorf, Sam Pitt—a surly, inscrutable trio, Miss Woodfield, Harry Andrews, Mrs. Pitt—a rather likable group. And finally the still unseen Dr. Crayne—

Which of these?

Could any of them be concealing some profound, savage reason to hate Dr. Jaeger? To seek such brutal vengeance on his graceful hands?

Lee was roused from the cogitation by Chief Pottle's touch on his arm. Curtly the corpulent official signaled him to step into the corridor. There, when they were alone, Pottle snapped: "We've got to have Crayne here! You keep those people together, will you? Keep them right here, in sight. I'm going to phone the hospital to send Crayne back. Then I'm going to take my men and hunt through the house for those keys—or whatever else we may be able to find. But I'm leaving it to you, Stanton, to keep that crowd out of our way."

Lee nodded. "But what about those patients?"

"The devil, man! Do you seriously think we can get anything out of a bunch of lunatics?"

The young man smiled dubiously. "Moses," he observed, "got water out of a rock, didn't he?"

An instant Chief Pottle hesitated, still skeptical. At last, however, he shrugged a concession. "At that," he muttered, "I don't suppose we've got anything to lose. ...All right. I'll let my boys search the house while I take

a swing at the patients. Just wait till I phone the hospital."

When the chief returned with the news that Dr Crayne would start back immediately, they reentered the reception room to learn that Theophile Ullmann possessed a pass-key—reserved for rare emergencies—which could unlock every door in the sanitarium.

"I don't remember when we've had to use it," the gaunt man told them. "It's somewhere in my room upstairs. I'll bring it down."

When Ullmann went to his chamber, however, Officer Craig quietly accompanied him, after a mute signal from Pottle. For the chief had decided that, for the present, it would be very wise to hold every member of this strange household under careful surveillance.... A man could never tell, as he whispered to Lee, when one of these people would drop some betraying gesture or attempt to obliterate some possible clue....

Despite himself, Stanton smiled.

It occurred to him that there had been ample time to eradicate all ostentatious clues from those bedchambers upstairs.

AS THE small group advanced toward the rooms that lined the corridor, there was, about the sanitarium, an atmosphere of tense, hushed expectation; a kind of premonitory unease. Lee felt it in a quickening of his heart, in a curious tightening of his scalp, and he had the idea that Pottle shared his peculiar sense of danger.

The man in Room 4 was moaning continously now—profound howls of wretchedness. When the door was unlocked, it revealed him as a small, white-haired creature seated on the edge of a white bed. His head was lowered between clawing hands, and he swayed endlessly from side to side.

Though the nurse, Pottle, Stanton, and even Ullmann attempted to speak to him, he ignored them all. His wails became louder, more querulous. Until finally the inquisitors were forced to admit the hopelessness of obtaining any intelligible information from him.

"It will be just as useless to try the others," Miss Woodfield said as she relocked the door.

"Well, we'll take the chance," Pottle mumbled frowning as he spoke.

In Rooms 3 and 2, however, the nurse's prediction was saldy fulfilled. Here the investigators elicited nothing better than pathetic gibberish. And even Lee shuddered slightly as the doors were locked.

He had seen that all the rooms were alike: narrow, dark, their windows crossed by iron bars as precautions against escape. But for the neat white beds the chambers might have been prison cells.

And then they reached the inmate of Room 1.

Seeing him, Lee Stanton was astounded. There was nothing visibly abnormal in the genial gentleman who rose to greet them. Cheerful, middle-aged, rather pompous, he wore only pajamas; yet he wore them with the dignity and elan of a man in dinner clothes. He was utterly bald, and as the lights went on, he blinked merry blue eyes. Those eyes, Lee saw with wonder, were friendly and pleasant.

"Well, well!" he exclaimed. "Quite a crowd! What's all the excitement, nurse?"

"There's been some trouble," Miss Woodfield explained. "These gentlemen thought you might be able to help them."

"Of course I can. Have they brought the yacht?"

"No, Mr. Cleedes, not yet. Now, if you'll just speak to them and tell them—"

"But I ordered the yacht! I ordered it for this afternoon!"

"Yes, yes, I know. It's been delayed." Miss Woodfield's tones were gentle and soothing, like a motherly

caress. "Now you just speak to these gentlemen, Mr. Cleedes. They want to know if you were awake this evening."

"Certainly I was awake. I was watching for the yacht and Captain Broome."

Chief Pottle, after exchanging a keen glance with Stanton, slowly moved forward. His own tones emulated the nurse's in their persuasive kindliness.

"Were you watching for the yacht, Mr. Cleedes?" he asked.

"Of course!"

"Through the door?"

"Through the door and through the window. Captain Broome didn't say which way he'd come."

"And did you see anyone through the door?"

"Oh, yes. But I didn't see the yacht."

"Whom did you see?"

As he watched and listened, Lee's heart began oddly to thump. From the movements of the police chief's hands he could see that Pottle, too, was affected by that sense of mounting excitement.

Mr. Cleedes sat on the bed. With his addled brain fastened upon the yacht that would never arrive, he shook his head and gestured with a pudgy hand.

"Oh, I saw the nurse when she passed.... You shouted about something, didn't you, nurse? Why did you scream? Did you see the yacht?"

"No," Miss Woodfield whispered, suddenly pallid. "Not—not the yacht, Mr. Cleedes."

"Ah, I wish you had."

Actually forcing gentleness into his voice, Chief Pottle quickly recalled the man's attention.

"Tell me, Mr. Cleedes," he urged, "just before the nurse passed and screamed, did you—did you see anybody else in the corridor?"

"Oh, yes."

The casual answer electrified the room. Lee bent forward, his narrow eyes flashing. No one ventured a sound, as if all dreaded to break some miraculous spell. And Chief Pottle, flushed, whispered: "Who was it?"

Mr. Cleedes shrugged. "It wasn't Captain Broome. There was no sign of the yacht, either."

"But who was it? Whom did you see?"

"I don't know. He was dressed in white—all in white. Like Captain Broome's uniform in summer. Only Captain Broome never covered his face with white!"

"Try to remember, Mr. Cleedes!" Pottle pleaded.

"He was dressed all in white—"

"Are you sure it was a man?"

Suddenly an expression of annoyance seized Mr. Cleedes' face. He rose and muttered something irascible, waved them all away. "Why do you bother me with that?" he complained. "I'm telling you I ordered the yacht for this afternoon. Something must have happened. Captain Broome is never late!"

AND AS he started striding impatiently about the small room, Miss Woodfield turned determinedly to nod toward the door.

"I'm sorry, Chief Pottle." Her low voice was firm, inexorable. "You'll have to stop this now. I can't permit you to question him any further. I—well, you'll have to wait until Dr. Crayne comes. I can't assume the risk of letting this go on!"

She almost pushed them through the door. As they went, Lee Stanton peered significantly, even excitedly, at the chief. Mr. Cleedes had seen someone in white pass through the corridor just before Miss Woodfield discovered the unconscious Dr. Jaeger!

If one employed consummate tact and patience, the man might yet be persuaded to recall a more definite description of that unidentified figure! Perhaps when Dr. Crayne returned; for Dr. Crayne, of all people,

would know how to handle the patient....

In the very midst of these clamorous thoughts Lee looked around to see Officer Craig hurrying down the long corridor. With the other policemen he had been searching the upper floors. Now, halting in front of Pottle and Stanton, he announced in deep, quiet tones: "I found these upstairs, Chief—in the door of a linen closet next to Mr. Ullman's room."

What he exhibited was the bunch of keys which had vanished from Dr. Crayne's desk!

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IT WAS 1.30 A.M. The Pine Point Sanitarium was silent; save for the occasional moan of the Room 4 patient. From outside floated the dreary monody of waves swishing upon rocks, of a fitful wind soughing through the pines.

Alone—and disappointed because a careful study of scalpel and saw had yielded no fingerprints—Police Chief Ellery Pottle sat in Dr. Jaeger's office. The gruesome evidence of the operation had been removed, and Pottle could sit at the desk. He looked tired, flaccid; under his slightly blood-shot eyes had already appeared faint hints of haggard pouches.

Rather grumpily he glowered over his shoulder at the policeman who stood in the door: "Where's Mr. Stanton, Craig?"

"He's in the reception room, Chief."

"Reception room. What's he doing there?"

"Why, there are a couple of bookcases there. Last I saw, he was looking through some books."

"H'm. Books—" Pottle stared moodily back at the desk. "That young man," he muttered to himself, "isn't going to find Dr. Jaeger's assailant hiding in any book.... Ask him to come here, Craig."

"Yes, sir."

And then, as Officer Craig's heavy steps thudded along the corridor, Pottle's roving glance fell upon the desk clock. At once he started, straightened. It was more than an hour since he had telephoned to the hospital. Yet Dr. Crayne had not returned!

In an attempt to banish the weariness from his eyes the chief blinked hurriedly. Deep in his thoughts he could feel the writhings of a new, disquieting suspicion.

Could Dr. Crayne, in fear, have seized this opportunity to dash away from Shag Harbor?...

Nonsense, he scoffed. A man would be a fool—even a guilty man—to attract suspicion by so rash an act. No. Dr. Crayne must have been delayed. He must have—

Pottle bent forward and seized the telephone. He was still waiting at the instrument when Lee Stanton entered the office behind him. Without turning, the chief waved a silencing hand. The detective, with a thin volume half raised, paused and stared curiously. His hair was disheveled. Otherwise, however, he looked quite fresh and alert.

"When?" Pottle suddenly asked. "Three-quarters of an hour ago? Oh, all right. Thanks. Yes, that's all right."

He put the telephone back on its hook; then swung around in relief.

"Crayne was held up at the hospital," he explained. "Then he had to wait for a taxi. I guess he'll be along in a few—What's that?"

His eyes curiously luminous, Lee raised the book he had brought from the reception room.

"A volume of poetry, Chief."

"Poetry! Good heavens, I must say you pick a queer time to go reading—"

Stanton stopped him with a smile. A strange smile.

"Pardon me, Chief. Just listen to these few lines. They're from a dramatic poem called 'Death of the Hun.' He spoke so quietly, so compellingly, that Pottle leaned forward in attentive perplexity. And Lee slowly read:

"These hands that so much harm have
done shall do no more;
These lips that so oft death pro-
nounced shall pay their score
To al humanity. Where once the Pa-
gan trod...."

Stanton paused, looked up; he was still smiling in that odd, tense way as he repeated:

"These hands that so much harm have
done shall do no more!"

Pottle stared. After an instant he snatched the book from Lee's fingers and himself read those few lines. His eyes widened and he drew a deep breath. "How on earth did you come across this?"

Stanton was lighting a cigaret, still smiling in that strange way.

"I don't like to call it deduction, Chief. Let's compromise and term it a hunch."

"What do you mean?"

"Why, we both agreed that the message left beside Dr. Jaeger had a peculiarly poetic lilt. Well, say lyrical rather than poetic. At any rate, it was a well balanced, musical sentence. To write a sentence like that, Chief, a person has to have a certain type of mind—a mind that thinks in melody, in rhythm.... I hope you don't think I'm trying to be didactic?"

"Go on, please!"

"Of course, I may be all wrong. Still, consider the people we've seen here. Sam Pitt, for example. Do you imagine he could write a sentence like that of his own invention? Unless I misjudged him altogether, Pitt would have written bluntly: *'These hands won't do any more harm!'* Something like that."

"Even then," thoughtfully agreed Pottle, "he'd have misspelled it.... But go ahead."

Stanton eyed his cigaret. "As far as I could see, the only one here likely to construct a sentence like that naturally would have been Miss Woodfield. And she—well, she simply doesn't look so brutal. But, on the other hand, practically everybody here might have read the line somewhere; might have memorized it because of its striking aptness in regard to that person's hatred of Jaeger's hands. Then it would have been very easy to reproduce."

"But how did you find it? And who—"

"I'm coming to that. The idea struck me, as a matter of fact, when I saw the bookcases in the reception room and found that the top shelf held four volumes of poetry. Also, there was a pad on top of the case where everyone who borrowed a book wrote his name and the title of the volume.... This one has been borrowed, as far as I could discover, only by Miss Woodfield and Dr. Crayne."

Lee bent forward to crush his cigarette in a tray. Then, eyeing the chief, he said: "It was the lyrical lilt of that line that sent me browsing through books of poetry. "I came upon 'Death of a Hun' just a moment before Officer Craig stepped in to—"

But Stanton could go no further.

Halfway through the sentence he stopped, rigid, staring. An icicle seemed to stab him. Then, like the stupefied Pottle, he sprang to his feet.

From somewhere out in the darkness tore a wild, hoarse, terrified voice. The voice of old Harry Andrews the groundkeeper screaming:

"Help! Help! Sto-o-op!"

-9-

NO DOUBT it was Lee Stanton's youthful energy that sent him dashing down the long corridor ahead of the others. Pottle and the two policemen, however, were immediately behind him, and they ran with a wild abandon that must again have roused all four patients.

Upstairs doors were being flung open, voices were crying out terrified, incoherent questions. The entire building, indeed, was alive with mad clamor. But Stanton scarcely heard it as he lunged out of the porch door and leaped down to the lawn. He raced on toward Harry Andrews' lodge.

The groundkeeper's shouts had suddenly subsided—a cessation that sent a dreadful fear through the detective. He peered ahead desperately. The moon, however, had long ago vanished behind clouds, and the blackness here, crushed in among tall pines, was agonizingly blinding.

At the door of the lodge he almost fell over Andrews.

The old man was gasping painfully, struggling to pull himself to his feet. Lee seized his arms and helped him up, just as Chief Pottle arrived with an explosive query. Andrews leaned weakly against the door jamb.

"He—he—" But the groundkeeper found it impossible to go on. His eyes were protruding. as if he were strangling. One hand tore at his already open collar, while the other pointed shakily into the darkness.

"Who." Pottle actually shouted. "Who was it?"

"I—don't know! I—" Andrews drew in his breath in a great, terrible gasp—"heard somebody! I—came out and—he—jumped at me and choked—me—"

"Good God, man, didn't you see who it was?"

"All—all covered—in white! His face—everything—!"

A sharp thrill shot through Stanton. The figure in white! Then Cleedes had known what he was saying when he spoke of the white-garbed apparition in the corridor!

Lee whirled away from the door and stared with blazing eyes into the blackness.

"Which way did he go, Andrews?"

"Out there—toward the—fence!"

They left the panting old man to care for himself as best he could, though he tried valiantly to stumble along behind them. As they lurched off, Pottle cried: "Scatter! Craig, get over to the left! Collins, you take the right! Keep going straight ahead, Stanton! Watch the fence!"

Lee was already plunging through the blackness under the pines. He was breathing heavily, and his eyes flamed. The figure in white....

It was difficult to run here. Time after time he collided with trees. He scratched his hands, suffered a painful blow on his forehead. But he ran on, on, searching, staring, until suddenly he crashed squarely into the wire fence. The impact hurled him back as from a spring. He staggered and would have fallen had he not reeled against the trunk of a pine.

A few feet ahead of him, almost invisible in the dark, the wire fence hummed after the blow. Beyond it he could look down over boulders dimly bulging to a great semicircle of lace-like foam and spray. The sea there—swishing, inscrutable, infinite. The sea and Stygian blackness.

FAR TO his left and again to his right he heard the rush of heavy steps. The policemen, no doubt. No one fleeing from the place would risk such noise. He stood motionless

against the tree, glaring about, his ears straining, his eyes yearning.

For a while there were no new sounds. Only the crash of water on the rocks below him, the soft hum of the fence still trembling, the heavy thuddings of his heart.

And then, of a sudden, Lee heard something that snatched him out of inactivity. It was a loud splash—a splash as of someone diving into the sea!

From somewhere at his left it came, and he bounded away like a startled deer. Now he rushed along the fence, peering through it at the sea below. When he had gone some twenty yards he all but collided with Chief Pottle and Officer Craig. They arrived panting, vibrant with excitement.

"Did you hear him?" Pottle cried.

"It was right around here somewhere, Chief!" Craig's ejaculation was a booming bass.

"Watch that water!" Lee said.

They stood pressed against the wire fence, staring down at the sea about the rocks. Their eyes were burning. Officer Craig had yanked out his revolver, and he held it as though he were ready to shoot at the first target that presented itself down in the darkness.

Stanton started climbing the fence. It was not a difficult feat, since the crossed wires offered facile holds; and he went up with the agility of a schoolboy. He swung over the top, let himself down on the other side, then ran to the very edge of the largest boulder.

Poised there, he could command a much larger view of the foaming bit of shoreline below him. He stared here, there, everywhere until suddenly he found Officer Craig at his side. The policeman had drawn a small electric flashlight from his pocket, and the beam of this went darting down over the water—a lonely shaft of gold in utter blackness. On the surface of the sea it painted a shining, spurting circlet of yellow.

But of the man who had dived there was no sign.

"I guess he's had plenty of time," savagely whispered the policeman, "to swim out of sight. Still, he's got to come up somewhere!"

The beam of his torch ventured farther out, and farther yet, until the ray became ineffectual. Then he snatched it back and sent it wandering over the rocks until—

"Hold it!" Lee suddenly exclaimed. "What's that?"

"Where?"

"Down between those pointed rocks—turn the light a little to the right— There! Hold it still!"

The electric shaft was playing on a small, white mound bulging in a crevice between two boulders.... It was too small a thing to be a crouching man. And its clear whiteness offered a strange contrast to the gloom that surrounded it.

"Come along and give me some light," Lee snapped. "I think I can get down to it!"

He did get down to it, after lowering himself carefully into a narrow fissure, while Craig's torch splashed a golden glow about him. The policeman watched, from above, as Stanton lifted the curious bundle. Once he had to turn his head to call something to Chief Pottle. The portly chief, having given up the effort to scale the fence, was barking impatient questions.

When Craig looked down into the fissure again, he saw a long, white sheet dangling from Lee's hands.

"What is it?"

Lee turned up his face so that the beam of the flashlight fell full upon it. A grim face, frowning and hard and tight-lipped.

"It's an operating gown," he answered, "and it's stained with blood!"

BACK at the lodge beside the gates, where they were joined now by the agitated Theophile Ullmann and Sam Pitt, they heard Harry Andrews' account. The groundkeeper had quite recovered his breath, though he still looked terrified and shaken. But he could speak coherently.

"I heard somebody walking outside—quick footsteps, like—and I figured it was somebody coming down to the lodge. So I stepped out to see. And—and there he was! Not two yards from me! Running toward the fence! First off, I thought I was seeing a ghost. He was all white—his head, his hands, everything! I couldn't even yell.

"Then he saw me and jumped at me! His hands went right to my throat! That's when I tried to scream! He—started choking. He was strong too—strong as a bull! Forced me down! I tried to hit back, but he had his fingers around my neck. And then, all of a sudden, he let go! Took one look toward the house, and jumped away under the trees!"

"Didn't you recognize anything about him?" Pottle demanded. "His size? His walk?"

"Gosh, no, Mr. Pottle, I—I don't think I did! It all happened so suddenlike, and him dressed in white—and looking like a ghost—"

Out of the frightened Andrews they could draw no more. Pottle shook his head grimly as he eyed the bundle in Lee's arms. He nodded toward the house, and together—withdrawing from the others who seemed intent on questioning the groundkeeper further—they moved away.

"Well, I'm stumped!" the chief snapped softly. "I just can't make it out!"

"He's quite a wizard himself," muttered Stanton, "whoever he may be. It couldn't have been very easy to get out of this garment and disappear in the sea in the few seconds it took us to get to the spot!"

"What do you make of it, anyway?"

"I'm just wondering why he came back—in this costume."

"Costume or not," the chief confessed, "I don't get it at all; no, sir. What could he have hoped to gain by prowling all around the place?"

"Usually," murmured Lee as they mounted the porch steps. "a criminal returns to the scene of the crime for a definite resaon. And that reason, nine times out of ten, is—to destroy some clue he imagines he left behind. Or some previously inconsidered source of danger. Sometimes he attempts to throw suspicion in the wrong direction—"

Then Stanton unexpectedly halted. His lips parted. His eyes widened in consternation and fear. "Good Lord!" he gasped.

He faltered, and the astonished chief exclaimed, "What's the matter?"

"Mr. Cleedes!"

"Cleedes?"

Instead of answering, Lee actually flung himself at the door. He threw his white bundle to the first chair he passed in the corridor and rushed on to Room 1.

"Have you got that bunch of keys, Chief?" he called over his shoulder.

"Right here!"

"Then come on! Open Cleedes' door!"

As he inserted the key in the lock, Pottle's hands quivered uncontrollably. But when he hurled open the door he grew instantly steady, even stiff.

Mr. Cleedes sat on the edge of his bed, gaping and almost ludicrously bewildered. His eyes were puffed, sleep-laden, and he blinked like a child when the lights were switched on in the chamber. The thing which hypnotized the stares of both Malloy and Pottle, however, was not the man's expression. It was what he held in his

hands—something which had no place in the vicinity of a madman.

Mr. Cleedes was holding a long, sharp-bladed kitchen knife!

- 10 -

AS GENTLY, as soothing as his inner agitation permitted, Lee Stanton uttered the question; "where did you get this?" And at the same time he took the ugly weapon from Mr. Cleedes' limp hold.

"I—I don't know," the patient stammered. "Somebody threw it to me!"

"Threw it to you?"

"I was trying to sleep. Somebody came to the window and whispered that the yacht was outside. Is it? I couldn't see it in the dark."

"We'll go and look right away, Mr. Cleedes," Lee promised. "Now tell us about the man who came to the window. Who was he?"

"I didn't see him. It must have been one of the sailors that Captain Broome sent."

"What did he do?"

"He said to come and see the yacht. Then, when I got up, I saw his hand throw this knife through the bars of the window. It fell here on the bed, next to me. But why did he do that? And where is the yacht? He said it was waiting—"

"Maybe if you remembered his face we could go out and ask him. Didn't you see him at all, Mr. Cleedes?"

"No."

"Didn't you recognize his voice?"

"No. But it wasn't Captain Broome—"

In the end, when Miss Woodfield appeared in a dressing gown to take charge of the patient, the investigators were constrained to leave the poor man without having gained further knowledge of his assailant. When they confronted each other behind the closed door of Dr. Jaeger's office, both were frowning.

"I reckon you were right, Stanton," grimly declared the chief. "The culprit came back to wipe out a source of danger he hadn't considered before—Cleedes. Disguised himself again for safety. It looks as if he was afraid Cleedes might eventually remember something about the figure he saw in the corridor after the operation."

Lee nodded. "That," he added softly, "brings us to the realization that the figure in white was aware of Cleedes' having reported seeing somebody in the corridor."

"Meaning—the party was somebody present while we questioned Cleedes!"

"Either that or," Lee amended, "the murderer obtained the information from somebody who was present."

"H'm.... That doesn't yet pin guilt on anybody in particular, does it?"

"I'm afraid not."

"I wonder why he threw the knife at Cleedes?"

Stanton sank into Jaeger's chair and sent his fingers coursing back through his disheveled hair.

"My guess," he ventured, "is that the killer intended to lure Mr. Cleedes to the window and to stab him through the bars. But some sound—something or other—frightened him away just as Cleedes rose. He had to run. But as a last desperate measure he threw the knife—and fortunately missed.... By the way, Chief, it comes from the sanitarium's own kitchen, you notice. Here's *P. P. S.* marked on the handle."

"I saw that, yes. And I don't suppose it'll give us any more prints than we found on the scalpel."

Suddenly, however, Lee Stanton leaped to his feet. His eyes were alive again, brilliant. "Chief," he snapped, better get everybody in here!"

"What for?" he asked in surprise.

"If anybody dived into the sea, he'll be missing! Or if he came back, he'll be soaked...."

"Good heavens!" groaned Pottle as he turned. "In this damned excitement I'm forgetting the simplest things and worrying about the hardest! Stanton this place is driving me crazy!"

WHEN the staff of the Pine Point Sanitarium with the exception of Dr. Crayne—stood mustered in the reception room, another astounding fact was revealed: All of them were present! Miss Woodfield, Mrs. Amdorf, Mrs. Pitt; Ullmann, Andrews, Sam Pitt. And not one offered a hint even of damp hair....

"Well, I'll be hanged!" Pottle ejaculated when he had finally dismissed them. "What do you make of that? .... Or do you believe in ghosts?"

"Not ghosts that wear operating gowns," Lee quietly declared. "Chief—" He paused, and the peculiar glimmer in his eyes caught Pottle's instant interest.

"Yes?"

"Do you know, I—I don't believe anybody dived into the sea!"

"Eh?"

"We didn't actually see anyone. did we? No. We simply heard the splash. What we heard might easily have been —well. say a rock thrown into the water."

For a moment the chief gaped, his tired eyes widening in wonder. The theory obviously impressed him, yet he hesitated to accept it without consideration.

"But why," he finally asked, "should anybody want to throw a rock into the water?"

"To accomplish precisely what he did accomplish—he made us all rush to the fence at a point near the slash. He focused our unthinking interest on the water; used us like so many puppets, Chief. Meanwhile he had the opportunity to slip back, among the trees to the house!"

Chief Ellery Pottle sat down. He sat down heavily, dumpily, like a man who surrenders to some form of inevitable defeat. For a long time he thought in silence. And his unseeing gaze was fastened on Lee's face.

At last he shook his head.

"Stanton," he muttered, "I must be getting old and doddering. I used to think I had some pretty good horse sense under this scalp of mine. But I don't know.... Maybe it's just the hour and all the excitement."

Lee smiled. "And the general atmosphere, Chief. It's hard to think in a place like this. I feel pretty much befuddled myself. And yet—well, I'm beginning to think I've found the road to Dr. Jaeger's assailant!"

Pottle started, gripping the arms of his chair.

"What do you mean? What road?."

"Lord, I wish I were sure, Chief! But I'm not—not yet, anyway. I just can't seem to see things straight. Maybe it's because we're all so dogtired—"

"But look here! Do you know who attacked Dr. Jaeger?"

"No, Chief, I don't actually know. If I did, you'd be clapping handcuffs on the one this minute. I simply have a faint, glimmering idea somewhere far back in my head. Maybe I can fan it into a flame, if you give me a little help.... Chief, let's get Theophile Ullmann!"

"What do you want him to do?"

"To tell us Dr. Jaeger's history. We should have done it long ago, I suppose. But so much has been happening to interfere that I'd almost forgotten." And as Pottle rose, Lee added: "At the same time, Chief, don't you think it would be a pretty wise idea to station Craig as a guard over Mr. Cleedes?"

FIVE minutes later, as Theophile Ullmann's firm stride came along the corridor, Pottle whispered: "This is your party, Stanton. You do the

questioning. Me, I'm going to sit back and listen while I rest."

Theophile Ullmann appeared to have aged many years since eleven o'clock. New, deep lines had come into his gaunt face, and his heavy-lidded eyes were inflamed. When he heard the detective's first query, however, a sort of savage energy seemed to rush into him.

"I told you before," he retorted, "that it's useless to look into Dr. Jaeger's past. You won't find anything there."

Lee shrugged. He was lighting another cigaret, and as he tossed the match into a tray he said:

"Well, we're not going anywhere in particular and we're quite willing to waste the time in listening. Suppose you just tell us what you know, Mr. Ullmann."

"I can give you Dr. Jaeger's history in a few words," the tall man snapped. "Born in Munich. Studied medicine in Vienna. Came back to Munich at twenty-six or twenty-seven to practice. Decided the opportunities would be greater in America and came to this country in 1930. At that time he was about thirty."

"Go on, please, Mr. Ullmann."

"I didn't see him again until I came over myself in 1933. He'd been studying, he told me. And in 1936 he was licensed to practice medicine here. A few years later, when he opened this sanitarium, he gave me the job of managing its general business. I've been here ever since. So—except for occasional trips and for winters in his New York office—has Dr. Jaeger." Ullmann waved his bony hand. "That's the whole story."

"In very bare outline," observed Stanton. "Too synthetic, I'm afraid. The only thing which can help us, Mr. Ullman, is—hidden details."

"Do you expect me to stand here and recite the details of a man's lifetime?"

"Hardly. Just a few salient points. You see, we're searching for someone whom Dr. Jaeger may at some time have given cause for hatred."

"That's absurd," Ullmann declared. "Jaeger was liked and trusted by all who knew him."

"Well," dryly commented Lee, thinking of his client, Mr. Ainley, "not by all, really.... You must be wrong, Mr. Ullmann, unless you believe the doctor's hands were amputated by somebody who liked and trusted him."

At that Ullmann looked somewhat sheepish. He appeared to have been caught off his guard and for the first time he faltered slightly: "We-ell, no. I must agree he probably had one—one enemy of whom I knew nothing."

For a few seconds there was silence. Lee glanced obliquely at Chief Pottle, then peered at the gaunt Ullmann.

"I understand," he said slowly, "that in his specialty Jaeger was quite a—wizard."

"He was a great alienist."

"Even in Munich?"

"Oh, no. In Munich, he was still a general practitioner."

"Successful?"

"Brilliantly!" Ullmann declared, with some pride.

"Then why did he leave?"

The gaunt man hesitated, frowned. "I've already told you—"

"But," protested Lee, "was it logical for a young man who was making a brilliant success to leave Munich suddenly and start for America, where he would have to begin all over?... Come, Mr. Ullmann. Why did he leave?"

"My dear man, I have told you all I know!"

Lee Stanton regretfully shook his head and stared at his cigarette. Presently he said: "I was hoping, Mr. Ullmann, you would save the police the necessity of cabling to Munich for Dr. Jaegar's record."

Very closely the detective watched

that gaunt face; watched it and fancied he saw a quick start—a twitch of lips, a glint in those deep-set eyes. The man would have forgotten, under stress of the moment that any records would likely have been destroyed in the war. Ullmann, however, did not speak. And before Lee could urge him further, there came a brisk, sharp knock at the door.

At Pottle's call it was pushed open by Officer Collins. The policeman jerked his head to indicate someone down the corridor.

"Dr. Crayne just got here, Chief."

- 11 -

THICK-SET, erect, impressive in stature, Dr. David Crayne entered with rapid, nervous steps. He nodded to Pottle and seemed to take Stanton's presence as something quite natural and needless to be explained.

"Sorry I had to be gone all this time, Chief," he apologized; and his voice was as worn as his countenance.

Frowning, Pottle muttered: "We needed you here, Doctor. It's a long time since I phoned for you."

"Yes, I know." Dr. Crayne threw himself into the nearest chair and wiped his forehead. "Jaeger's dead. I—I stayed at the hospital to arrange for the disposition of the body. When I finally hunted up a cab to drive me back here, we had a blowout on the way. The chauffeur took so long fixing it that I gave up and walked most of the way.... I suppose you wanted to question me."

"Very much!"

"Well, I'm afraid I can't help you, Chief. When I left Jaeger's office tonight—at about ten—he was quite all right, and there's no doubt he wasn't fearing anyone."

"What did you do?"

"Do? Why, nothing, I simply went to my room. I smoked for a while, then stepped out on the porch and met Miss Woodfield."

"H'm." Pottle glanced toward Lee Stanton and was somewhat piqued to discover that the detective was gazing abstractedly through the window. Turning back to the doctor, the chief demanded: "Did you, by the way, give your bunch of room keys to anyone tonight?"

At that Dr. Crayne stared up in astonishment. "Certainly not!"

"Do you know if anyone went to your desk and took them?"

"Why, no. This is the first I heard—"

A sudden sound at the window checked the doctor. Like Pottle, he looked around in some surprise: and what they saw temporarily banished their own conversation.

Stanton had turned to face them. But this was a new Lee Stanton—tense, his eyes alive with lights and narrow, his chin drawn in close to his chest. When he spoke, his low voice was vibrant.

"Excuse me, Chief, if I interrupt. But if you'll allow me to ask Dr. Crayne a question, I think—I believe—we may be able to arrest Dr. Jaeger's murderer in a few minutes!"

The assertion was so startling that Pottle could not reply. He merely gaped, half incredulous. Apparently Stanton accepted his silence as assent, for he looked immediately toward the staring Dr. Crayne.

"Doctor, can you tell me the nationalities of the people employed here?"

For an instant, before answering, Dr. Crayne ocularly consulted the chief, as if asking whether this young man ought to be taken seriously. Pottle, however, sat dumbfounded; and so the physician at last said:

"That's a mighty queer question,

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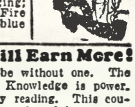

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...I can answer it in a few words. We're all Americans."

"Oh, come, Doctor. Not Theophile Ullmann?"

"Certainly. He's naturalized."

"That—" again Stanton's eyes flashed "—is exactly what I want to know! Which of the staff are naturalized? And where did they originally come from?"

Dr. Crayne considered.

"Well," he muttered, "let's see. Mrs. Amdorf comes from Austria, I believe—Vienna—though she's been here a good many years. Ullmann comes from Munich. Mrs. Pitt, our cook, and her husband come from somewhere in England—Harwich, I think. Miss Woodfield, Andrews, and myself are Americans."

Lee stepped forward eagerly.

"You're sure of all that, Doctor?"

"Oh, yes. It's down in the blanks everyone fills when he's employed here. I can show you those blanks, if you like."

"Please!"

The papers which Dr. Crayne eventually produced merely confirmed whatever he had reported. As Lee put them down, excitement was seething within him.

"Chief," he whispered tensely, "I believe we've got the murderer!"

- 12 -

BEFORE Chief Ellery Pottle made his dramatic arrest that night, the investigators were in possession of this knowledge of Dr. Paul Jaeger.

The killer had stolen a bunch of keys from Dr. Crayne's desk; had used one of those keys to open a linen closet from which an operating gown and other white attire had been taken; had entered the doctor's office when Jaeger was alone; had overpowered the alienist with chloroform and had operated; had left a message which had been memorized after a reading in a volume of verse; had called an ambulance; and had vanished.... Later, because it seemed the demented Mr. Cleedes might recall some description of the figure he had seen, the murderer had employed a ruse in an effort to kill the patient. In preparation for that attempt, a knife had been stolen from the kitchen.

Whatever other knowledge the authorities had was still tinged with theory.

As Chief Pottle and Stanton, with Dr. Crayne listening, discussed their problem, the official snapped: "From all I can see, though, we haven't got enough evidence to get a court conviction—no, sir! How's a man to get around that?"

Lee sat down on the arm of a chair. Earnestly he leaned forward. "By a bit of strategy, Chief."

"Strategy?" Pottle snorted. "I'll be damned if I can see any trick that can help us now."

"It seems to me, Chief, that if you strike quickly, hard, and unexpectedly, you're apt to throw the murderer into confusion by the very suddenness of the arrest. And in confusion many strange things are said—"

"Ye-es," Pottle admitted dubiously. "But a policeman's got to have grounds, actual—grounds."

"My father," Stanton pressed, "surprised a hundred incriminating statements out of crooks by jumping at them unexpectedly."

"But he probably had something tangible on them."

"No, not always. Sometimes he merely pretended he had something. Why not try it?"

"Pretend," the chief demanded in astonishment, "That I've got what?"

Lee's eyes narrowed again. "Pre-

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tend," he suggested in a whisper, "that Mr. Cleedes recognized the person who threw the knife at him!"

They stared at each other in understanding that was eloquent.

And two minutes later Police Chief Ellery Pottle slowly rose. His rubicund face had grown hard and determined. He moved to the door and summoned Officers Craig and Collins; then, in silence, the group stepped out to make the arrest....

THEOPHILE ULLMANN, though he still wore only a dressing gown over his pajamas, stood in the cool darkness outside the house, throwing curt queries at Harry Andrews, while Sam Pitt offered a series of sullen opinions. On the porch behind them the women had gathered—Mrs. Amdorf, Miss Woodfield and Mrs. Pitt; and they, too, occasionally interpolated comments at once bitter and desperate.

But their conversation suddenly ceased when the porch door opened.

All of them turned to stare at the five men who were so grimly moving toward them: Pottle, Stanton, Dr. Crayne, and the policemen. There was something fateful, something unnerving, in the silent, deliberate, and resolute advance of that group. Something premonitory....

No one spoke. Somehow no one dared speak. The expression of Chief Pottle told too much....

He led his party directly to the men. There was profound significance in the fact that Officers Craig and Collins assumed positions which would serve to surround those who now gaped in amazed hushedness.

Behind his strange demeanor Chief Pottle carried the force of various discoveries and deductions which Lee Stanton had just presented to him. The chief wasted no time.

His eyes actually glittered as his

[*Turn To Page* 86]

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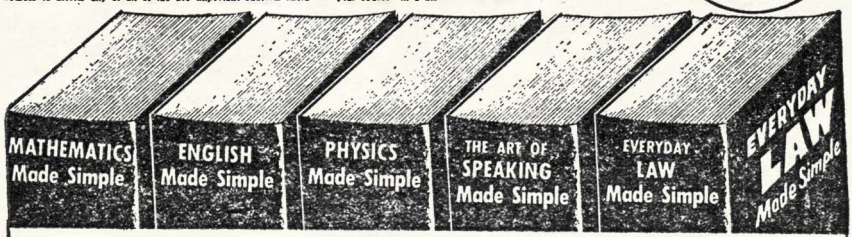

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hand went out to rest on the accused man's shoulder.

"Harry Andrews," he said quietly, "I arrest you for the murder of Dr. Paul Jaeger!"

There followed an interval of utter stupefied stillness. No one stirred. A kind of paralysis seemed to have seized them all. Overhead the wind wearily soughed through the pines. The sea beat its endless dirge upon the rocks. The sounds went unheard.

But slowly the countenance of Harry Andrews was undergoing a ghastly change. It had become pallid, haggard. The eyes widened as terror forced its way into them. The lower lip dropped, trembling. The man tried to cringe, to withdraw from Chief Pottle's eloquent hand, but he found himself pressed against the figure of Officer Craig.

"Wh—what," he gasped hoarsely, "what—do you mean? I—I never—"

"Never mind that," Pottle ominously warned. "We've got the goods on you, Andrews!"

"What goods?" he asked wildly. "I tell you I—"

"—didn't know," Pottle finished the groundkeeper's sentence coldly, "that Cleedes recognized you as you ran away from his window?"

SOMEHOW the appalling force of that question for a moment choked Harry Andrews. He stood speechless, gaping, incredulous. He looked from Pottle to Ullmann, then back again, as if both men had suddenly pressed revolvers to his chest. Indeed, he did not regain his voice until, with a startling click, Officer Collins' handcuffs snapped about his wrists.

Dazedly, then, he blinked down at the manacles as he might have stared at a miracle. When he looked up again, it was to cry harshly: "He didn't! That's a lie! He—he—" Andrews stopped, overwhelmed by the

[*Turn To Page* 88]

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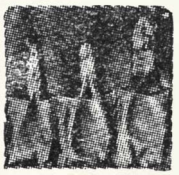

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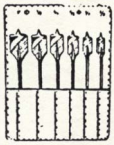

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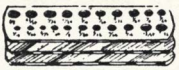

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profusion of words that fought to escape his constricted throat.

"Better be careful what you say," snapped Pottle. "It'll all be used against you! . . .Andrews, you tried to trick us a few minutes ago, and the trick itself went against you! When you shouted for help, that was a sham! You wanted to get us out of the house—away from Cleedes' room! You wanted to get around to Cleedes' window while the rest of us hunted for the man in white. That's why you threw a rock over the fence, into the sea. So that we'd rush to the spot. . . . But Andrews, you forgot a mighty important thing."

The groundkeeper did not speak. In some way Chief Pottle's words seemed to mesmerize him. Round-eyed, colorless, shaking, he gaped at the official.

"You forgot," rasped Pottle, "that when a man is almost strangled by choking fingers—as you pretended to be—marks are left on his throat! Andrews, you forgot the marks!"

Suddenly, then, the groundkeeper shut his eyes. Shut them tightly, fiercely, while his teeth bit into his lip. He reeled back against Officer Craig. And from the very depths of his soul, it seemed, tore a groan.

Pottle flashed a swift, brilliant glance at Stanton. Like a boxer he moved forward quickly to press his advantage. "Look here, Andrews! From all we've seen, you didn't actually intend to have that operation kill Dr. Jaeger! If that's the truth, we won't press a first degree murder charge against you. But only—if that's the truth!"

At once Andews' eyes snapped open. Blazing with a fire of hope, he cried: "You mean—you mean it wasn't—murder?"

"I said—" Pottle's words fell like blows "—it won't be *first degree* murder if you didn't intend to kill him. You won't die for it. But you'll have to convince us, first, that you operat-

[*Turn To Page* 90]

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ed without actually intending to murder. Can you do that, Andrews? ...Because if you can't, I'm going to recommend the first degree charge!"

Harry Andrews stood still, staring. His mind, in that moment, must have been choatic with a hundred conflicting impulses.... Days later, when his lawyer consulted him in his cell, the old groundkeeper confessed that he had been addled and tired—exhausted by the strain of the dreadful night. Pottle, he said, had extended a bit of hope, and he had pounced upon it almost with gratitude. The police were so certain of themselves; they seemed to have figured the whole thing out—even the chances of Andrews' saving his life. That was why he had confessed the maddening cause which had impelled him to operate on Dr. Jaeger....

"I didn't intend to kill him!" he cried now to Pottle. "I didn't! I wanted him to live on—and on—always remembering what he had done!"

"And what," sternly demanded the chief, "had he done?"

"He—he murdered my boy!"

And now it was Pottle who started in amazement and gaped.

"Eh?" he snapped. "What do you mean by that?"

"He did! He did, I tell you!" Sobbing, Andrews was on the verge of hysteria. His manacled hands leaped up to clutch importunately at the chief's uniform. "He murdered my boy in Munich! I've been trying to find him ever since—to—to make him—pay!"

"You'd better explain that, Andrews!"

"Yes! Yes! Listen! My boy was wrong—wrong in the brain. I took him to Jaeger. Jaeger had a little house in the country, outside of Munich. He—he told me that if I left my boy under his care he—he'd cure him. I did. I was fool enough to trust the man!

[*Turn To Page* 92]

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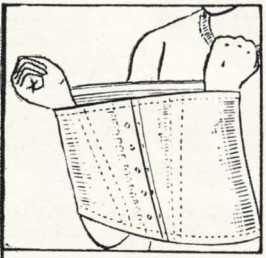

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ADDRESS _____

Then one day he sent for me and said my boy was dead—had fallen on some rocks and—and crushed his head!"

AT THAT Lee Stanton suddenly caught his breath. Eyes gleaming strangely, he moved forward. Was he to hear a repetition of the Martin Ainley mystery?...

"I believed him," Andrews was sobbing. "But there was a woman who worked on Jaeger's place. She told me later—weeks later—that Dr. Jaeger had killed my boy! He had operated on his head—an operation that was not legal, because every doctor knows it must kill! But Jaeger took a chance with the boy. He—he was experimenting on him! The story he told me was a lie! After the operation, when the boy died, he had deliberately crushed his head to hide the signs of his work and to make it look like the boy fell!

"I—I was going to have Jaeger arrested. But the woman—the only witness I had—disappeared. What happened to her I don't know. Maybe—maybe he killed her, too!... But I went after Jaeger! People tried to help me. I didn't have proof, but—but in the m i d s t of it all he ran away. I didn't know where. Some said Paris. Some Berlin, Vienna, Budapest. And some America. It—it took me nineteen years to trace him to this place!"

The rest of Harry Andrews' story, because of his turbulent emotions, became almost incoherent. Yet, from scattered phrases, it was easy enough to reconstruct its significance.

He had been in America fully twelve years before he discovered Dr. Jaeger's sanitarium. Immediately he had rushed to Shag Harbor; but destiny was still mocking the man, still taunting him. For he learned that the physician was away on one of his frequent trips. Andrews waited. Waited patiently, like a jungle beast crouching to leap. In order to be near Jaeger, he applied for work at the sanitarium. And after a few weeks, through a for-

tuitous chance, he was employed as groundkeeper.

That had been a little more than a year ago.

Harry Andrews was not his true name. No, no. In the old country he had been Hans Andrigen. But he was not going to be cheated of the vengeance he sought by untimely recognition. No! That was why he changed his name and claimed to be an American.

At last, when Jaeger had returned to the sanitarium, there had been a thrilling, breath-taking moment. Would he remember Andrews?... He did not. Indeed, he scarcely glanced at the groundkeeper. Accepted his presence as he might have regarded a new chair on the porch, impersonally.

Then Harry Andrews began to scheme.

Murder Jaeger? No—for the groundkeeper had no desire to die as payment for his vengeance. But to hurt the man—to strike hard, cruelly, terribly!... By this time Jaeger had achieved a considerable reputation not only as an alienist but as a cranial surgeon. People spoke of his wizardry, of the skill of his graceful hands—those same hands that had murdered Andrews' son.

And from that thought had sprung the groundkeeper's dreadful inspiration... To remove those hands would be to reduce Dr. Jaeger to nothingness!"

"But I couldn't do it yet," the man cried. "Not yet. I didn't know how. That was last year. Before I could try anything, he—he ran off again—to Europe, now! And once more I had to wait!"

Then, unexpectedly, Harry Andrews' blazing eyes narrowed, and he snarled almost venomously:

"You remember last year a boy died here? A Martin Ainley? Eh? Jaeger said he fell on those rocks! Pah! I

don't believe it! He must have operated on him like he operated on my boy—then invented that crazy story to explain failure! It must have been the same kind of operation—one sure to kill—and yet he took a chance—for the sake of experiment!"

The man sobbed again: "All the time he was in Europe I got ready for tonight! I read books, many books, that I borrowed from inside. Sometimes at night when nobody knew, I crept into the office and read about surgery—about amputations. A whole year I read! I got ready! I stole a bottle of chloroform weeks ago and and kept it ready, hidden!"

This night, when he saw Jaeger finally alone in his office, Andrews was determined to cheat himself no longer.

It had seemed to him that there were no clues to lead to his apprehension—to spoil the savor of his long-awaited triumph. But now—well, he did not care any more.

IT WAS almost half-past four in the morning when the police chief's small automobile turned away from the town jail, where Andrews had been left. Wearied, his eyes puffed and haggard, Pottle sat at the wheel; and Lee Stanton was at his side.

"God, what a night!" the chief muttered. "I've got a hundred things to ask you, but I'm just too doggone tired to start!"

Stanton, himself exhausted, drew a long breath. "Well—all right, then. What can I tell you?"

"First off, what on earth made you suspect that man in the first place?"

Lee shrugged.

"On the library record I saw he'd borrowed quite a few books on anatomy. It seemed a funny thing for a groundkeeper to be interested in. Then, of course, when I saw he didn't have any of the supposed 'strangler's' marks on his neck, things be-

[*Turn To Page 96*]

came a little clearer. I'll confess, though, that I couldn't understand why Andrews should have done it. That's why I was anxious to hear about Jaeger's past."

"H'm...." Pottle scowled ahead into the first pale glow of burgeoning dawn. "Ullmann certainly concealed a lot of that past. I wonder why he took the chance."

"I imagine he was governed by a queer sense of loyalty to the doctor. It's the only explanation."

Of a sudden, then, Pottle remembered something that had puzzled him exceedingly: "Say! What the devil made you ask Crayne about the nationalities of those people?"

"Oh, that....." Stanton paused and his brows drew together. "You see, Chief, that rather proved to me that Harry Andrews' entire position at the sanitarium was a lie." He spoke very slowly now. "Andrews claimed to be an American. Yet, on the library pad, he had made some notation of a book borrowed on July 7th. And, like practically all Europeans, he crossed his 7! Did you ever—hear of an American crossing his 7's, Chief?"

All Pottle answered, after a full minute, was: "Well, I'll be damned!"

It was late—very late. And when Lee Stanton presently left the chief to enter his hotel, he was ready to throw himself into bed in utter exhaustion. He was ready, indeed, to sleep for twenty hours—after the most harrowing experience of his life.

Yet he did not go to his room until he had written a telegram to his client—his first client—Mr. Ainley.

That message, left at the desk, was simply:

THINK YOUR SUSPICIONS WERE RIGHT. BUT HANDS THAT SO MUCH HARM HAVE DONE WILL DO NO MORE. JAEGER DEAD. WILL EXPLAIN ON RETURN.

★

The Court of Aja Ping

(*continued from page 38*)

Connely thought his explanation sufficient but my confused look made him continue further.

"Remember the chief shaking hands with every one after they had touched the bird? He had a reason for that gesture. You see, he had previously coated the bird's feathers with a mixture of oil and sand. When a man touched the bird's feathers, his hand became dirty; Aja Ping could feel the grit in the handshake. Inconspicuously he'd wipe his hand and wait for the next man. The man with the clean hand—the guilty one, afraid to touch the bird—gave himself away without knowing it. It's simple but effective psychology. What guilty man would have touched that bird? Would you?"

I shook my head. "I guess not," I answered.

"Last night we learned something," Connely admitted seriously.

He was pensive now, thinking into the future. I knew that some day back in San Diego and civilization, there would be an Aja Ping trial, but with Connely as chief and psychologist.

★

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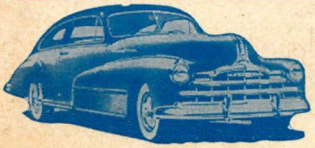

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Compression Readings—1945 Dodge Truck

	Cylinder 1	Cylinder 2	Cylinder 3	Cylinder 4	Cylinder 5	Cylinder 6
Before	87 lbs.	75 lbs.	75 lbs.	60 lbs.	75 lbs.	85 lbs.
After	100 lbs.	110 lbs.	115 lbs.	95 lbs.	105 lbs.	118 lbs.

TEST #2

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Compression Readings—1948 Pontiac

	Cyl. 1	Cyl. 2	Cyl. 3	Cyl. 4	Cyl. 5	Cyl. 6	Cyl. 7	Cyl. 8
Before	105 lbs	95 lbs	107 lbs	120 lbs	110 lbs	115 lbs	95 lbs	123 lbs
After	125 lbs	120 lbs	120 lbs	125 lbs	122 lbs	120 lbs	115 lbs	116 lbs

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