

THE FEDERALS IN ACTION

10¢

G-MEN

FEB.

**THE
NAVY
SPY
MURDERS**

**A
COMPLETE NOVEL
FEATURING
THE WORLD'S
GREATEST
MAN-HUNTERS
IN ACTION**

• ALSO
C. K. M.
SCANLON
• LEE
FREDERICKS

A THRILLING
PUBLICATION

**EXPOSING
THE STAMP
RACKET**
By AN EX-GANGSTER

10¢

G-MEN

STORIES OF THE FEDERALS IN ACTION

FEB. 1937





**YOU HAVEN'T
A CHANCE, SIS
JIM HATES
GIRLS!**

**- JIM'S
PIMPLY
FACE
MADE
HIM
BALKY
ABOUT
GOING
PLACES**

READ STORY



THAT GUY'S A REGULAR HERMIT I TELL YOU - JUST STICKS AROUND BY HIMSELF - WOULDN'T TAKE A GIRL OUT ON A BET...

IS THAT SO - WELL I'LL BET I CAN BREAK HIM DOWN. YOU WATCH!



NOT HURT ARE YOU - HERE - YOU'D BETTER LET ME HELP YOU OVER TO THE BANK THESE SKATES



THANKS SO MUCH - YOU'RE JIM GREENE AREN'T YOU? I'VE HEARD MY BROTHER BOB TALK ABOUT YOU LOTS. WHY DON'T YOU EVER COME OVER WITH THE REST OF THE CROWD?

OH - I - ER I COULDN'T - THAT IS YOU SEE - I - ER - I - I'M NO GO AT SOCIAL STUFF



H'AM - BOB I BET I KNOW WHY HE ACTS STAND-OFFISH. IT'S HIS FACE. ALL THOSE PIMPLES. WHY DON'T YOU TELL HIM ABOUT FLEISCHMANN'S YEAST? YOU KNOW HOW IT HELPED YOU!

WELL, MISS CLEOPATRA, DIDN'T GET FAR THAT TIME - DID YOU?



LATER
HERE - TRY THIS ONE!

WHO SAID JIM DOESN'T LIKE GIRLS?

O.K. SIS - I'LL EAT MY WORDS. YOU AND THOSE YEAST CAKES SURE HAVE WORKED WONDERS. JIM'S A NEW GUY SINCE THOSE PIMPLES LEFT HIM!

Don't let Adolescent Pimples keep YOU from making new friends

COUNTLESS boys and girls shun company and avoid "dates", because they hate to be seen with a pimply face.

After the start of adolescence—from about 13 to 25, or even longer—important glands develop and final growth takes place. The whole body is disturbed. The skin gets oversensitive. Waste poisons in the blood irritate this sensitive skin. Pimples result.

Fleischmann's fresh Yeast is helping thousands of young people to

overcome adolescent pimples. It clears these skin irritants out of the blood. As a result, the pimples go away.

Eat 3 cakes of Fleischmann's Yeast daily, one about 1/2 hour before each meal—plain, or in a little water—until your skin is clear. Start today.



—clears the skin
by clearing skin irritants out of the blood

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VACU-MATIC

SCORES AGAIN!

BOB MCKENZIE
TRANSCONTINENTAL AUTOMOBILE CHAMPION
COAST TO COAST

Vacu-matic Carburetor Co.
7617 W. State St.
Wauwatosa, Wisconsin

Dear Sirs:

Having just completed a new speed record between Los Angeles and Chicago, driving a 1936 Chevrolet equipped with a Vacu-matic carburetor control, I thought you might be interested in knowing some of the facts and the important part Vacu-matic played in the success of the run.

The distance covered was 2322 miles in thirty nine hours and forty-two minutes, officially timed by Western Union, which gave me an average speed of 59.7 M.P.H. based on elapsed time and with the Vacu-matic averaged 18 1/2 miles per gallon on gasolines.

Before leaving Los Angeles, we made several test runs both with and without the Vacu-matic, and the tests prove that Vacu-matic increased my gas mileage 3 1/2 miles per gallon at the driving speed of 60 M.P.H. and also very noticeable increase in both acceleration and power.

After this experience with Vacu-matic, you can depend that on my future speed runs across country that I will be depending on Vacu-matic to give me the same added performance it has proven on this last record breaking drive.

Yours very truly,

Bob McKenzie



Sets New Coast-to-Chicago Record

New Supercharge Principle SAVES GAS

MORE POWER - MORE SPEED FASTER PICK-UP -- NEW LIFE

ESTABLISHING new mileage records on cars in all sections of the country, the Vacu-matic again scores in a new speed record established by Bob McKenzie transcontinental automobile champion. Los Angeles to Chicago—2,322 miles in 39 hours and 42 minutes—driving 75 and 80 to maintain a speed average of 59.7 miles per hour!

Here is speed—a grueling grind—where quick acceleration, greater top speed—and less stops for gasoline mean those precious moments saved that make new speed records possible.

The same Vacu-matic that helped Bob McKenzie establish this speed record and gave him such fine gas savings is now available for all car owners. It is positively automatic—simple to install—inexpensive—and pays for itself many times over in gas savings.

Automatic •• Nothing Like It!

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VACU-MATIC offers a splendid opportunity for unusual sales and profits. Valuable territories now being assigned. Check and mail coupon.

The VACU-MATIC Co. Wauwatosa, Wis.

Guaranteed Gas Savings

VACU-MATIC must prove itself on every car. It is guaranteed to give worthwhile gas savings, quicker pick-up and more power, or it costs you nothing. "On my V-8 Ford it works miracles", says Ralph Fields. James Seeley—"On an International Truck on a round trip to Cleveland, 385 miles, it saved 19 gallons of gas." A. V. Grove—"On the Buick it showed 5 miles more per gallon." F. S. Peck—"I average 22 miles per gal. on my Plymouth, an increase of 7 miles, for a saving of \$15.00 a month, or \$180.00 a year." Wm. Lyons—"Averaged 25 miles on a gal. with a Model A Ford at 40 miles per hour."

Free Details

You owe it to yourself to know all about this remarkable discovery. Mail the coupon below. Start saving gas with VACU-MATIC and enjoy a new driving thrill! There's no obligation—so get the facts now! Write today!

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THE VACU-MATIC COMPANY
7617-282 W. State St., Wauwatosa, Wis.
Gentlemen: Please send me full particulars concerning the Vacu-matic and details of your Free Offer. This of course does not obligate me in any way.

Name

Address

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Check here if interested in selling proposition.

G-MEN

Vol. VI, No. 2

February, 1937

Price, 10c

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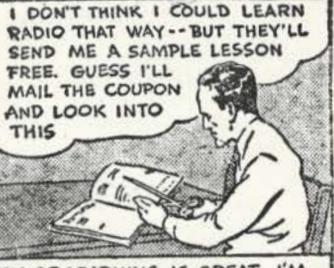
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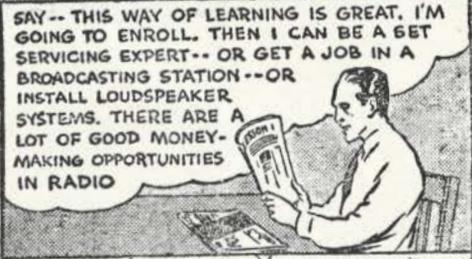
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HOW A FREE LESSON STARTED BILL ON THE WAY TO A GOOD RADIO JOB



Yes, I will send my First Lesson FREE to show how easy it is to TRAIN AT HOME FOR A GOOD RADIO JOB



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Many Radio Experts Make \$30, \$50, \$75 a Week

Radio broadcasting stations employ engineers, operators, station managers and pay up to \$3,000 a year. Spare time Radio set servicing pays as much as \$200 to \$500 a year. Full time Radio servicing jobs pay as much as \$30, \$50, \$75 a week. Many Radio Experts own and operate their own full time or part time Radio sales and service businesses. Radio manufacturers and jobbers employ testers, inspectors, foremen, engineers, servicemen paying up to \$8,000 a year. Radio operators on ships get good pay and see the world besides. Automobile, police, aviation, commercial Radio, and loud speaker systems offer good opportunities now and for the future. Television promises many good jobs soon. Men I have trained are holding good jobs in all these branches of Radio.

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J. E. SMITH, President National Radio Institute, Dept. 7B09 Washington, D. C.



J. E. SMITH, President, Dept. 7B09 National Radio Institute, Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Smith: Without obligating me, send the sample lesson and your book which tells about the spare time and full time opportunities in Radio and explains your 50-50 method of training men at home in spare time to become Radio Experts. (Please write plainly.)

NAME..... AGE.....
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10_{TO} 25 POUNDS
THIS NEW QUICK WAY**

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SKINNY, friendless men who never could gain an ounce can take new hope from the experience of thousands of others with this new scientific treatment that is sweeping the country. These others have gained 10 to 25 pounds of solid, naturally attractive flesh this new, easy way—in just a few weeks!

What is more, this new discovery has given them naturally clear skin, freedom from indigestion, constipation and nervousness, new pep and popularity for social and business success.

Why it builds up so quickly

Scientists recently discovered that great numbers of people are thin and rundown for the single reason that they do not get enough digestion-strengthening Vitamin B and blood-enriching iron in their daily food. Now the richest known source of this marvelous body-building Vitamin B is cultured ale yeast. By a new process the finest imported cultured ale yeast is now concentrated 7 times—made 7 times more powerful. Then it is combined with 3 kinds of blood-building iron, pasteurized whole yeast and other valuable ingredients in pleasant little tablets known as Isonized Yeast tablets.

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Money-back guarantee

No matter how skinny and rundown you may be, try these new Isonized Yeast tablets just a short time, and note the marvelous change. See if they don't build you up in just a few weeks, as they have thousands. If you are not delighted with the benefits of the very first package, your money back instantly.

Special FREE offer!

To start you building up your health right away, we make this absolutely FREE offer. Purchase a package of Isonized Yeast tablets at once, cut out the seal on the box and mail it to us with a clipping of this paragraph. We will send you a fascinating new book on health, "New Facts About Your Body." Remember, results with the very first package—or money refunded. At all druggists. Isonized Yeast Co., Inc., Dept. 172, Atlanta, Ga.

Posed by
professional
models



Why Trained Accountants Command High Salaries

[—and how ambitious men are qualifying]
By the LaSalle Problem Method

GET this straight.

By "accountancy" we do not mean "bookkeeping." For accountancy begins where bookkeeping leaves off.

The skilled accountant takes the figures handed him by the bookkeeper, and analyzes and interprets them.

He knows how much the costs in the various departments should amount to, how they may be lowered.

He knows what profits should be expected from a given enterprise, how they may be increased.

He knows, in a given business, what per cent of one's working capital can safely be tied up in merchandise on hand, what per cent is safe and adequate for sales promotion. And these, by the way, are but two of scores of percentage-figures where-with he points the way to successful operation.

He knows the intricacies of government taxation.

He knows how to survey the transactions of a business over a given period; how to show in cold, hard figures the progress it has made and where it is going. He knows how to use these findings as a basis for constructive policies.

In short, the trained accountant is the controlling engineer of business—**one man business cannot do without.**

Small wonder that he commands a salary two to ten times as great as

that of the bookkeeper. Indeed, as an independent operator (head of his own accounting firm) he may earn as much as the president of the big and influential bank in his community, or the operating manager of a great railroad.

Some Examples

Small wonder that accountancy offers the trained man such fine opportunities—opportunities well illustrated by the success of thousands of

LaSalle accountancy students.* For example—one man was a plumber, 32 years old, with only an eleventh grade education. Today he is auditor for a large bank and his income is 325 per cent larger.

Another was a drug clerk at \$30 a week. Now he heads his own very successful accounting firm with an income many times as large.

A woman bookkeeper—buried in details of a small job—is now auditor of an apartment hotel, and her salary mounted in proportion to her work.

A credit manager—earning \$200 a month—moved up quickly to \$3000, to \$5000, and then to a highly profitable accounting business of his own which nets him better than \$10,000 a year.

And What It Means to You

Why let the other fellow walk away with the better job, when right in your own home you can equip yourself for a splendid future in this profitable profession?

Are you really determined to get ahead? If so, you can start at once to acquire—by the LaSalle Problem Method—a thorough understanding of Higher Accountancy, master its fundamental principles, become expert in the practical application of those principles—this without losing an hour from work or a dollar of pay.

Preliminary knowledge of bookkeeping is unnecessary. You will be given whatever training instruction or review on the subject of bookkeeping you may personally need—and without any extra expense to you.

If you are dissatisfied with your present equipment—if you recognize the opportunities that lie ahead of you through home-study training—you will do well to send at once for full particulars. The coupon will bring them to you without any obligation, also details of LaSalle's convenient payment plan.

Check, sign and mail the coupon NOW.



LaSalle Extension University
DEPT. 2329-HR CHICAGO

Opportunities in Accountancy—Check below as we will send you a copy of "Accountancy, the Profession that Pays," without obligation.

Higher Accountancy

Other LaSalle Opportunities; if more interested in one of the other fields of business indicated below, check here:

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<input type="checkbox"/> Business Correspondence	<input type="checkbox"/> Effective Speaking
<input type="checkbox"/> Credit and Collection Correspondence	<input type="checkbox"/> Railway Accounting

Name

Present Position

Address

*Names available on request.

Acid In Your Blood Kills Health and Pep Kidneys Often to Blame

There is nothing that can so quickly undermine your health, strength, and energy as an excess of Acid in your blood. Everytime you move your hand, take a step, or use even the slightest amount of energy, cells are broken down in the body and create Acids. This process goes on even when you are asleep.

Fortunately, nature has provided an automatic method of getting rid of these excess Acids. To get rid of these Acids nature provides that your blood circulate 200 times an hour through 2 million tiny, delicate tubes, or filters, in your Kidneys. It is the function of the Kidneys to filter out these health-destroying Acids, and to purify the blood so that it can take energy and vitality to every part of your body. But if your Kidneys slow down and do not function properly, and remove approximately 3 pints of Acids, Poisons, and Liquids from your blood every 24 hours, then there is a gradual accumulation of these Acids and Wastes, and slowly but surely your system becomes poisoned, making you feel old before your time, run-down, and worn-out.

CAUSES MANY ILLS

If poorly functioning Kidneys cause you to suffer from Acidity, Getting Up Nights, Nervousness, Leg Pains, Dizziness, Frequent Headaches, Rheumatic Pains, Swollen Joints, Circles Under Eyes, Backache, Loss of Vitality, or Burning, Itching and Smarting, don't waste time worrying and waiting. The natural thing to do is to help your Kidneys with the doctor's special guaranteed Kidney diuretic prescription, called Cystex (pronounced Siss-tex). Cystex works directly on the Kidneys and Bladder, and helps the Kidneys in their function of washing impurities and Acids from the system and in maintaining the purity of the blood. Don't try to overcome Acidity in your blood by taking



Dr. T. J. Rastelli

medicines to offset the Acidity. The only way you can really get rid of the Acidity is by helping your Kidneys to function properly and thus remove the Acid from your system. The Acid is bound to stay there unless the Kidneys function properly.

Thousands of druggists and doctors in over 22 different countries throughout the world recommend Cystex for its purity and prompt action as a Kidney diuretic. For instance, Dr. T. J. Rastelli, famous Doctor, Surgeon, and Scientist, of London, says: "Cystex is one of the finest remedies I have ever known in my medical practice. Any doctor will recommend it for its definite benefit in the treatment of many functional Kidney and Bladder disorders. It is safe and harmless." Dr. C. Z. Readelle, another widely known physician and Medical Examiner, of San Francisco, recently said: "Since the Kidneys purify the blood, the Poisons collect in these organs and must be promptly flushed from the system, otherwise they reenter the blood stream and create a toxic condition. I can truthfully recommend the use of Cystex."

GUARANTEED TO WORK

Because of its world-wide and unusual success, Cystex is offered under a written guarantee to do the work to your complete satisfaction in 8 days or money back on return of empty package. Under this written guarantee you can put Cystex to the test and see exactly what it can do in your particular case. You must feel younger, stronger and better than you have in a long time—you must feel that Cystex has done the work thoroughly and completely, or you merely return the empty package and it costs you nothing. You are the sole judge of your own satisfaction. With Cystex there is no long waiting for results because it is scientifically prepared to act directly on the Kidneys as a diuretic. For that reason most people report a remarkable improvement within the first 48 hours, and complete satisfaction within 8 days. Cystex costs only 3c a dose at druggists, and as the guarantee protects you completely, you should not take chances with cheap, inferior or irritating drugs or delay. Telephone your druggist for guaranteed Cystex (Pronounced Siss-tex) today.



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A THRILLING PUBLICATION

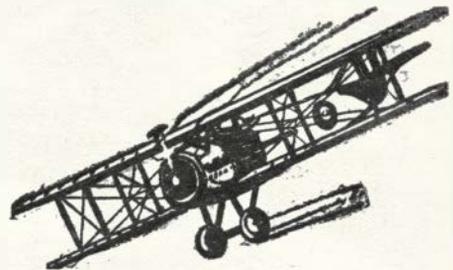
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AND OTHER ACE WRITERS



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Clerks and carriers now get \$1,700 the first year regular and automatically increase \$100 a year to \$2,100 and \$2,300. Open to men—women, 18 to 45.



Railway Postal Clerks get \$1,900 the first year regular, being paid on the first and fifteenth of each month. (\$79.17 each pay day.) Their pay is automatically increased yearly to \$2,450. Advance may be had to Chief Clerk at \$2,700 a year. (\$112.50 each pay day.) Open to men, 18 to 35.

Customs Inspector

Salary \$2,100 to start. Men 23 to 45. Work connected with examining baggage and merchandise entering the country from foreign parts covering boats, trains, roads, automobiles, etc.

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Many other positions are obtainable. Experience is usually unnecessary and political influence is not permitted. Let us show you how to get a government job.

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Fill out the following coupon. Tear it off and mail it today—now, at once. This investment may result in your getting a big-paid government job.

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Gentlemen: Rush to me, FREE of charge, list of U. S. Government big pay jobs. Send me FREE 32-page book describing salaries, vacation hours, work, and full particulars telling how to get one of these jobs.

Name

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NOW ONLY **15c**
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Over 700,000 People have studied music this easy way



**Now You Can Learn to Play
Your Favorite Instrument
Without a Teacher**

Easy as A-B-C

YES, over seven hundred thousand delighted men and women all over the world have studied music this quick, easy way.

Seven hundred thousand—what a gigantic orchestra they would make! Some are playing on the stage, others in orchestras, and many thousands are daily enjoying the pleasure and popularity of being able to play some instrument.

Surely this is convincing proof of the success of the new, modern method perfected by the U. S. School of Music! And what these people have done, YOU, too, can do!

Many of these seven hundred thousand students didn't know one note from another—others had never touched an instrument—yet in an amazingly short time they learned to play their favorite instrument. Best of all, they found learning music amazingly easy. No monotonous hours of exercises—no tedious scales—no expensive teachers. This simplified method made learning music as easy as A-B-C.

It is like a fascinating game. From the very start you are learning real tunes by note.

You simply can't go wrong, for every step, from beginning to end, is right before your eyes in print and picture. First you are told how to do a thing, then a picture shows you how, then you do it yourself and hear it. And almost before you know it, you are playing your favorite pieces—jazz, ballads, classics. No private teacher could make it clearer. Little theory—plenty of accomplishment. That's why students of the U. S. School of Music get ahead so fast!

You don't need any special "talent." Many of our students who have already become accomplished players never dreamed they possessed musical ability. They only wanted to play some instrument—just like you—and they found they could quickly learn how this easy way. Just a little of your spare time each day is needed—and you enjoy every minute of it. The cost is surprisingly low—averaging only a few cents a day for whatever instrument you choose. There are no extras. And remember, you are studying right in your own home—without paying big fees to private teachers.

Don't miss any more good times! Learn now to play your favorite instrument and surprise all your friends. Change from a wallflower to the center of attraction. Music is the best thing to offer at a party—musicians are invited everywhere. Enjoy the popularity you have been missing. Get your share of the musician's pleasure and profit! Start now!

Free Booklet and Demonstration Lesson

If you are in earnest about wanting to join the crowd of entertainers and be a "big hit" at any party—if you really do want to play your favorite instrument, to become a performer whose services will be in demand—fill out and mail the convenient coupon asking for our Free Booklet and Free Demonstration Lesson. These explain our wonderful method fully and show you how easily and quickly you can learn to play at little expense. Instruments are supplied when needed—cash or credit. U. S. School of Music, 2942 Brunswick Bldg., New York City.

Thirty-ninth Year (Established 1898)

U. S. SCHOOL OF MUSIC,
2942 Brunswick Bldg., New York City.

Please send me your free book, "How You Can Master Music in Your Own Home" with inspiring message by Dr. Frank Crane, Free Demonstration Lesson, and particulars of your easy payment plan. I am interested in the following course:

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Instrument?

Name

Address

City..... State.....

What Instrument for You?	
Piano	Guitar
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Trumpet	
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Voice and Speech Culture	
Harmony and Composition	
Drums and Traps	
Banjo (Plectrum, 5-String, or Tenor)	



A Guide-Post to the Newest Dodges of the Petty Racketeers of America! Follow This Interesting Series in G-MEN

The Baffling Case of the Spurlous Quarters— and How It Was Solved

FAST, efficient fleets of streamlined buses have in past years crisscrossed the traffic lanes of New York City, forcing the old-fashioned trolleys into the scrap heap. But in the garden plot of progress a crop of evil may sprout side by side with the good.

A young, somber-faced fellow named William H. Haughton got on a bus in Chatham Square and gave the driver a dollar bill. He merely glanced at his change. Counting it later, he saw that three quarters he had got back from the driver were little masterpieces of the counterfeiter's art. Haughton grinned wryly, said nothing.

A COLLECTION OF QUARTERS

It was probably not chance which brought him into the same bus again the same evening. The same driver was operating. Haughton, it seemed, had oodles of dollar bills and he parted cheerfully with another.

Back at him, like a well returned jab in the midriff, came three more quarters with his change. Shiny, handsome two-bit pieces that promptly joined their fellows in Haughton's pocket, making the cutest set of sextuplets ever a forger saw.

Haughton didn't feel generous until the next day, when he watched for the jinxed bus and the even more seriously jinxed driver. The dollar bill left Haughton's hand and the driver gave him change—three shiny quarters once more.

"Looka, pal," said Haughton mildly. "This here quarter feels kinda funny."

"What's the matter with it?" growled the driver.

"Well—it's got a funny color to it—and the weight don't seem right."

"Okay, okay!" the driver snarled. "Here's another quarter for it; you're holdin' up the passengers. Step up, please!"

"Not so fast, fella," Haughton remonstrated with him. "This second one, now, I'm not so sure, but—"

"Hey, what the hell is this anyway? That

coin's all right! I couldn't 'a' given you two—"

"You might have even given me three. Bless me if you haven't!"

With a muttered curse, the driver slipped three other quarters out of his coin-carrier. "Here y'are—I ain't got all day to argue."

"Yes, you have," Haughton returned. "All day and all night, maybe, until you come across with the info on this racket! Who's been supplying you with the phonies?"

STACKS OF SILVER

The driver's eyes went hollow, his ruddy color faded. Haughton took possession of his coin-carrier and released an entire stack of bad coins. In the driver's pocket, also, were several paper-wrapped cylinders of the stuff.

There was hardly any need for Secret Service Agent William H. Haughton to exhibit his G-man shield, but he did. A new driver was on hand, by prearrangement, to relieve the crook.

It was brought to light then that a number of drivers, not only in New York but in other cities as well, had formed a buying syndicate for "cheap" money. They figured they were in a strategic position to distribute large quantities of bad quarters. They succeeded best with poor passengers, or foreigners whom they could often bulldoze out of their objections.

ON THE ROUND-UP

Government agents are now scouring the country for possibilities of a nationwide hook-up of thieves who like to stick to the petty graft of cheating the poor and unsuspecting out of quarters which often take a man an hour or more to earn.

So look carefully at your change, and warn your friends who ride in buses that such means of transportation offer a clever "in" for the easy-dough boys.

Remember, too, that **BEWARE!** appears each month in **G-MEN**, exposing the latest gyp games hot off the griddle.

SAVE UP TO 50% DIRECT FROM MIDWEST FACTORY!



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Mail coupon today for new, FREE 40-page catalog... and learn how you can save up to 50% by buying direct from Midwest factory. See for yourself that Midwest offers today's greatest radio values, and scores of exciting features, like Dial-A-Matic Tuning, plus Elektrik-Saver. With the sensational Dial-A-Matic Tuning feature, for example, even a child can bring in ten perfectly tuned programs in ten seconds. Zip!... Zip!... Zip!... stations come in instantly, automatically, perfectly... as fast as you can push buttons. The exclusive Midwest Elektrik-Saver cuts radio wattage consumption 50%, enables Midwest radios to use no more current than ordinary 7-tube sets.

ONLY IN MIDWEST DO YOU GET
DIAL-A-MATIC TUNING plus ELEKTRIK-SAVER



DIAL-A-MATIC TUNING

Now, even a child can bring in ten perfectly tuned programs in ten seconds! It's a big thrill to whirl the dial... and then hear the station you want... come in instantly, automatically... as fast as you can press buttons!



ELEKTRIK-SAVER

This exclusive Midwest feature cuts radio wattage consumption 50%... results in Midwest radios using no more current than ordinary 7-tube set... enables you to operate on voltages as low as 60 volts.

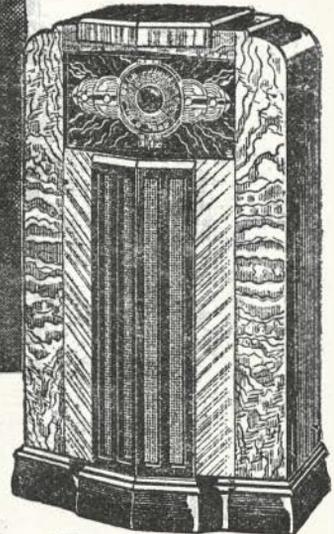
Only \$59.50 COMPLETE with GIANT THEATRE-SONIC SPEAKER (12 25 TUBES)

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30 DAYS FREE TRIAL

You have a year to pay... terms as low as 10¢ a day... you secure privilege of 30 days' FREE trial in your own home. In addition, you are triply protected with Foreign Reception Guarantee, One-Year Warranty and Money-Back Guarantee.



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SIX WAVE BANDS
4 1/2 to 2400 METERS

Bigger, better, more powerful, more beautiful, this super deluxe Midwest out-performs \$150 sets on a point-for-point comparison. Amazingly selective, delightfully sensitive, it brings in distant foreign stations with full loud speaker volume on channels adjacent to powerful locals. You'll thrill over its marvelous super-performance... glorious crystal-clear "concert realism"... magnificent world-wide foreign reception. Powerful Triple-Twin tubes (two tubes in one) give 22-tube results. You can switch instantly from American programs... to Canadian, police, amateur, commercial, airplane, ship broadcasts... to the finest and most fascinating foreign programs. Never before so much radio for so little money. Why pay more? Save up to 50% by buying at wholesale... direct from factory... preferred by thousands of careful radio purchasers since 1920.

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The NAVY SPY



Featuring
Dan Fowler,
Man-Hunter,
in Action!

Fowler leaned out

CHAPTER I

Bloodstained Web

HE was a pitiful sight—bruised, salt-encrusted, his face covered with blood, his outstretched hands reaching as though striving to drag his body a little farther from the relentless surf.

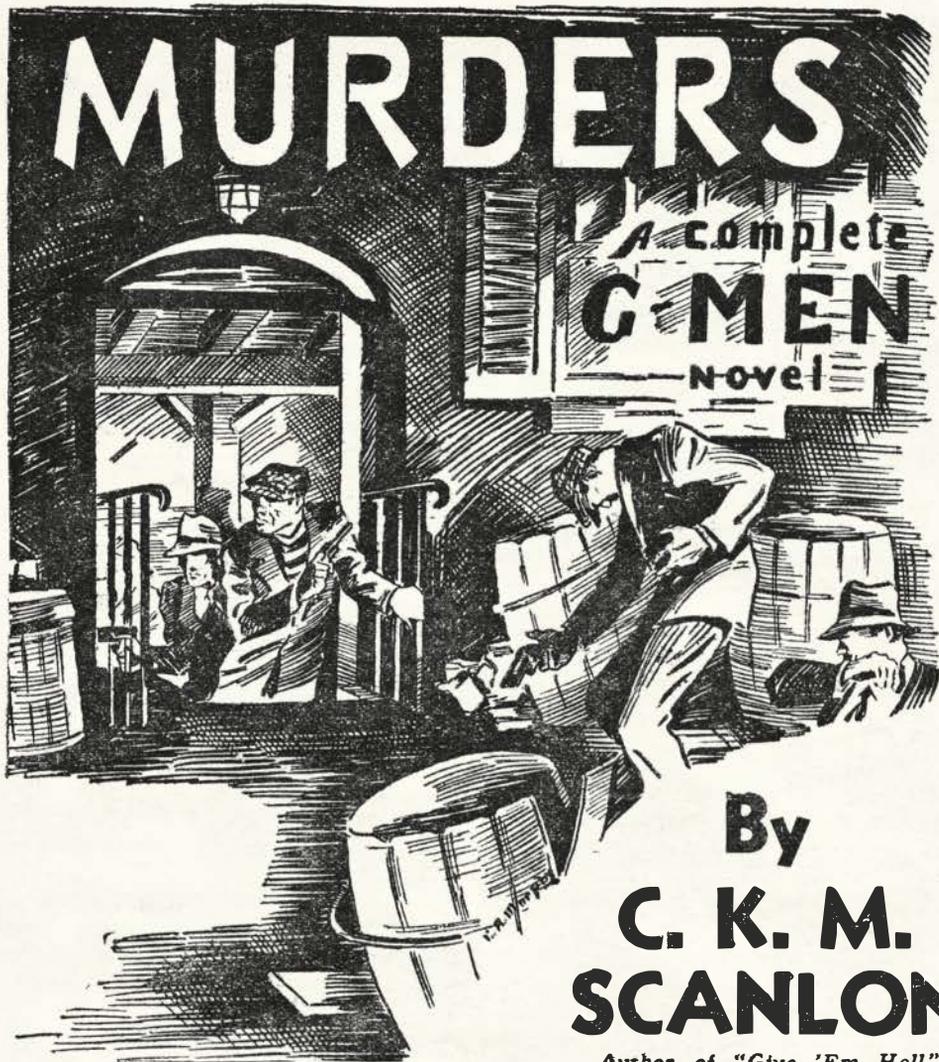
Private O'Neill of the U. S. Marine Corps, on beach patrol, found him just as the sun lifted its crimson disc above the horizon's rim, marking

the end of the short Northern night.

On the rocks, farther out, the broken mast of a wrecked fishing boat told how this man had come to a forbidden shore. The others? For surely there had been others—Private O'Neill's sharp young eyes swept along the beach. An oar—a bit of deck planking—a spar with a tingle of rigging attached to it—nothing else.

Private O'Neill lifted rifle to shoulder; three shots echoed against the steep pine-clad slope above; then he

Sinister Undercover Foes of America Plot a



By
**C. K. M.
 SCANLON**

*Author of "Give 'Em Hell,"
 "The Parole Racket," etc.*

and fired twice (Page 36)

bent over the man who lay so still on the sand.

"Tough guy—he's okay," thought O'Neill. "Squarehead, by his blond hair."

The thud of feet on the hard sand announced the approach of the corporal of the guard and two privates.

"Castaway," said O'Neill. "Storm last night musta wrecked his boat."

"This'll make trouble, I betcha," grunted the corporal, sourly. "Splash some water in his face."

The blond man stirred, opened blue eyes.

"That's a bad knock on the head you got," said the corporal. "What happened?"

"Come great storm—my ship—rocks—" He spoke with a strong Scandinavian accent. "What iss dis place?" he asked. "You ban soldiers?" His eyes looked stupid, beaten.

"Marines," corrected the corporal. "And never you mind what this place is. People don't ask questions around

Mighty Campaign of Espionage and Slaughter!

here; it ain't healthy. Parry, you help me get this fellow back to camp."

THE castaway stumbled along between the two marines, aided by their hands under his armpits. The sound of busy hammers, the whine of machine-tools, the clatter of riveters came louder and louder through the pines, until they cut through a corner of the forest and emerged on a wide plain where men were busily at work. Beyond were neat rows of brown tents; an anti-aircraft gun lifted its slender snout skyward beneath a camouflage net. In the harbor a destroyer and two huge patrol planes rode at anchor.

A Marine officer, very trim and smart in his well cut greenish uniform, was striding toward them.

"Castaway, sir," the corporal reported. "Found him on the beach."

"Hm. What's your name?" The officer's tone was crisp.

"Hans Trygvasson, mate of fish-schooner *Harald*," the castaway answered.

"What was your last port of call, Trygvasson?" he asked.

"Petropavlovsk, in Kamchatka. We lef' dere tolv day 'go."

"Twelve days ago. Petropavlovsk. You're Danish?"

"Yes. Danish."

"Since when," asked the officer, "did the Soviet authorities allow foreign fishing vessels to operate out of their ports?"

"I dunno."

"Bring him along to headquarters, Corporal. Commander Franklin will want to see him."

When the castaway reached the long, one-story headquarters building of unpainted pine planks he was ushered into a bare little office where an officer in the blue uniform of a commander in the United States Navy sat behind a rude desk. The marine officer whispered a word or two in the commander's ear.

"How did you happen to be in these waters, Trygvasson?" the commander asked. "Not much fishing hereabouts."

The blond man said nothing.

"Your ship was from Denmark?

Danish-built?" the commander asked him.

"Yes."

"Hm. You—" The telephone at his elbow interrupted. The commander spoke a few words, listened. He hung up.

"When was your ship last overhauled, Trygvasson?" he snapped.

"Last summer, I t'ank. In Vancouver."

"Then how does it happen that a block of Asiatic manufacture is in the wreckage washed up from her?" the commander queried. "Built in Denmark—last overhauled in Canada—but with Asiatic running rigging. Very odd, that."

A young chief yeoman came in, laid a manila folder at the commander's elbow, went silently out again. The commander glanced at the contents of the folder, nodded.

"You tried hard, Rompert," he said in a grave voice. "Unfortunately you have come in contact with our Naval Intelligence agents before. I have your dossier here—just as I have in my files data on every known agent who might be employed by our Asiatic friends. You are the third within three weeks to try to penetrate this island. Sorry, Rompert."

The castaway smiled and shrugged.

"You'll be held for trial," the commander said. The castaway was led out of the little office. Commander Franklin, U. S. N., sat staring before him at the pine wall.

"Three in as many weeks," he muttered to himself. "How do they know? How have they guessed that on this island— Damn! There's a leak somewhere, a damned bad leak."

He drew toward him a pad and began scribbling a report.

"They'll have to act," he said softly. "They can't ignore this situation any longer. That leak must be found and plugged. Permanently plugged. Or else—God help the United States!"

TWO thousand miles away, at that moment, another officer of the United States Navy sat at a somewhat more pretentious desk, also busily writing. It was night; the officer's

brows wore a tired frown. His pen raced over the paper:

In conclusion, it is desired to emphasize again the conviction which I have formed—the Asiatic League means to strike at its own chosen moment, and from the present state of their naval, air and military preparations that moment cannot be far distant. They are almost openly boasting that they mean to make the Pacific Ocean an Asiatic lake, to end forever what they are pleased to call the American menace to their ambitions. They are but waiting until they are fully informed of the details of our new plans to meet such an emergency; and since it is increasingly apparent that they have some means of access to our most secret archives, I cannot believe that this delay will be a long one. It is in their advance knowledge of our war plans that their real strength lies; without that knowledge I do not believe that they would take the risk of attacking a power so superior to them in military resources as the United States. I cannot put this too strongly—that the issues of peace and war, or if war comes, of victory or defeat, hinge on our immediate discovery and destruction of the means by which they are enabled to know of changes in our secret war plans here almost as soon as these are decided upon in Washington.

A gentle knock, twice repeated, sounded on the door. The officer swept the sheets of his report into a drawer of the desk.

"Come in."

A slight, stoop-shouldered little man, with iron-bowed spectacles half hiding his slanting eyes, glided into the room. He wore a cheap American suit, a dirty collar, a wisp of a tie.

"Well, Ki Poo?"

"I failed yesterday," said Ki Poo. "I took two messages over the confidential wire. In each case I used two sheets of carbon paper, giving up one to be destroyed, according to regulations, but retaining the other. I had hoped to be able to bring you those messages, intact. But I was suddenly transferred to another desk, and I had barely time to slip the used carbons into the box with other similar sheets. I did not dare to take them with me. That devil Nakuma was watching me with the eyes of a hawk.

"Now I go back. I report for work at dawn. Perhaps I will be returned to my own desk; in which case I may well hope to find those carbon sheets

still there. Are there any other orders?"

"None, Ki Poo. But—will it be safe for you to return? If Nakuma suspects you he may have examined his desk, he may have found those carbon sheets; and if so, you are doomed if you go back."

Ki Poo was Michaels' best agent. Oriental himself, he had wormed his way into a trusted post in the confidential cable office of the Imperial Admiralty. Here were received the messages from hundreds of agents and spies all over the world. And if now, at last, the spy chief Nakuma suspected Ki Poo—Michaels could not sacrifice the life of his faithful aide.

KI POO was smiling a little. "Perhaps, Captain," he said, "but maybe I read in the eyes of Nakuma only that suspicion which is natural to him. Those messages, Captain, were from America. They were routed instantly by the cipher chief to Commander Yayeyatsu, who is chief of the American section of their intelligence service."

Captain Michaels rose, gripped the bony fingers of Ki Poo warmly. "You are a brave man, Ki Poo," said he. "I pray to see you safe back to this room tonight."

Ki Poo bowed, turned and left the room without another word.



Captain Michaels set to work to encode the report he had just finished.

Going to the safe, he worked the secret combination. The heavy door swung open; a key unlocked a compartment of tempered steel, and he took out a small box. He pressed his fingers gently against one end of it;

it was apparently a solid piece of metal, but under the pressure it slid away, revealing a recess in which reposed a small brass cylinder. This Captain Michaels shook out in his palm and placed with great caution on his desk pad.

"Blow my arm off, that would," he reflected, "if I'd tried to open the box without removing it."

He turned the key in the lock—a bright spark snapped in the compartment where the brass cylinder had been—and lifted back the hinged top. He took out a book bound in black leather, put it on the desk, drew toward him a pad of paper and went to work.

The book was Secret Code F of the United States Navy, and there were but seventeen such books in existence in all the world.

with wax in five places. He returned the code book to its box, locked the box, replaced the cylinder, put the box into its place in the safe, and locked the safe, reconnecting the thermite device. Then he picked up all his work sheets, carried them to a copper brazier in one corner and burned them to ashes. When the last was consumed he stirred the ashes till they were only black dust.

HE unlocked and lifted the steel window shutter, throwing open the casement behind it which looked out over the Embassy gardens.

Steps sounded in the corridor—the guard appeared in the door, carrying a cubical package about a foot square.

"The pouch is ready, sir," he said, "and this package was just delivered for you by messenger."



Michaels began setting out his long report in parallel lines of letters and transposing these into the groups required by the code.

Hour after hour went by. Outside was daylight and a warm sun; inside, the electric light still burned and Captain Michaels labored in the atmosphere of an oven. He continued until, toward noon, he was able to draw in a satisfied sigh of accomplishment. It was done.

He arranged the sheets of his coded message, checked them over one by one, folded them together and placed them in an envelope, which he sealed

Captain Michaels looked at the superscription. There was nothing by which the sender could be identified.

The burly guard eyed the package uneasily. "You ain't goin' to open that thing, sir? Not at least without duck-in' it in a bucket o' water?"

Captain Michaels grinned. "Don't you worry," he said. "They wouldn't try anything as crude as sending me an infernal machine."

Michaels took a knife from his pocket, slit the gummed tape which secured the wrapping of the package and folded back the paper. This revealed a tin box, something like a

cracker box in appearance. It bore no markings of any kind.

He reached a hand to lift the lid, hesitated, bent over and put an ear to the lid. He heard nothing; but there was certainly a peculiar odor about that box. He grabbed the lid, flung it back. Nothing happened. There was nothing in the box but a roundish object about the size of a football,

As his fingers touched the top of that mysterious enclosure he experienced something very much like an electric shock. A thrill of horror ran through his body; he jerked back his hand with a sharp exclamation, had to force himself to lift the thing out and unwrap it.

He was looking at the severed head of Ki Poo. At the head—but not into the eyes.

Where the eyes of Ki Poo had been

CHAPTER II

Hell Over Panama

AT that same moment, eight thousand miles away, clear across the Pacific, in the Panama Canal Zone, the tropic stars looked down on the house of the Commandant of the Fifteenth Naval District. Two men lounged in wicker armchairs in the commandant's study—the commandant himself, in starched whites with the starred gold straps of a rear-admiral adorning his shoulders, and a grim lean man in khaki and spurred boots, on whose shoulders also twin stars glittered bright—the Commanding General of the Panama Canal Department.

The strains of a Panamanian rumba, the shuffle of gay feet, and the single high-pitched thrill of a young girl's laughter came to their ears.



were only fire-blackened sockets, empty, charred and dreadful.

"Burned out with a red-hot iron," muttered Michaels. He saw the gleam of metal marking where molten lead had been poured into Ki Poo's ears. His hand rose to his forehead in salute.

"May your ancestors receive you with the honor that is your due, my gallant comrade," he said softly. "And some day—some day—His voice broke. "My last hope," he muttered. "Now—may God help the United States!"

"You didn't ask me here to dance," the general said quietly.

The admiral shook his head.

"No; that's Nancy party," he replied. "I thought we might have a little talk, you and I, under camouflage as it were. It has come to the point where, here in Panama, we must face some damned unpleasant facts. To all intents and purposes, General, we are at war with the Asiatic League at this moment."

"Let 'em come," said the general. "I'm ready—and so are you."

"I know, I know," growled the ad-

miral. "That's all very well. We're ready, yes. Patrol planes, submarines, mine-layers on my side; on yours, aircraft of all sorts, coast fortifications, and your mobile forces—infantry and artillery and engineers. To attack the Canal across eight thousand miles of sea, against such defenses, would seem an act of madness, fated to certain defeat.

"But suppose the enemy knew every channel through the mine fields, the range and position of every coastal gun, the exact plans under which our air force and submarines and mobile troops will operate, and has prepared



a plan based on ours—based on the exact knowledge of our strength and the measures we mean to take in our defenses—for his attack. What then, General?"

"Good God!" said the general.

"Of course you know," the admiral continued, "that the whole Zone—and the whole Republic of Panama as well—has been swarming with Asiatic spies for months?"

"Certainly I know it. But we take precautions — they can't find out much."

"No?" snapped the admiral. He leaned forward; his voice sank almost to a whisper. "Maybe you think they can't. But I've been doing a little spying on my own. I've had one of my bright young officers, who spent years in Asia as a language student, mingling with those rats for the last six weeks. He's been posing as a discharged seaman, nursing a grievance against the whole naval service and against his country. Tonight he's coming here to make his report. First

contact he's dared to make with me. He says he knows the whole damned business—ten times more than they think. He told me enough for me to understand that there isn't a single defense plan we have of which the details aren't in the possession of our Asiatic friends. I thought you ought to hear him."

THE general nodded. "If they suspect him, I wouldn't give much for his life."

"He'll be all right—I won't let him outside this station until midnight, when he leaves by plane for Washington to report in person to the Intelligence people there. And maybe you noticed, as you came in, that the Marines are being a little extra vigilant tonight?"

"I did," nodded the general. "How about your daughter's guests? All service people?"

"Every one of 'em. I censored her guest list myself."

The admiral fell silent, seemed lost in rueful thought.

The general knew what he was thinking about. The admiral had been commanding officer of the Naval Air Base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. His daughter had fallen in love with a brilliant young junior lieutenant stationed there, an officer so promising that he had been assigned reconnaissance work in connection with the new patrol planes which were so formidable a part of the defenses of that Gibraltar of the Pacific. But he'd met another woman—one of those exotic flowers of dark loveliness which seem to bloom only that they may destroy the souls of men who bend too near to sniff their heady fragrance.

The young officer had married her after a hectic month of whirlwind courtship. Thereafter there had been other things—rumors uglier and uglier—a brilliant young man breaking, crumbling—finally a plane crash which had cost the life of a machinist's mate and sent a radio man to a naval hospital; and a medical examination of the officer of controls, Nancy's onetime love. The young lieutenant had been pronounced unfit

for duty because of narcotic drugs. There had been that final, damning line in the Navy Directory: *Resignation accepted for the good of the service.*

Another good man gone to the dogs—and another girl who laughed a little too loudly, who hated above all things to be alone, to yearn over the grey wretched ashes of what might have been.

The silence of painful remembrance was broken by a tap at the door.

The door was opened; the brown face of the admiral's steward, Manuel, appeared in the opening.

"Misser Howard, he here now, sir. You want see?"

"Bring him in, Manuel." The door closed softly.

"Been with you a long time, that steward, hasn't he?" asked the general.

"Eleven years. He was my messboy on the *Springfield*."

"Hm. I served a good many years in the Islands. And I'd be puzzled to know just what Filipino tribe Manuel belongs to. He has a look to me of—something else."

"Nonsense, General. Manuel's all right."

A SHARP knock came then—a knock instantly followed by the door's opening.

A tall young officer, very trim in his starched whites, his gold-ornamented cap, stood at stiff salute in the doorway.

"Lieutenant Howard reports to the commandant, sir."

"Come in, Mr. Howard. Major-General Wynton—may I present Lieutenant Howard? Sit down, Lieutenant."

The lieutenant dropped into a comfortable chair.

"Proceed, Lieutenant," the admiral said.

"Very good, sir. On the fourth of last month I left this station secretly aboard the *Rodman* in the character of a seaman under arrest. I went through the form of trial by summary court martial, sentenced to bad conduct discharge and expulsion from the naval

service in apparent disgrace. I went into the red light district of Panama City and was there accosted by a man using the name of—"

Again a sharp knock at the door interrupted.

"Your steward, sir," reported the young officer on guard in the passage. "He has a message—very important, he says—something about Miss Nancy—"

"Let him come in," snapped the admiral. His face had gone suddenly grey and strained.

The steward entered. His Oriental features were utterly expressionless, but his eyes glittered oddly. He took a step toward the admiral, hesitated.

"Well, Manuel. Out with it!" the admiral ordered.

"Yes, sir. Out with it," repeated Manuel—and suddenly whipped an automatic from his sleeve and fired four bullets into Lieutenant Howard's head.

The lieutenant slumped forward in his chair. Manuel sat down upon the floor, throwing the gun away from him. The admiral, the general were on their feet; through the door from the corridor burst the officers on guard, with pistols out.

Very quietly the bent form of Lieutenant Howard rolled from chair to the floor and lay still.

"Wait!" snarled the admiral. "Manuel! Tell me—why did you do this thing?"

"For my Emperor," said Manuel very quietly, very proudly. "I have waited for eleven years for this moment when I might be of service to the Divine Throne. Shades of my ancestors, receive me now with honor!"

From his other sleeve he drew a long, glittering knife and plunged it into his abdomen. He swayed, smiled, and collapsed upon the mat, his blood mingling with the blood of his victim in dark horror there.

"He has served his Emperor well, damn him," growled the general.

"Too well. Howard died with all he learned unspoken. And we are left to face a foe who knows—everything we don't want him to know. Now may God help the United States!"

CHAPTER III

Dulce et Decorum Est—

HE line shuffled forward slowly, in silent, shivering misery. An icy wind swept the street.

"Colder tonight," muttered a man with half an inch of grey stubble on his face. "That coffee'll go mighty well."

The other man nodded. He was clean-shaven, and his shirt was almost white. He wore a tie.

"We'll make it this trip, old-timer," he said. "I've faced worse than this. You ought to face a North Atlantic gale some time."

"You a sailor, friend?" the old man asked.

"Not any more."

A tall young man in a smart grey topcoat swung round the corner near the lighted doorway. As he hesitated at the curb the headlights of an automobile coming round the corner swept over the line.

The young man took three quick strides and grabbed the hand of the man in the clean shirt.

"Jimmy Osborn, or I'm a Marine!" he cried. "Damn it, man! What are you doing here?"

The other gave him a wry smile.

"Hello, Micky! I'm waiting for mess call to sound."

Lieutenant - Commander Endicott McMunn, U. S. N., spat out a seagoing oath.

"Not here you're not, shipmate," said he. "You're coming home to dinner with Micky and the new missus. Do you suppose for one second that I'm going to let the best friend I ever had, my roommate at Annapolis, stand in a bread line for a handout? Do you walk, or do I drag you?"

"I'll walk, if you put it like that," grumbled the other.

The two left the breadline and started across the street.

"I haven't congratulated you yet,

Micky," said Osborn. "I do now. Navy girl?"

"Nope. None of your smart seagoing lasses for me," replied McMunn.

"You deserve the best, Micky," Osborn said earnestly. "Doing pretty well for yourself, aren't you? I've been — sort of keeping tabs on you. Selected for two-and-a-half stripes the other day, I noticed. Pretty nearly the youngest Lieutenant-Commander in the Navy, boy."

"I've been working like the very devil. War Plans Division, under old Holystone Harry Hall. You remember, him?"

"Don't let 'em work you too hard, Mick," Osborn said. "You're looking tired. Working nights, I'll bet."

"Every night last week," said McMunn. "But how about you, Jimmy? Where've you been all these years? What've you been doing?"

"One thing and another," Osborn answered. "I tried a lot of things—no good. Couldn't stick 'em." His lips were trembling. "Just — no good, Mick."

McMUNN made no answer. He could read between the words his friend spoke—no good because he could not kill his craving for the drugs he must have in order to endure life at all.

"Well, here we are," he said after a long silence, pausing before the entrance of a modest apartment house. Osborn drew back.

"Maybe—better not after all," he muttered. He was beginning to shake all over. His last supply of his essential narcotic was gone.

"Nonsense. You'll feel better after a cocktail and a good dinner."

McMunn urged him forward into the lobby, into the automatic elevator. They rose to the third floor; McMunn's key admitted them to the foyer of a small but smart little apartment. To the left was a closed door, from behind which a contralto voice of a singularly sweet huskiness called out:

"Is that you, Micky? I'm just dressing—"

"Okay, honey," called McMunn.

"Go in and sit down, old man. Pour yourself a drink."

When Osborn had heard the bedroom door click shut behind McMunn he turned swiftly and tiptoed to the outer door, opened it with quick stealth, slipped into the hall. The elevator was still there. He got in, descended to the lobby and went straight out to the street, turning to the right and stepped out as a man with a purpose.

From a car parked a few doors away a small man ducked suddenly into his path.

"Pardon, please — have you the time?"

"No—sorry," Osborn answered, and would have brushed by. But something hard was jabbing into his stomach; other men appeared as though by magic at his right and left.

"No noise, please; or we shall be compelled to discharge the weapon which is now pressing your abdomen," said the little man pleasantly. "So sorry, Lieutenant Osborn, but this is very necessary. Please to get into the car."

Lieutenant Osborn! It was many a year since he had been so addressed. It was dark—he could not see the face of the man who spoke to him.

This must have something to do with Micky—some danger—and danger might well hang over an officer of the War Plans Division of the Navy in these terrible days.

Osborn got into the car, followed by his three captors. A fourth man was beside the wheel.

The car started; at the same moment a coat or cloak was suddenly thrown over Osborn's head, completely muffling his face.

The ride was not a long one. When the blindfold was removed, the car was in almost complete darkness in which the men about Osborn were but blurs of moving shadow. He was guided out of the car and tugged forward by a man at each elbow.

A door closed. He was led into a cement-floored corridor, at the end of which a round disc of light glowed. This proved to be an automatic elevator. Someone snapped off the light.



Lieut. Daniels

In the darkness the elevator rose, passing floor after floor. Five—six—it stopped.

The door slid open; Osborn was urged ahead, across a corridor and into an apartment, into a sparsely furnished living room where, at last, he stood beneath a clear light and could see his captors. Or one of them, for the others had vanished.

This one was the little man who had held the gun to his stomach. He was well, even foppishly dressed; his dark face, high of cheekbone and slightly slanting of eye, held more than a hint of Oriental blood.

"So sorry to inconvenience you, Lieutenant Osborn," he said in staccato tones, bowing a little, drawing in his breath with a quick hiss. "But it was, as you perceive on recognizing me, quite—quite necessary."

"Nakuma!" said Osborn sharply. "What the devil—"

"Am I doing here, you would say, Lieutenant? I will not attempt to deceive you," smiled Nakuma. "I am keeping an eye on your erstwhile comrade, Lieutenant-Commander McMunn."

"I thought so! Damn you, Nakuma, are you up to your fiend's tricks with McMunn too?"

"I do my duty," said Nakuma. "Attention to Lieutenant-Commander McMunn is an important part of that duty just at present. I do not know how he happened to meet you; but when I saw you enter his apartment with him tonight, I felt sure that you would be coming out very shortly, and I did not feel that I could permit you to divulge to anyone the information you might have obtained there."

"I don't know what you're talking about," dissimulated Osborn.

"So sorry to contradict you, but I think you know very well what I am talking about."

Osborn said nothing. What was the use?

"Very well, then," pursued Nakuma. "I know also something of the strange thing you call your code of honor, you Westerners. You would not tell your friend the truth; he would not listen, you could not bear to speak the words. But you would also feel bound by your duty to your country. You would go to his superior; to the so estimable Rear-Admiral Hall, in fact. Him you would tell certain things which would cause a most unpleasant investigation. An investigation which would not enhance the chances of my success in my mission. Therefore it is now necessary that you should be eliminated, Lieutenant Osborn."

Osborn felt a sudden chill run down his spine. He glanced toward the window, involuntarily.

"No use, I'm afraid," purred Nakuma. "A straight drop of six stories to the street. An unpleasant, violent end, Lieutenant."

He walked to a little cellarette, took out a bottle, poured a small glass half full of a colorless liquid. Into this liquid he dropped a capsule which he took from his vest pocket.

"My own prescription," said he. "I keep it by me in case things go badly. You will find it swift—and painless."

He offered the glass to Osborn, bowing his jerky little bow. "So, so sorry," he murmured.

Osborn stared at the smiling little man. To all appearances, they were

alone. He might spring upon Nakuma, overpower him—but he knew that was a chimera born of a mad hope. Those others were close at hand.

He tried to think of some way out. Time—if he could have a little time—to think—

"Why didn't you shoot me down in the streets?" he demanded. "Why didn't you let me die like a man, not like a cur poisoned in a corner?"

"There must be no publicity," smiled Nakuma. "Come, Lieutenant Osborn; do not compel us to use force. Drink—and forget."

He must think—think—yet how could he? An idea—just one—

"Nakuma," he said, "I do not want to die like this, like a trembling coward. I am not afraid to die. But I would like to go with my mind clear, with my heart unafraid, as one of my tradition should go. Once you were quick enough to give me a certain—medicine. Have you any now? A last favor."

NAKUMA hesitated. "There is no time," he said. "Drink."

Osborn took the glass; but a fit of trembling which he scarcely needed to accentuate spilled the contents on the floor.

"You see?" he said.

Nakuma inclined his head. He returned to the wall cabinet, took out a flat blue bottle, shook a couple of white tablets into his hand, passed them to Osborn,

Osborn was watching him as narrowly as he could. He swallowed the pellets. Instantly *new* life straightened his body, cleared his mind.

And as he lifted his head to meet Nakuma's narrow gaze, there swept before his brightening vision a pageant of the past, of events long buried in oblivion.

He remembered sun-kissed Hawaii, he remembered a girl in a pink chiffon dress, who came running toward him, crying his name, he remembered another woman, a dark flame of a woman with a husky voice of singular sweetness. He remembered the evening when he had said that he must have

rest and sleep—and the remedy she had given him, laughing into his eyes. A dry sob shook his throat.

Something lay against his heart—something hard and small, suspended by a string about his neck.

He felt it as his body drew itself erect to face death.

And then he remembered the words which Nakuma had uttered:

"Publicity is a curse to men in my profession."

He saw his way clear before him. Perhaps thirty seconds had passed since he had taken the tablets. He nodded cheerfully to Nakuma.

"Thank you," said he. "Now I can face what must be faced. If you will mix your potion again, Nakuma?"

Nakuma refilled the glass.

There echoed in Osborn's ears, as from the muted voices of ten thousand comrades who had died for flag and country, the solemn chant that called to him:

"Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori."

His life was all he had left to give. He spun on his heel—he flung himself at the window. There was a splintering crash of broken glass at his body hurtled through and out into the night—and down, down toward the lighted street far below.

CHAPTER IV

Dan Fowler—U. S. N.



ADMIRAL HALL had something good and small in his hand.

"The police found this about the poor fellow's neck; it was by this we identified him," he said, handing across the desk to the Director of the gold ring.

"An Annapolis class ring," said the Director.

Hall nodded. "The initials inside told us who he was—James Osborn, who resigned under a cloud four years ago. Drugs—bad associates—a nasty business. A great pity."



Nakuma

The Director turned to a broad-shouldered young man with grim, ragged features who sat at the end of his desk, his steel-grey eyes intent upon the ring.

"Well, Fowler," said he, "have you been over the police reports on Osborn's death?"

Special Agent Fowler nodded.

"He fell in the street almost at the feet of Patrolman Byrnes, 4th Precinct," he said. "Byrnes immediately rushed into the house and ascended to the sixth floor; no one answered the bell in the apartment from which Osborn had leaped, so Byrnes had the superintendent open the door. No one was found within. The apartment had been let furnished to one Anhton Sarodian, ostensibly an Armenian rug dealer.

"Sarodian can not be located, but an automobile license had been taken out in his name and a car bearing that license was pursued by Motorcycle Officers Cray and Forshe—after a general alarm had been sent out for it—at six a.m. this morning. Shots were fired from the car, disabling Forshe.

"Cray stopped to help Forshe and the car escaped, going north on

the Baltimore Pike at a high rate of speed."

Hall drummed nervously on the desk with his fingers.

"Gentlemen," he said, "the time has come to put our cards on the table. We must call on you for help. The fate of the nation is at stake. We believe this case to be directly connected with the activities of a spy ring operating throughout our naval service. Every man Naval Intelligence can spare is already at work. I know Fowler's record. We need him. I know this case is not technically within your field—but we are—well, almost desperate. Will you assign Fowler to this case, Director?"

THE director paused. "He's yours, Admiral. You can count on him."

"Thank you. Here, then, is our problem. I am, as you know, head of the War Plans Division in the office of the Chief of Naval Operations. I do not mean that the United States is preparing to make war on any other nation, but that we must be ready in case war does come. These plans are of a most detailed nature. Foreknowledge of them would be of inestimable advantage to any power preparing to attack us."

"I can readily understand that," nodded the Director.

"Then you can readily understand how uneasy we feel when we know that the Asiatic League has accurate, detailed knowledge of our most secret plans."

Fowler said nothing; but the knuckles of his big hands were white where they gripped the arms of his chair.

"You must know, gentlemen," Admiral Hall continued, "that we cannot alter our plans day by day. When the movements of a great Navy, of its vast supply train, of hundreds of thousands of men and untold quantities of munitions and food for them, are under consideration, there must be some advance planning or hopeless confusion will ensue.

"To consider just a single area—the defense of the Panama Canal—we must decide in advance the initial dis-

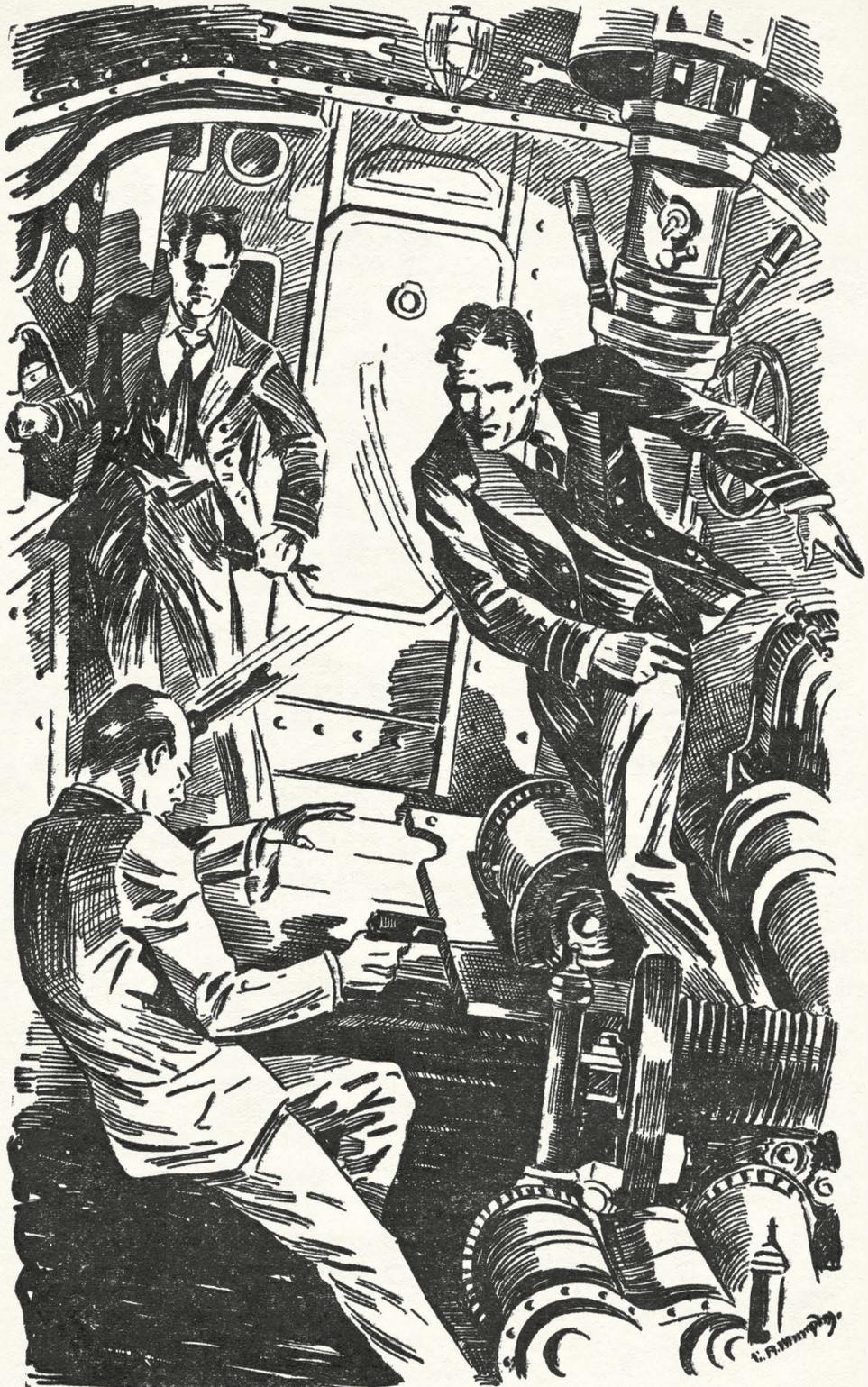
position of the forces available: when the first hint of attack comes, what will we do with our submarines and naval aircraft at Coco Solo? Where will mine fields be laid? What measures shall be taken to insure cooperation between naval and military air forces? Where and what quantities of supplies must be assembled? What precautions are essential for the interior guards on the canal, its locks and machinery? And so on ad infinitum.

"When you expand these plans to cover the whole breadth of the Pacific, with such vital areas as the Hawaiian Islands, the Alaskan Coast, Puget Sound, San Francisco Bay and the South Californian ports to be considered, as well as the initial dispositions of the Fleet in that enormous area on the outbreak of war, you may perhaps see the magnitude of the plans involved and the impossibility of continually changing them to baffle the enemy's intelligence agents. Yet, gentlemen, there is a leak. Somehow these plans are becoming known to the Asiatic League."

"How do you know this, Admiral?" Dan Fowler asked quietly.

"First," replied the admiral, "from the reports of Captain Michaels, our naval attache at their capital. Too, we are quietly developing a large air and submarine base in the Aleutian Islands. We have kept this work absolutely secret. No man who has once been there, not the most trusted of our officers, has been permitted to leave. The secret is known to no one in Washington except the President himself, the Secretary of the Navy, and certain officers of the War and Navy Departments directly concerned in the matter: all above even a breath of suspicion. Yet three times within the past few weeks, Asiatic spies have attempted to land on that supposedly isolated, deserted island.

"Again, at Panama, our naval commandant, Rear-Admiral Jourdan, attempted to track down the leaders of the Asiatic spy ring there by using a young officer who went among them as a discharged sailor, won their confidence and obtained valuable in-



Fowler threw the spanner with beautiful accuracy (Page 87)

formation. In the act of making his report, this officer was murdered in the admiral's study, by the admiral's supposedly Filipino steward. You begin to see, gentlemen?"

Fowler and the Director nodded.

NOW, we are faced with a situation which is charged with immediate menace," the admiral continued. "From our sources of information, we are convinced that the Asiatic League means to commence war against us—war without a previous declaration, war of which a sudden devastating attack will be our first warning—in about three months time.

"We are commencing work on new plans immediately. And I join with Captain Michaels in the firm belief that the enemy agents will know of this renewed activity on our part and that, realizing that we have time to recast our plans, they will delay their attack until they have learned what new plans we are making. Our material superiority is too great for them to take the risk unless they are assured of an initial advantage. Therefore, gentlemen, they must not learn what our new plans are going to be.

"Let me tell you what we are now doing," the admiral said. "First of all, we are shifting our base of operations to Newport. Newport is a small place, and it will be much easier to watch suspicious characters, new faces, there than in Washington."

"Excellent," said the Director.

"Next," Admiral Hall continued, "we are recalling Rear-Admiral Jourdan from Panama to take charge of the work at the War College. I must stay here; I must keep in close touch, day and night, with the Intelligence Division. Indeed I am sending to Newport but one officer now serving under me—Lieutenant Commander McMunn. He will act as a sort of liaison officer between my office and the War College group; the rest of the work at Newport will be done by officers qualified by experience and natural talents to carry it on. Gentlemen, that work must be protected."

"If it is protected— you think

there will be no war?" Fowler asked.

"That is my opinion."

"This is the heaviest responsibility I have ever been asked to accept, Admiral," the Director said. "We will do our best. And that brings us back to the present—to the affair of ex-Lieutenant Osborn, which you consider to have some relation to the problem. Why?"

OSBORN," said Admiral Hall, "was required to resign his commission 'for the good of the service,' as we put it. His record you have before you; behind that record lie certain facts. He was engaged to a Navy girl, a very fine young woman—the daughter, in fact, of Admiral Jourdan, of whom I have just spoken. He broke that engagement to marry a somewhat older woman, a perfect type of fiction adventuress, named Flora Delisle.

"This woman we now know to have been associated with certain espionage agents in the service of the Asiatic League. We believe that they were seeking to obtain from Osborn certain data on the performance and tactical handling of our patrol planes, then new to the service. We lost track of her after Osborn's resignation from the Navy; she left him without a word, left Hawaii, disappeared utterly.

"Now Osborn's closest friend in the Navy—who was not stationed in Hawaii when these events took place—was this same Lieutenant Commander McMunn, now my trusted assistant. McMunn saw in the papers this morning the story of Osborn's tragic end, and came to me at once with a very queer story. It seems that only last night he had recognized Osborn in a bread-line, had taken him to his home—and that while McMunn was in the bedroom informing his wife about their guest, Osborn left the apartment without saying a word. About half an hour later Osborn crashed to the pavement from the window of a building a number of blocks away. Do you wonder that I think this occurrence may have some connection with espionage matters?"

"Not at all," said the Director. "It looks very queer indeed."

"I took the liberty," Admiral Hall continued, "of bringing McMunn along with me. He is waiting outside; I thought you might wish to question him personally."

"Bring him in," the Director invited.

Fowler rose.

"Just a moment," said he. "If he's going to Newport, it'll be better that he doesn't see me now in the character of an agent of the F.B.I. Lord knows what character I may want to assume when I get there. It's better that nobody knows. I'll wait in the next room."

The Director threw a small switch underneath his desk at a glance from Fowler; the admiral was already moving toward the door, and did not notice. In the next office, Fowler sat and listened while the Director talked to McMunn.

"You know of no reason why Osborn should have left in this sudden fashion?"

"None at all."

"Could it be possible that he is connected with some espionage agency, and that his conscience belatedly drove him away from the house of his friend?"

"That is ridiculous, sir. How could he have foreseen that I would pass that corner and recognize him in the bread-line? Moreover, Jim Osborn isn't that sort."

"He was in difficulties in Hawaii not unconnected with foreign espionage activities," the Director observed.

"It was that damned woman," snapped McMunn.

"You think she was mixed up in Osborn's death?"

"I'm sure of it."

"**H**ERE'S another angle," the Director said. "Your meeting with Osborn, entirely by chance, as you say it was, was observed. Osborn goes out of your apartment without saying goodbye. Half an hour after Osborn leaves you he is either murdered or commits suicide. Why?"

"I don't know!" snarled McMunn.

"Belay that, McMunn!" commanded the admiral. "You'll answer the Director's questions. That's an order."

"Don't get excited, Mr. McMunn," the Director suggested. "You look tired, man; and I suppose you are. Responsibility such as yours will weigh on any brain. Do you get enough sleep?"

"Sleep! I sleep like a dog, but it doesn't do me any good," growled McMunn. "I always wake up tired, heavy-eyed, no energy—why, last night I slept nine solid hours: and I could lie down right now and sleep another nine, the way I feel. It's hell. Sorry if I was discourteous. Nerves. Damned feeling of eyes watching—shadows whispering questions—"

"Did Osborn seem to you to be a man on the verge of suicide?" the Director cut in.

"No. Osborn wouldn't do such—He was no quitter." "Could anyone have lured Osborn out of the apartment?"

"I don't see how. We came in together. I told Osborn to go into the living room and pour himself a drink. When I went out to join Jim—he was gone. There was hardly time for anyone to have come to the door and lure him out, as you put it. And I'd have heard 'em if they had."

"Then Osborn left of his own free will. What happened to him afterward, between the moment you left him in your living room and the moment he crashed into a shapeless pulp at the feet of Patrolman Byrnes, we don't know; maybe shall never know. All right, Mr. McMunn. Thank you."

"A pleasure, sir. Good morning."

A door slammed. Fowler stayed where he was a moment, thinking hard. He heard the Admiral say to the Director:

"Have you any suggestions?"

"The spies will gather at Newport, of course. Fowler had better go there."

"In what capacity?"

"That's what I'm considering. It's not easy to see—"

"It's not easy to see what I'm about to," cut in the Admiral, "but the leak must be an inside leak of some sort."

How about my swearing Fowler in as an officer of the Naval Reserve, having him ordered to active duty at the War College, assigning him to this War Plans detail? He might see a lot that the men actually on the job wouldn't see. He'd have a different angle of vision from a naval officer."

"Excellent."

It was this moment that Fowler chose to reenter the Director's office.

"Anything new, sir?" he asked.

"Nothing. Except—" The Director announced the decision reached; and so it happened that a few moments later, standing very straight before Admiral Hall with his right hand held aloft, Fowler found himself repeating solemnly:

"I, Daniel Fowler, do solemnly swear that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic, that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same, that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion, and that I will well and truly discharge the duties of a lieutenant in the United States Naval Reserve Force, upon which I am about to enter, so help me God."

CHAPTER V

The Enemy Moves



NEWPORT, sir! All out for Newport!"

The stern-faced, grey-eyed young man who was on the passenger list of the Fall River boat as Lieutenant Fowler, U.S.N.R., struggled into wakefulness, blinking at the glowing dial of

his watch. Two-thirty in the morning—and the boat would be at Newport pier at two forty-five.

He swung to the floor, snapped on the light, began hastily dressing in unfamiliar Navy blue.

His orders were to go directly to the Naval Station, where quarters had been arranged for him and other

officers on special duty. Admiral Hall had informed him that the marine sergeant of the guard would be ready to show him to his quarters, and that in the morning he was to report in person to Rear-Admiral Jordan, just arrived the previous day from Panama.

He buttoned the last brass button of his double-breasted uniform coat, with its glaringly new twin gold stripes on the cuffs; he set his gold-laced cap on his head, and grinned at himself in the dim mirror.

But the grin faded at the thought of the task before him—of the terrific responsibility which was his. The last words of the Director rang in his ears:

"If you fail, Fowler—God help the United States!"

His jaw tightened. Little knots of muscle stood out beneath the bronzed skin.

The ship's whistle bellowed. They were coming alongside the pier.

"Porter, sir?" called a voice.

Fowler opened the door, pointed to his bag, and swung down the deck to the doorway which led to the main staircase, and so down past the pursuer's office to the opening where several sleepy passengers were already waiting for the gangplank. Fowler strode down the plank to the dock.

"Taxi, sir? Thames Hotel! Taxi, sir?"

Fowler was about to select the nearest cab when a young man in seaman's uniform, wearing pistol, belt and leg-gings, stepped forward and saluted.

"Lieutenant Fowler, sir?"

"Yes."

"I'm ordered to meet you and bring you to the station, sir. This your bag? This way, sir. I've a station car here."

He opened the door of a large sedan standing in the shadow at the end of the pier. Fowler got in, thankful for Navy thoughtfulness.

Lord, he was sleepy. He leaned back thankfully on the comfortable cushions and closed his eyes. The car sped through the narrow streets of the town, bumped over car tracks, swung into a paved road and left the

Newport lights behind. Fowler dozed on.

He was jarred into wakefulness when the car came to an abrupt stop.

"Must be there," he thought, trying to peer out. The lights of the car were off. There was only utter darkness—a dense, stuffy darkness. Somewhere behind, a heavy door slammed. They were in a garage, then.

HE started to get out—the door handle stuck. He twisted at it with all his strength; no result. The other was stuck, too. He was locked in—

"Hey, sailor!" he sang out. No answer. He reached forward—no one in the front seat. The front doors were locked, too. The driver had departed so swiftly, so silently that Fowler had heard nothing of his going.

A chill ran down his spine. This was no Navy garage. He had stumbled into a trap—caught neatly, landed like a fish when he had scarcely set foot in Newport.

He coughed. The air was bad. He crawled into the front seat with some idea of starting the car and crashing it through the doors, but the key was not in the lock. He fumbled for the lights, found them, switched them on. They illumined nothing but a brick wall a few feet ahead, and a pile of rubbish heaped against it.

He lifted the seat cushion, hoping to find some tool—a tire-iron perhaps—with which he could break the glass and so get out. But there was nothing there.

He was aware of an increasing fuziness in his brain. He couldn't think straight; he was getting sleepy—

Then he saw the grey fumes swirling through the beam of the headlights, and he knew that somewhere in that garage gas was seeping out to filter into the car and smother him into unconsciousness. He braced himself in the front seat, lifted his heels and crashed them against the windshield. The glass cracked but did not break.

He tried again, conscious that the

effort was a feeble one. No use. His power over his muscles was going—going—

He realized that he had collapsed on the seat. He could not lift his body. His clawing hand closed on the steering wheel; he made one more effort—his last. He raised himself a few inches, fell back. The light was fading. . . .

Far off in a bluish void filled with rushing winds, a voice was asking questions. Steady, insistent questions that hammered on the doors of Fowler's mind like the strokes of Thor, and would not be denied.

Another voice was answering—to Fowler's horror, he realized that it was his own.

"What will be the initial dispositions of Submarine Squadron Fourteen in the Puget Sound area?"

"I don't know."

"What progress has been made on the new base in the Aleutians?"

"I don't know."

"What is the operating range of the patrol planes now stationed at Panama?"

"I don't know."

SOMEHOW—and his horror deepened with the realization—Fowler understood that had he known the answer to these questions, he would have replied to them truthfully. His will was gone.

"Have the new aircraft carriers been fitted with the improved landing gear, Mark Nine?"

"I don't know."

"Bah," said the voice. "I told you so. He knows nothing. He is not like the other. He is just a reserve officer, ordered to active duty for instruction purposes. But he will be useful, none the less. He will serve our purpose for a little while."

"Queer that they should order a reserve officer to the War College at such a time," said another voice—a woman's voice. "I never heard of such a thing being done. He must have some special qualification that they need—if we could only find out what it is."

"It does not matter. Bernhard will

be equal to any situation which may confront him," said the voice. "But we had better ask. Safety is best."

Fowler concentrated all his slowly returning will power. He knew what was coming. He knew he must not answer truthfully. Could he do it? Could he fight off the hold—the unaccountable hold—which this man of the voice held over his very soul?

"Answer truly—why are you being ordered to Newport?"

Fowler was shaken by the battle of forces struggling for the mastery of his spirit—heard his voice speak:

"Special duty — communications plans—"

He had won! He had done it. He heard the voice laugh a little.

"A communications expert. That explains much. Radio wizard, I suppose. Well, Bernhard knows radio and all that sort of thing thoroughly. We're through with this man. We've wrung him dry."

"Better get rid of him, then," the woman said coldly.

"Yes. He must go. Doctor!"

A high-pitched voice answered in a tongue which Fowler did not understand. An order, a reply, recognizable from their tone, were spoken in staccato syllables; footsteps receded. The click of high heels, the firm steps of a man—only the approaching slippers remained nearby.

Slippers that were bringing death, Fowler did not doubt. And he lay there helpless, exhausted by his one effort, unable to move a muscle.

"A fine specimen," the high pitched voice said. "A pity to waste him. Why should he not contribute to the sum of human knowledge ere he dies? What do you say, my friend? Will you live a little while and aid the march of science?"

"Of course."

Ghoulis laughter sounded, horrible, repulsive. "I knew you would say that. You may suffer, before I am done with you, my fine strong fellow. A little touch here on the head—an opening to the brain—a slight alteration of the cerebrum—yes, that shall be my first experiment. I must know more—more—and I must

have living men with which to work."

FOWLER was dimly aware that the cot on which he lay was being dragged across the floor, over a threshold, into a much colder room. He heard a door close; now the cot was being pushed along again. He could even hear the panting of the doctor as he labored at it. Another threshold, another door.

"You will do well enough here," the doctor said. "Just a touch of something that will simulate death. Then you will wait till I can return to you with time to experiment a little."

Then a voice was shouting in the distance, muffled, angry. The slippers fled—a door slammed—silence—

Fowler knew that this was likely to be his one chance. He must escape, here and now, or perish. He concentrated his will again—concentrated on one simple movement, the lifting of his right hand.

With all his power he commanded the muscles of his arm to obey. He was bathed in sweat—and suddenly his right hand lay across his stomach. He had moved it. He concentrated on the right leg—to move it to the floor. This proved easier. His foot hit the floor with a thump.

Now to sit up. Another struggle of titanic proportions. But he won. He sat erect on the cot. He opened his eyes at that moment, and with sight, more of power returned.

He was sitting in a narrow room, lighted by a single window high up in the room. There was nothing in the room but the cot and himself. The walls were plastered and the plaster had broken away here and there, baring wooden lath beneath. The door was wooden. The next job was to stand up. He leaned forward, gained balance, thrust upward with both legs. He rose, only to topple sideward against the wall, on his knees.

One more try. This time he made it. He was standing, supported by one hand against the wall. He began moving toward the door.

At the same instant he heard some-

one come into the next room. Footsteps were coming his way.

He was clad only in his underwear; his feet were bare. He took three lurching strides forward, to stand flat against the wall. He peeled off his undershirt, twisted it into a sort of noose, each movement easier than the last.

The door opened. A man stepped in—a man about his own height,



Fowler

dressed in a rough sack suit and a soft hat.

He saw the empty cot, opened his mouth to call out—and the noose gripped his throat and throttled that cry a-borning. Fowler's powerful hands were twisting the cotton noose tight. The man went to his knees, clawing madly at the thing which constricted his throat. Fowler put all his returning strength into twisting tighter. The man's body swayed, writhed, his fingers tore helplessly at the noose. A dreadful straining sound came from his throat. Fowler

shoved him flat on his face and kneeled on his back twisting still tighter the deadly noose. He felt the body under him relax.

HIS victim was not dead; there was a faint heart beat. He stripped off shirt, coat, trousers, shoes, and put them on, clumsily, hastily. They fitted well enough, as did the hat. There were a few crumpled bills in one pocket, and a heavy automatic slung under the left arm in a holster.

The unconscious man was white. The gun was fully loaded. Gripping it in his right hand, Fowler felt new confidence. He was ready for anything now.

He walked into the next room—a storeroom to judge from the old trunks, broken furniture and other odds and ends it contained. It had one door, at which he listened, and heard nothing. He moved to the window—much larger than the other—and saw that he was on the second floor. Trees close about, still heavy with foliage, barred any distinct view, but he could see a macadam road and a passing car or two.

He went back to the door, opened it, peered into the room where he had been questioned. The door beyond the bed opened on a hall—it was ajar. Fowler moved to it silently, saw a descending stairway.

Below on an ancient hatrack hung a blue uniform cap of an officer of the Navy. His own, more than likely.

He could hear a murmur of voices.

Step by step, bracing himself against the rail, Fowler went down. The murmur grew louder; it was coming through an arched doorway beyond the hatrack. The double door, glass-panel, at the end of the hall was the one which he was interested in. It led to the outer air, to freedom.

Nevertheless, when he stood upon the worn carpet of the lower hall, he hesitated, looked about him. At the rear, almost beneath the staircase, was another door leading into the back of the house. This was tightly closed.

He took a cautious step or two toward the outer door. He could walk

pretty well now; but he took advantage of the support the batrack afforded. Pausing, he glanced at the cap—it didn't look as new as his own.

He took it from the hook, glanced inside it; and just managed to suppress an exclamation. Stamped on the band was the name of the owner: *McMunn*.

Fowler replaced the cap, moved closer to the archway. He could hear two voices—the deep tones of a man, the lighter voice of a woman. And if he was not mistaken, the woman now speaking was the same who had assisted in his questioning. Her voice was sweet, and husky, and yet somehow wholly heartless. "I had to come. I had to, I tell you!" She was saying.

"But you shouldn't have! I told you why, in Washington." That was *McMunn's* voice. "It's too big a risk—I won't have it."

Before the woman could make any answer there came a thump and a crash from upstairs. Fowler didn't need to be told what it was; the man he had throttled had come to, had tried to get up and had fallen headlong. He leaped for the front door, tore it open, dashed across the porch and half ran, half fell down the steps landing on all fours on a gravel driveway.

A man dashed round the corner of the house, gun in hand. Fowler rolled into the corner between the steps and the trellis. The man did not see him; he went running up the steps and entered the house.

Fowler wriggled cautiously beneath the steps, under the porch, crouched there waiting. Farther down the drive he had seen a car; given a chance, he might get to it, get away.

SOMEBODY was walking on the porch over his head. Again he heard *McMunn's* voice:

"Very well. Have it your way, then; but I'm going back to the station now. I'll call you tonight if I can." Then, as in answer to a question: "No! I can't do that. I can't, I tell you, and there's no use arguing. Goodbye."

He ran down the steps, walked swiftly to the waiting car, got in and drove away.

"Damn him! He'll spoil everything with his stupid ideas!" said the woman, as Fowler lifted himself to hear better.

"What will spoil everything?" asked another voice, one Fowler had not heard before, "Fowler's escaped. Strangled Jean and got clear away. We've got to get out of this, quick."

"Wait!" said the woman. "It must have been Fowler who ran out just now! I thought it was Jean! He can't have gone far—it wasn't two minutes ago!"

"We'll get him, then! Hi, inside there! Everybody out—search the grounds? Search the house! Everything depends on getting that fellow!"

Several men came out, spread round the house, searching, poking everywhere. Fowler was already at work on a flap window leading into the cellar. He broke the glass gently, by firm and steady pressure, as he had been taught during his training course. It gave way almost without noise, save for a tinkle of fragments on the cellar floor. Reaching through, Fowler unhooked the window, opened it, backed through and dropped softly inside. He refastened the window, then stole through the dusty darkness toward a gleam of light in the rear which he hoped would be an old style cellar door.

If there was another car out back, he'd fight his way to it. It seemed his only chance. For he knew that those who searched for him would not hesitate to shoot him down at sight.

He had picked his way half the distance across the cellar when the crack of light suddenly yawned wide into a rectangle. A dark figure came plunging through, sweeping the dusty floor with the ray of a torch. Fowler dodged behind the furnace. He'd have to shoot it out—the man was moving his way, probing every corner with the light. Now he paused, and Fowler could see that he stood directly beneath a hanging shelf, loaded with Mason jars. He took another step—

one more and his light would reach into Fowler's corner. Fowler lifted his gun.

The man never took that step. Instead, there was the unmistakable *thuck* of a hard object striking flesh and bone; the man gave a queer little sigh and flopped face downward, on the floor, the torch rolling from his hand.

Fowler rubbed his eyes. He could hardly believe that he had seen something that had glittered briefly in the reflection of the torch strike downward from that loaded shelf; and yet he had. He had; and there was the unconscious form on the floor to prove it.

Behind and above Fowler, someone opened a door. It must be, Fowler knew, the door at the head of the cellar stairs, descending from the interior of the house. Whoever had opened it was coming down. Coming stealthily, quietly—

In two strides Fowler had the torch and began flashing it about, as though searching eagerly.

He swung it toward the direction of the sound of descending steps; it illumined a pair of neatly shod feet, small feet, almost too small for a man's, yet clad in masculine shoes and shrouded by masculine trouser-bottoms. The rest of the man, above his ankles, was not yet in sight below the row of shelves which lined the stairs.

"Well," said a voice—the voice—"have you found him, stupid, blundering fool that you are?"

The English was perfect, yet spoken with a clipped precision that was hardly American in origin.

"NOT yet," Fowler answered in as close an imitation of the gruff tones of the unconscious one as he could muster. As he spoke he laid the torch on a barrel close at hand, where it still played on the stair, and began moving slowly, silently forward.

"He is not here, that is why. You have let him escape." The neat little shoes moved; they were turning, going back—

Fowler leaped forward. His out-

stretched left hand closed on a silk ankle and his body braced against the stair-edge as he heaved. The foot was jerked from the stair; the body above came crashing down, rolling to the floor at the stair's foot.

Fowler pounced on him, yanked him to his feet, jammed his pistol-muzzle into his back.

"Take it easy, now," he advised, "or I'll blow your spine in two."

The man ceased struggling, stood perfectly rigid.

"Who are you?" he asked in a whisper.

"Never mind. March toward that back door."

The little man obeyed. One step—two— Suddenly he twisted away. He ripped clear of the coat which Fowler gripped at the collar, caromed into the barrel, knocked the torch to the floor. He started up the stairs on the run, yelling at the top of his voice in shrill, staccato syllables.

Fowler—his right arm numb to the shoulder from the twist it had received—ran for the open. He went up the short flight of stone steps two at a time, saw before him a bare yard, and, a hundred feet distant, a barn, with the headlights of a car blinking from its open door.

Putting all his trust in speed, he gained the barn, the car.

Two men were coming out of the back door of the house. A pistol barked, the bullet starring the windshield. Fowler leaned out and fired twice at them. They dodged back inside.

Fowler's foot went down on the starter. A window was flung up; the ugly muzzle of a tommy gun was thrust out. The motor caught; Fowler felt a hot sear across his upper left arm—he heard a crash of glass, saw someone leaping out of the open cellar door as the car moved past. He fired at a shadow in the window, then he was out in the drive and the car was speeding up.

He had never heard so sweet a song as that of the gravel beneath the wheels. He crouched low—they'd give him another dose of bullets from the front, of course. But they didn't—he

was almost at the road when a man sprang from behind a clump of bushes into the path of the car, blazing away with a pistol. Fowler drove straight at him, reckless of bullets; the man leaped clear, just grazing the bumper. The car lurched on to the macadam surface of the highway and the speedometer needle began climbing on the dial—

"I never," thought Fowler, "had a closer shave than that. Wonder why that mug with the tommy didn't riddle me. His gun must've jammed."

He slowed up as he saw a highway intersection ahead, with a white sign. The sign read: *Newport 3 mi.* Fowler was going in the right direction.

HE sighed with relief. In just a few moments he would be at the Naval Station, reporting—

Something cold and round and hard touched the back of his neck. "Slow down," said a very low voice. A husky voice—with just a hint of feminine timbre in its obviously disguised accents.

Fowler slowed down.

"Pull over to the side. Stop." Fowler obeyed. "Get out of the car and don't turn around."

Fowler again obeyed. He was listening for the click of the tonneau door, planning just how his heel would drive back against the knee of his assailant as the latter emerged.

But as his right foot was on the running board, his left starting to the ground, a coat was flung over his head, something dark and muffling. He heard the motor of the car roar suddenly. He tore at the muffling cloth, ripped clear the grip of sleeves knotted upon his neck, flung it off just in time to see the back end of the car disappear around a curve a hundred yards down the road.

He stood there, holding the coat. He swore thoughtfully.

"I wonder why she didn't shoot?" he asked himself. "Lost her nerve, maybe; or maybe—yes, that's it! She's gone for help. Pals in Newport, I've no doubt."

He started walking swiftly along the road toward town. There was

nothing but fields on either hand. He reached the curve and heard the hum of a motor behind him. A big red truck was coming along at a fair rate of speed.

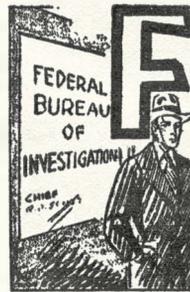
Fowler flagged it down by waving the coat.

"What's the idea—" began the burly driver, but Fowler was up and beside him.

"Government business," he said curtly. "Head for Newport."

CHAPTER VI

The Cipher



FOWLER reached the Naval Station causeway just as the setting sun was touching the hills beyond Narragansett Bay.

At the entrance to the causeway leading from the shore to the island on which the station stood was a sentry box. A marine in well scrubbed khaki stepped out, waved the taxi to a halt.

"Your pass, sir?" he asked Fowler.

"I'm Lieutenant Fowler, and I must see Admiral Jourdan at once," Fowler said crisply.

"Sorry to ask you to wait, sir," the sentry said to Fowler, "but my orders are to report by telephone to the sergeant of the guard anyone I don't know trying to enter the station after retreat. Just a moment, please."

The sentry went inside to telephone. Fowler could hear the sentry's voice:

"That's right, Sergeant. Lieutenant Fowler. Wants to see Admiral Jourdan. No, he's not in uniform. Huh? All right."

The sentry came out, gave Fowler a queer look, whispered to a corporal standing by. He swung himself to the seat beside the driver.

"Straight ahead, buddy," he ordered. The cab drew up before the War College. Fowler paid the driver, went up the steps with the corporal close behind him.

An officer met them in the doorway, said curtly:

"This way, Corporal." He strode down the corridor and opened a door like a bailiff conducting a prisoner to the judge.

Fowler entered. Facing him, at a desk strewn with papers, a grey-haired man with wrinkles about the corners of his eyes and a broad gold stripe with a narrow one above it on his sleeve, sat eyeing him sternly.

"I am Admiral Jourdan," he said. "You wish to see me?"

"Yes, sir," said Fowler. The admiral was the only person at Newport who knew Fowler's real identity. Dan glanced uneasily at the aide and the marine corporal.

"Well?" snapped the admiral.

"I'm Lieutenant Fowler, sir, Naval Reserve, reporting for temporary duty by order of the Secretary of the Navy," said Fowler.

"Let me have your orders, please," said the admiral.

Fowler flushed. Not until that moment did he realize the difficulty he was in.

"I'm sorry to say, sir," he replied, "that I've lost them; or, rather, that they were taken from me."

He did not dare suggest, in the presence of the others, that the admiral call up the Director of the F. B. I. Had there been some slip in Washington?

Hadn't they sent Jourdan word about Fowler?

"That is unfortunate," said the admiral icily. "But of course you have some other means of proving your identity?"

"Not immediately, sir," Fowler replied. Why didn't Jourdan send the officer and the corporal out of the office? He must know Fowler wanted a private word with him, and he must know that Fowler couldn't make such a request.

"You haven't?" the admiral exclaimed in astonishment. "You seem to be rather naïve at your trade. You should have arrived yesterday. Unfortunately for you, Lieutenant Fowler reported at this station for duty early this morning."

IN a single flash Fowler understood—understood the dimly remembered references to a mysterious Bernhard, who knew all about radio and "would have no trouble"—understood what had become of the credentials and the uniform taken from him by his captors, understood the imminent peril which now menaced the new, secret war plans which were being turned out here in Newport.

He knew that he must keep to the character of a naval reserve officer. The aide, the corporal of marines must not be let in on secrets they were not meant to share.

"If you will permit me to explain, sir," he said, "I think you will understand. I arrived here this morning on the Fall River boat. I was decoyed into a car by a man in uniform who professed to be an orderly sent from this station to meet me. I dozed off in the car, and when I came to I was in a dark garage, with the car locked. A stupefying gas was let loose in the place, and I was overcome by it. I recovered this afternoon and contrived to escape and come here.

"But I could not get back my uniform and papers; the clothes I am wearing are those of a man who was guarding me and whom I overpowered. The person who presented himself as Lieutenant Fowler, wearing my uniform and carrying my papers, is an impostor, perhaps a spy."

The admiral laughed curtly. "A likely story," said he. "I received in this morning's mail, from the Navy Department, a card bearing Lieutenant Fowler's fingerprints, which I checked with him at once and found identical in every respect. I can't imagine what you hoped to gain by this incredibly childish attempt, but whatever it is, you've failed. Place him under arrest, Corporal."

"Hold your hands over your head," snapped the corporal.

Fowler obeyed. The corporal gave a grunt of satisfaction as he discovered the gun stuck in the waistband of Fowler's trousers.

"A forty-five automatic, sir," he said. He laid the gun on the admiral's

desk, continued to search. There was nothing else but a little money in the pocket. The corporal next turned his attention to the coat which Fowler carried under his arm—the coat which had belonged to the man of the voice.

"Here's somep'n," the corporal remarked. "Piece o' paper—all scribbled over—looks like code, sir."

The admiral smoothed out the paper on his desk. "Looks to me," he said, "like the notes a man makes when he's coding a message—these three lines at the bottom would be the message as finally encoded. The rest are just working notes. What is this message, and to whom was it sent?"

Fowler had an inspiration. "May I see it, Admiral?" he asked.

Before leaving Washington, Fowler had learned by heart a very simple code used by Naval Intelligence agents, comprising but few combinations, and capable of expressing only certain set messages for emergencies.

He must remember it now. Or he'd be locked up, and heaven knew what would happen before he was finally identified and released.

He bent over the desk, the corporal close at his side, glaring at him suspiciously. He picked up a pencil, pointed to a group of letters.

"This looks funny," said he. "Maybe it goes this way."

HE wrote three letter-groups of the N. I. code — groups which meant:

"Require immediate assistance—must be identified—notify at once—Hall."

The last was the name of the Chief of the Naval War Plans Division. He hoped Admiral Jourdan would understand.

"I guess I'm wrong," he muttered, standing up. "I don't know anything about that code, Admiral. Read what I set down—does it make sense to you?"

The admiral glanced at it. Evidently he did not at once connect it with the N. I. code.

"No sense at all," he growled. "Except this last word. Who's—"

He stopped suddenly. His eyes met Fowler's in a searching look. Then he

said slowly, lips almost bloodless: "I'll give you one more chance. I'm going to call up the Naval Reserve section in the Bureau of Navigation at Washington, and try to get hold of an officer personally acquainted with Lieutenant Fowler."

"Mr. Tufton, take the prisoner into the next room and wait." He was reaching for the telephone as they went out.

Five minutes dragged past. Fowler was in a fever of impatience. He forced himself to sit still.

Fifteen minutes had been ticked off on the wall clock when a buzzer whirred under the aide's desk. He got up and went to the admiral's door, opened it just a crack.

"You're to come in, please," the aide said to Fowler.

The admiral looked at Fowler again, handing him the telephone across the desk.

"There is someone on the line who can identify your voice, if you are Lieutenant Fowler," he said. "Do you wish to speak?"

Fowler grabbed the instrument.

"Hello," he said—and heard the voice of the Director of the F. B. I.

"Hello, Fowler. What's wrong?"

"Just a case of mistaken identity, Commander," said Fowler deliberately. "I'm sure glad they could get you, sir. You don't know what a relief this is."

"Ummm. You're in a mess, of course. Report to me later tonight, understand?"

"Aye, aye, sir."

"Let me speak to Admiral Jourdan."

"Aye, aye, sir." Fowler handed the phone to the admiral, who listened a minute, nodded, said: "Thanks very much," and hung up.

To Fowler's astonishment, his first words were directed to the corporal of marines.

"Do you like this station, corporal?"

"Yes, sir."

"How near are you to a sergeantcy?"

"Not very near, sir. I've always wanted to make a ship detachment, but I never could."

"Excellent ambition. Every marine

ought to have some sea service. Very commendable," said the admiral. "Mr. Tufton, am I correct in supposing that the cruiser *Syracuse* is lying in the harbor?"

"Yes, sir. She's sailing at midnight, though. She's just been assigned as flagship of the Special Service Squadron in the Caribbean."

"How would you like to go in her—as sergeant, Corporal?"

"That'd be swell, Admiral! But—"

"No buts. You'll go—and when she gets to Panama you'll find orders there promoting you to the rank of sergeant. But on one condition; remember that to no one, ever, at any time, are you to mention one single thing that has happened, one single word that has been spoken in this room tonight."

"You can depend on me, Admiral."

"All right. Good luck to you. Mr. Tufton, go with the corporal to the marine barracks while he gets his kit; then take him off to the *Syracuse* in my barge. And keep your own mouth shut about all this, Tufton."

"Aye, aye, sir." The aide and the corporal went out.

THE admiral extended a hand to Fowler.

"Lieutenant Fowler," he said, "I'm sure you understand my situation. Sorry to have suspected you, even for a moment. Now about this impostor: I'm not wasting time, as you may suppose, because I've already ascertained that he's left the station. Drove out in his own car, a green roadster, just before you came in."

"I saw him then!" Fowler exclaimed. "Just before my taxi reached the causeway. Do you suppose he'll come back?"

"I don't know. He's supposed to be quartered here."

"Did he talk to Lieutenant Commander McMunn at all today?"

"Yes. In fact, I assigned him to McMunn as an assistant." The admiral flushed. "Damn it, man, I feel like a fool—but he had his orders, and those cursed fingerprints—"

"Clever work, that," Fowler said. "Of course it was absurdly easy. They

only had to get an official envelope and an official fingerprint blank which any clerk could have been bribed to swipe. With me out of the way they doubtless hoped to keep their man here for days, if not weeks. But they apparently had no idea that I was anything but just a naval reserve officer. Did you say anything to the impersonator which would tip him off to my F. B. I. connection?"

Again the admiral flushed.

"I'm not sure," he admitted frankly.

"I had only one talk with him. I recall now that I did think he was stalling a bit, but people were coming in and out of the office and I was being continually interrupted by the telephone, so I supposed he was just being properly cautious. As I remember our conversation, I did ask him whether his superiors had given him any special instructions, but I'm certain I didn't mention the F. B. I. by name."

"He'd naturally think it odd that he should be supposed to have superiors other than the Navy Department, who are also your superiors," Fowler mused. "Well—we'll know whether he was suspicious when we see whether or not he returns. Now about McMunn."

As briefly as he could, Fowler related the whole of his experiences since he had left the Fall River line pier. The admiral turned white when he told of McMunn's presence in the spy house.

"McMunn! I can't believe it," he half whispered. "Whom can we trust now?"

When Fowler finished, the admiral sat silent for a moment.

"Why are we sitting here?" he snapped suddenly. "There's work to be done. This spy nest to be raided; McMunn to be questioned and placed in close arrest—" He reached for the telephone.

"One moment, sir," Fowler advised. "As for the raid—I've taken care of that. The Navy doesn't need to be in that picture. I got in touch with certain of my colleagues by telephone just before I came out here. They'll raid the place, but they won't

find anything. Our opponents are a little too slick for that. They were all out of there, with every ounce of incriminating evidence, within ten minutes after my departure. On that I'd bet a good deal. As for McMunn—I think he's a fish we'd better play on a long line. How far has your work crystallized here, Admiral? How much can McMunn, at this moment, divulge that will be of value to a potential enemy of this country?"

"Very little," the admiral admitted. "We're still in the preliminary stages—conference and discussion. No vital decisions will be taken for about a week."

THEN we have a week to watch McMunn, to let him think he's unsuspected. The spy ring will certainly get word to him of my escape—or perhaps they won't. Perhaps he knew nothing of that angle. They may be going on the principle of letting not their right hand know what their left hand is doing. In any case he can only brazen it out; flight would be a confession of guilt. Let's watch him, and wait, and hope that he'll lead us to his principals."

The admiral nodded.

"Dissimulation is not my forte," he grumbled. "It'll be hard for me to have daily contact with a damned traitor and not show what I think of him. But I'll try it. You're right, of course. We must get the higher-ups, to be safe. If we destroy the tool now they'll only try something else that we may not detect in time."

"Exactly," said Fowler. "Now as to my own status. This false Fowler has of course been introduced to the other officers on duty here. A new Fowler could hardly appear without exciting remark. I suggest that you have a new set of orders issued at Washington for Lieutenant Daniels, let us say; and I'll report in that character. If the false Fowler comes back we can keep tab on him, too. If he doesn't, you can give out that he has been transferred to some other duty. Of course, if we've developed nothing by the time the plans get to the point where decisions are to be

made we'll have to arrest both McMunn and the phony Fowler. But I'm hoping that by that time we'll know a lot more about who is pulling the strings."

"You're a resourceful devil," the admiral said. "They made no mistake in Washington when they asked for your services."

"I had miserable luck in one respect," he said. "However they doped me, they certainly did a good job. I can't identify positively a single person in the whole mob except the fellow who came to rub me out. I couldn't see the head man, or the doctor, or the woman when they were gathered around me; afterward, in the cellar, circumstances prevented me getting a good look at anyone; the same when I was getting out with the car; and on the road the woman tricked me so neatly that I didn't see her face. As for McMunn, I can swear to him all right—by his cap, and his voice. Also, I saw him when he ran for the car; when I meet him here I'll be able to identify him. The dope they used puzzles me; what sort of stuff can it be which can be used to question a man in that fashion and make him answer with the truth, against his will?"

"I don't have the smallest idea," the admiral muttered. "Damned dangerous, though. Suppose they caught me? Or Hall?"

Fowler slammed his open hand on the table.

"There's our answer, Admiral! That's how they do it!" he cried. "They get hold of people who know things—they use this dope—they ask questions—and afterward the man either doesn't remember or is afraid to say anything for fear he'll be accused of treason!"

"You've hit it, Fowler!" agreed the admiral.

"Also—they've engaged the services of American gangsters as strong-arm men. Of that I'm convinced. Have you got the gun I brought in? Thanks—I hope I haven't smudged all the prints. I'll examine that presently. Our other clue is the cipher note found in the head man's pocket. Let's

examine that," suggested Fowler.

The admiral produced it from a drawer in his desk.

"Four-letter groups," said Fowler. "Maybe with these work notes we can get an idea of how they do it. Want to let me work on it with your best cipher officer?"

"Certainly. Commander Yewell is your man. I'll send for him."

"I'm beginning to feel hopeful, Admiral," Fowler said. "For the first time we've something definite to go on. We'll win through yet!"

CHAPTER VII

Message of Death



"T'S a mess," growled Fowler, leaning wearily back in his chair. "I thought I knew something about ciphers, too."

"So did I," muttered lean Commander Yewell.

Both men were in their shirt sleeves, laboring under the

low-swinging glare of a single lamp over a table strewn with sheets of yellow paper covered with endless rows of letters, squares and diagrams.

"It just doesn't make sense," Fowler complained. "A book-cipher—one in which the symbols refer to pages and lines in a book and so indicate certain words—is too dangerous, because you have to have the book and there is always the chance of being caught with the book in your possession and then your whole communication system is shot."

"It could be a common reference book available in public libraries."

"Something to that—but it's too limited. What books are available everywhere, and at all sorts of hours? Telephone books!"

"But how could you use a telephone book for a code? It has only names and numbers."

"Yes, that's true. Well, look here: these dashes between the groups—sometimes one, sometimes two. Those groups are being divided into two

classes. One is translated one way, one another. Two kinds of words—odd and even—high and low—up and down—*up and down!* Listen, Commander!"

Fowler leaped to his feet, gripped the other's shoulder. "Don't think I've gone crazy—but there's just a chance I've hit it. You've seen this new series of crossword puzzle books that so many folks are crazy about? The ones in the red covers? New one out every week. They're on sale at every newsstand, every drug store, every railroad train, and a man could sit in a crowded street car, or a restaurant, or anywhere working over one with a pencil and no one would give him a second glance.

"Let's see—I think there are 24 puzzles in each one. Say the initial letter is the number of the puzzle, taking the letters in their alphabetical system—A for 1, B for 2, and so forth. That fits! Then the next letter would indicate the number of the word; but how to indicate numbers about 26? Some of those puzzles run up to 125 or 150 words each way."

"That sounds like an interesting theory," said the commander, in his cold precise voice. "Let me see—how would I work that if I were using such a method? I suppose you're thinking that the single or double dash denotes horizontal or vertical, as the case may be."

"Precisely. Up and down; that was what gave me the idea."

"Yes. Well, take this first group, AJZZ. That would indicate the first puzzle, tenth word, and the twenty-sixth puzzle, twenty-sixth word. But that's impossible if each group represents two words, because there is no twenty-sixth puzzle in the books you're talking about."

Fowler was writing down letters on a piece of paper.

Like this—

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J											
K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z					
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0											

HE pored over the cryptic message, hammered the table with an eager fist.

He snatched a magnifying glass, examined the original message very carefully.

"Got it!" he snapped. "Look at these little figures above each group! We noticed them before, but they ran in sequence—1, 2, 3, 4—and we thought we had just been counting his groups to check the message as he finally wrote it.

"Now I see another reason. In group one, you start with A for 1 in your work, indicating symbols. In group two, you start somewhere else—maybe B, maybe J and work backward, but keeping in the same list of ten letters. Let's get one of those books; any crossword puzzle fan in this outfit?"

"Yes—Chief Gunner Olsen, down on the station ship. He has these red puzzle books about all the time. I'll get the latest—I imagine they'd use the current one, and take a chance of finding words to convey their meaning somewhere in it. Be right back. His quarters aren't very far away."

Fowler glanced at his watch. It was four A.M.

Nothing more to be done till Yewell got back with the book—he couldn't, suddenly, look at those letter-groups any longer. His head dropped forward on his crossed arms; he was instantly asleep. He woke, strangling in smoke, with flame rolling red before his eyes. He was on the floor, where he had fallen from that rickety chair.

He sat up. The top of the table was all ablaze; the room was full of smoke. Coughing heavily, he staggered to his feet, grabbed his coat from a nearby chair and began beating at the flame. Someone came running along the hall—Yewell's voice called through the smoke:

"Lieutenant Daniels! Are you all right?"

"All right," answered Fowler in a strangling voice. "Help me put out this damned fire."

Together, with their coats, they beat the flame down, beat out the last glowing bit of paper ash. Yewell flung open a window, the smoke began to clear out of the room.

"What the hell happened?" Yewell demanded.

"I fell asleep with my head on the table," Fowler answered. "Next thing I knew I woke up on the floor—fallen out of my chair, I had—and saw the fire."

"My damned cigarette," moaned Yewell. "I must have left one lighted on the edge of the tray, and it burned to the point where it overbalanced and rolled on to the table among the papers."

"Nonsense," snapped Fowler. "A cigarette wouldn't start a thing like this. How long were you gone?"

"About ten or twelve minutes; not more."

The smoke was clearing fast. Fowler could see the mess of blackened paper and charred wood that was the tabletop.

"It looks to me," he said, "as though our evening's work has been pretty well wiped out."

Yewell cut loose a seagoing oath.

"Damned convenient moment for—somebody, if your guess about this book"—he tapped the crossword puzzle book in his hand—"was right."

"I was thinking that," said Fowler, looking at the table. "Commander, weren't you using paper matches all evening?"

"Sure. Always do."

"Got any wooden matches on you?"

"No—never carry 'em."

"Neither have I," said Fowler. "But look at this."

HE bent over the table, pointed. Close to its edge a charred match head with about a quarter of an inch of black ash adhering to it; the remains of the match stick.

"That's wood ash," said Fowler. "Square, not flat. Commander, somebody came into this room and set those papers afire while you were out!"

"Impossible!" gasped Yewell. "And yet—what else—Someone wanted to destroy our work—perhaps kill you!"

"Not with a little paper fire in a fireproof building. I was sleeping with my face on a pile of papers. They hoped, I think," said Fowler, "to

blind me. And they'd have succeeded, too, if that chair hadn't given way under me. As I lifted my face and opened my eyes the flames would have shot up right into them. Fortunately—the chair broke and I fell to the floor with nothing worse than singed eyelashes.

"What I'm wondering is, how they knew what was going on, and how their arson expert got up here. There's no use going off half cocked. Let's figure it out. Anybody quartered in this building?"

"Yes; I am, and seven other officers." Yewell named them. The last was Lieutenant Commander McMunn.

"Could anyone else enter the building at night?"

"I don't think so. There's a marine orderly on duty in the main vestibule, and two sentry posts, front and rear, outside. There are two other doors, but both are supposed to be locked at retreat, and the keys delivered to the commander of the guard. I was challenged just now, both going out and returning; the sentries are alert and on the job. The windows on the lower floor have steel grilles."

"Is there anyone else now supposed to be in the building besides the seven officers, yourself, me, and the orderly?"

"No."

"Then who set that fire?"

"Damn it, man, how do I know?" Yewell went to a telephone on the wall, pressed a button.

"Orderly, this is Commander Yewell. Has anyone come into the building tonight except the officers quartered here? Very well. Keep a sharp lookout. If you see anything suspicious, anything at all, act quickly."

Yewell turned away from the phone.

"He says all the officers were signed in by half-past ten, and nobody, except myself, has gone out or come in since he came on duty at midnight. The corporal of the guard has just relieved the sentries; that means that during the last fifteen or twenty minutes the guard relief has been marching around in the vicinity. It looks as though this fire was an inside job."



Fowler squeezed the noose tight (Page 33)

Yewell passed a bony hand across his high narrow forehead. "This is one of those things that can't happen," he added. "It can't, and yet it has—and we have to deal with it."

"Funny," mused Fowler, "that a fire in this room has occasioned no alarm as yet. Where are these officers quartered? On this floor?"

"No. The one below—the second floor. Nobody up here—all offices and drafting rooms."

"Well—" Fowler hesitated, thinking. His eyes roved round the room.

HE saw the scattered paper ash, blackening floor and walls; he saw charred pencils, erasers, a half-consumed pad of scratch paper; he saw, on the linoleum-covered floor, a mark—a dusty print—and then, as he lifted his head to speak to Yewell, he saw something move in the crack of the door.

"Well," he remarked easily, "I suppose we'd better see what we can piece together out of this mess."

He moved toward the table; now the door cut him off from observation through the crack. His hand darted to the gun in his hip pocket; then leaped at the door, flung it wide—and was just in time to see a shadowy figure turn the head of the stairs at the end of the corridor and go racing down. The fugitive was a woman.

Yewell was at his elbow. "What's up?"

"Down," snapped Fowler. "Come on."

He was running as he spoke. Down the stair he raced, saw the second floor corridor bare, thought he heard something below, dashed down to the first floor. Here he found himself in a passage which opened into the main entrance hall; a brighter light was burning there, and the burly form of the veteran marine orderly, Mike Peterson, was coming toward him.

"See anybody come down these stairs, Orderly?"

"No, sir."

"Has there been a woman in the building since you came on duty?"

"No, Lieutenant. I've seen no woman about here tonight."

Fowler pointed to the door near the stair's foot.

"Where does that lead?"

"The admiral's private study, sir. It's locked at night."

"Try it. Here, give me that flashlight. Give Commander Yewell your gun. Stand by, Yewell— Now, orderly, try the door."

The orderly turned the knob; the door swung open on stygian blackness.

"Light?" whispered Fowler. There was a click; a ceiling fixture illuminated the room. From a leather couch behind the admiral's desk a slender girlish figure started up, wide-eyed and blinking in the sudden glow.

"What's the matter?" asked a husky voice.

"Nancy!" exclaimed Yewell. "What are you doing here?"

The girl swung her feet—clad in tennis shoes—to the floor. She was fully dressed in a navy-blue sports outfit, trimmed in lighter blue; her hair was rumpled, and she wore no hat.

"I—I must have fallen asleep," she said. "I came in here to wait for Daddy this evening. He didn't know I was here. I lay down. I must have dropped off."

Her eyes strayed to Fowler; one eyebrow lifted a little.

"What," she wanted to know, "have you been doing to yourself, Commander Yewell? You're all black—you and your friend."

"This is Lieutenant Daniels," Yewell presented. "Miss Nancy Jourdan, Admiral Jourdan's daughter."

"Delighted, Miss Jourdan."

"You don't look delighted," she said.

"You weren't by any chance up on the third floor just now, were you, Miss Jourdan?"

"No, indeed. I've been right here, asleep. But what have you been up to, you two?"

"Working on a cipher," said Yewell. "It was burned. Fortunately, I remember every symbol of it. Now I'd better see you home, Nancy."

"All right. 'Night, Mr. Daniels. 'Night, Mike."

COOOL as a cucumber, that girl. Something hard about her, underneath her light banter. Hadn't she been affianced, in Hawaii, to the dead Osborn? Hadn't she been in Washington when Osborn was murdered? And now—here she was in the Naval War College tonight, when valuable papers had been burned and an attempt made to maim Fowler—

Fowler had plenty to think about as he plodded back up the dark stairway.

But there was one thought which amused him. Yewell, the trained cipher expert, had said he remembered every symbol of that code message. He'd be surprised to find that Fowler remembered it too. His memory for such things was, indeed, almost photographic.

The crossword puzzle book lay on the burned table where Yewell had left it. Or—was it quite in the same position?

He carefully closed the door, sat down at a small desk in the corner of the room, switched on a desk lamp, took paper and pencil from a drawer and began setting down the letter-groups of the message from memory. When he had done he checked them over. They were right, he was sure.

He looked at the first AJZZ.

A—Puzzle One. J—Word ten. Disregard ZZ. Dash—either horizontal or vertical.

The tenth vertical word in the first puzzle was *amoeba*. Not a very likely start. The tenth horizontal was—Fowler felt his blood quicken in his veins—*must*.

The second group—XBDH=2

Puzzle twenty-four. Word 248? No, there were not that many words in the puzzle. Then did B in the second group stand for 1? In that case D would probably stand for 3, and H for 7, taking the letters in their regular order. And the double dash would mean vertical, if the single one meant horizontal.

Word 37, vertical, was *obtain*. *Must obtain*—that made sense.

"Got it," chuckled Fowler, overjoyed.

He began leafing through the puzzle book furiously, setting down the words as he worked them out.

Hello, here were two letter groups the same; he'd noticed that before.

MUST OBTAIN IMPREGNABLE
NEW NEW—

The next word was *harbor*.

Was he running off the track? Did the method of locating words change every so often. *New New Harbor* didn't sound very good.

He resolved to go right through the whole message, using this method, and puzzle out the result afterward. Word after word he set down, grimly refusing to think about the sense. When he had finished he read the complete message as he'd translated it:

MUST OBTAIN IMPREGNABLE
NEW NEW HARBOR OPERATION US
VIGILANCE WAXES CONDITION
RENDER RENDER MACAW MONEY
NEARLY USELESS REPORT QUICK
STATUS NEGOTIATE COUNT DARK
HOME IMPERIOUS PLANT UNUSED
AGENT HERE OWNING SOCIAL
ECLAT FAILING ALL LOST

"A mess," Fowler pronounced it mentally. "Some of it sounds like sense, some of it is just nonsense. *Macaw money*, for the love of Mike! *Count dark home imperious*—there's something screwy. I haven't *quite* got the answer. Only part of the answer."

HE studied the words. He tried to put himself in the place of the man making up the message—have to use, as he'd already figured, the words that were in the puzzle book. Fowler started at the beginning. *Must obtain new read all right. New what? New new harbor*—there was the first ambiguity. Those words had been used in place of others, for lack of more precise ones—what other words for *harbor* in the English language? Bay, inlet, haven, port—Port!

MUST OBTAIN IMPREGNABLE
NEW NEWPORT BASE OF OPERA-
TIONS.

There he had his first sentence com-

plete. He wrote it down, set a period after it. *Us*, the next word, obviously belonged to the following sentence, which began, *Us vigilance waxes*.

That sounded silly.

"U. S. vigilance increases!" wrote Fowler swiftly, chuckling again. He went on, struck another snag: *Report quick status negotiate count dark home*.

Count Dark Home? Count Black Home? Count Black House? Count Dark House? Getting nowhere. Fowler scratched his head with the point of his pencil.

Wait—he was using English words. And "Count" was not a title of the English peerage. They called 'em Earls. Of course it might be a substitute word. But let's see—try French. Count *Maison Sombre*. Count *Maison Noire*. That didn't sound very promising. Try German. Count *Schwarzhaus*. Count *Schwarzheim* — Whoa!

What was it he'd seen recently about a Count Schwarzheim? An exiled Austrian nobleman—something about his being the current social lion in Bar Harbor that summer— For this to be mere coincidence would be too much.

REPORT QUICK STATUS (of your) NEGOTIATIONS (with) COUNT SCHWARZHEIM.

Now for the next sentence.

(It is) IMPERATIVE (that we should) PLANT (hitherto) UNUSED AGENT HERE POSSESSING SOCIAL ENTREE. FAILING (this) ALL (is) LOST.

He turned back to the puzzling words *macaw money*. *Conditions render macaw money nearly useless*. What kind of money would *macaw money* be? What kind of money, other than ordinary money, would Asiatic spies attempt to use in the United States?

Taken in connection with the rest of the message—which was all about needing a new agent—it didn't sound sensible, this crack about money. Former methods were "nearly useless" under new "conditions," with "U. S. vigilance increasing." Then

macaw money referred to an old method now failing them—an old method—an old agent! *Mac(aw) mon(ey)*. McMunn.

Fowler wrote out a finished draft of the message, nodding with grim satisfaction:

MUST OBTAIN IMPREGNABLE NEW NEWPORT BASE OF OPERATIONS. AMERICAN VIGILANCE INCREASES. CONDITIONS RENDER McMUNN NEARLY USELESS. REPORT QUICK STATUS OF YOUR NEGOTIATIONS WITH COUNT SCHWARZHEIM. IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT WE SHOULD PLANT HITHERTO UNUSED AGENT HERE POSSESSING SOCIAL ENTREE. FAILING THIS ALL IS LOST.

That meant they'd go through with the scheme. Even though they must know that Fowler had the code message— Why! Of course. It all checked. They knew he had it; they knew he was working on it; they'd tried to burn his papers and blind him. Such an effort meant that the scheme was indeed imperative; since they'd go to such lengths to prevent the Naval Intelligence from solving that cipher.

They had no other recourse; this Count Schwarzheim was their last hope. Or at least their best hope.

It had been a hard grind. He rose from his chair, stretching—and the first rays of the rising sun gleamed in his eyes. He glanced at his watch. He'd been working over an hour here, and Yewell hadn't returned.

HE grabbed the phone, called the orderly.

"Lieutenant Daniels speaking. Have you seen Commander Yewell since he left with Miss Jourdan?"

"Why, yes, sir. Isn't he up there with you?"

"No! When did he return?"

"Just a few minutes after he took Miss Nancy home, sir. He went right up."

Fowler swept all his work sheets into a single pile, put his final draft of the translated message on top, carried them to a steel filing cabinet, put them inside, along with the puzzle book, and locked the cabinet, of

which he and Yewell alone knew the combination.

Then, gun in hand, he stepped into the corridor. Light was creeping through the windows at either end. No one was in sight. Fowler went to the head of the staircase, looked down. Something—a dark, indistinguishable shadow—lay there near the foot of the steps. Fowler ran down, bent over the stiffening body of Commander Yewell, U.S.N.—dead in the line of duty, with a tiny pearl-handled stiletto driven into the base of his brain just under the edge of the skull.

CHAPTER VIII

Two Girls in Distress



BUT why—why?” snarled Admiral Jourdan, pacing back and forth in slippered feet across his bedroom where Fowler had roused him. “Why kill Yewell, and not you?”

“I know why,” Fowler answered grimly. “Because Yewell talked too much. I’ll tell you the very words which were his death warrant. Speaking of the code-message, he said: ‘It was burned. Fortunately, I remember every symbol of it.’ And for that, he died.”

The admiral turned haggard eyes on Fowler.

“Who was present when he spoke those words?” he asked.

“I was present, sir; and the marine orderly, Peterson; and your daughter.”

“Then—the murderer was either Peterson or—or—”

“Let’s not jump at conclusions, Admiral,” Fowler suggested. “Suppose McMunn to be the criminal. He’s quartered in the building. Suppose he set fire to those papers, and hurried back to his room. Perhaps he stood with the door open a crack, listening for any alarm. Suppose, for some reason, your daughter went

upstairs; perhaps she caught a whiff of smoke, went to investigate. When I jumped out at her, she fled in terror, back to your study, where she pretended to have been asleep all the time, because she was frightened. McMunn, watching, saw Yewell and myself chase her downstairs. He followed, sneaking down the steps close enough to the open door of the study to hear what was said inside. Then he lay in wait for Yewell and murdered him, thus, as he thought, wiping out the last clew to the contents of the message. He didn’t credit me with an equally good memory, because I’d said nothing.”

“I’ve known McMunn for years. I can’t believe that he’d do such a thing!” groaned the Admiral.

“It’s just a hypothesis, Admiral,” Fowler pointed out. “Murder on a Government reservation is a proper subject for investigation by the F.B.I., so no suspicion will be excited by the fact that two of my assistants are now making the customary inquiries and examining the scene of the murder. They’ll question me just as they would any other witness. Will you come along to the War College and see how they’re getting on?”

“Certainly.” The Admiral was getting into his clothes as he spoke. “And you’ll want to wash up. My bathroom’s there; and I’ve a clean shirt that’ll fit you, I think. I’ll send for Tufton to bring over a uniform coat and cap; he’s about your size.”

Special Agent Larry Kendal and Special Agent Klein were waiting in the Admiral’s office when Jourdan and Fowler entered.

“We’ve got a preliminary report, Admiral,” said Kendal. “The murder weapon is here.” He pointed to a knife on the desk—a mere silver steel, with a pearl handle. “There were no fingerprints, which means that the murderer wore gloves, or used a handkerchief. Death was instantaneous. The murderer apparently lay in wait on the stairway itself, and reached over the rail to stab Commander Yewell as he was about to

make the turn to ascend. He left no other trace that we could find, except this."

He took out from an envelope a tiny scrap of dark red.

"It was on the floor, close to the body. We will have it analyzed, but it looks to me as though it were a bit of dried collodion from a woman's polished fingernail."

The admiral's lips went pale.

"We have examined the side doors; they were both locked, as they should be. Neither lock shows any evidence of having been tampered with. Nor do the window grilles. The sentries saw nothing unusual during the night. We conclude that the murder was committed by someone inside the building. Lieutenant Daniels, will you describe how you found the body?"

FOWLER related the facts briefly as he could.

"Very well," nodded Kendal. "Now the persons inside the building according to this list were Lieutenant Daniels, Private Peterson of the Marine Corps, and the following officers quartered there: Captain Faxon, Captain Trevor, Commander Nylund, Commander Lehr, Commander Uhlig, Lieutenant Commander McMunn, all of the Navy, and Colonel Esterling, Marine Corps. At the suggestion of Lieutenant Daniels, I have an agent at the door, together with Private Peterson and the marine officer of the day. Lieutenant Daniels ordered in your name, Admiral, that they detain any person seeking to leave the building except those named in the list. It is possible, you see, that the murderer got in yesterday before retreat and hid himself, and will attempt to leave in the ordinary manner as soon as things begin to move with normal daylight activity."

"A very wise precaution, Mr. Daniels," said the admiral in a low voice.

"Here," proceeded Larry Kendal, "I have a plan of the building, showing the second floor. Might I suggest that you call in the officers one by one and question them?"

"They are all waiting in the ante-room, sir," put in Lieutenant Tufton.

"Very good, Tufton. Send in Captain Faxon—he's the senior."

One by one the officers came in, saluted the admiral, were asked as to their knowledge of anything wrong during the night, any unusual sounds, whether they had left their rooms, and so on.

Faxon and Uhlig had smelled smoke, but had thought nothing of it. Nylund had heard someone running down the stairs. Trevor had slept right through the night, undisturbed. So had Esterling. None of these had been out of their rooms after midnight.

Commander Lehr came in, a slow moving, rather corpulent officer, with the eyes of a dreamer and the forehead of a professor of mathematics; which indeed he had been at the Naval Academy.

"No, sir," he said in response to the admiral's question. "I heard nothing unusual last night. I went to bed about four bells and slept unusually well."

"Nothing whatever out of the ordinary to report?"

"Not a thing, sir."

"Very well, Commander. That's all," the admiral said. "Mr. Tufton, send in Lieutenant Commander McMunn."

"Aye, aye, sir."

Tufton opened the door to the ante-room; Lehr went out, and the tall, good-looking, dark-haired McMunn entered. He looked haggard; his eyes were bloodshot, his shoulders drooped a little. He moved like a man still half asleep, or half drugged.

"Mr. McMunn," said the admiral in a grating tone, "did you leave your room during the night?"

"No, sir."

"Did you hear or notice anything unusual?"

"No, sir."

The admiral leaned a little forward; his eyes were hard as bits of grey flint.

"You were aware, I presume, Mr. McMunn, that Commander Yewell was found stabbed to death in the

second floor corridor at daybreak this morning?"

"Yes, sir," McMunn said—in almost a whisper.

"And you are prepared to say upon your honor that there was no unusual circumstance which came to your knowledge last night?"

McMunn stood silent.

"Answer my question, Mr. McMunn!" snarled the admiral.

"I—cannot answer it, sir," muttered the wretched McMunn.

"Mr. Tufton!" The admiral's tone was like a crash of swords. "Ask the officer of the guard to step in here, please!"

"MIGHT I ask one question first, Admiral?" cut in Fowler.

"Be quick, then!" The admiral's hands clasped and unclasped.

"Mr. McMunn," said Fowler, "did you at any time during the night see any person in the building other than myself, the orderly, and the officers quartered here?"

"I do not—I do not know what authority you have to—to question me, Lieutenant," McMunn stammered.

"Answer him!" rasped the admiral.

"I decline respectfully to do so, sir."

"Mr. Tufton!"

The aide saluted, started for the door. But before he reached it, it was opened, a marine lieutenant with his heavy ivory-hilted sword buckled at his side stood there—the officer of the day.

"Sir," he reported, "you ordered through Lieutenant Daniels that I should detain, and report to you immediately, any person attempting to leave the building other than the officers quartered here. In pursuance of that order, I have detained this lady."

He stepped aside, bowed jerkily.

A very handsome young woman, dark-haired, bright-eyed, beautifully dressed in a brownish tailored suit and smart silver fox neckpiece, stepped forward, nodding cheerfully to the admiral.

"Margaret!" whispered McMunn,

hoarsely. "Why are you here?"

"Hello, Micky!" said the girl in a husky voice curiously like that of Nancy Jourdan. "Good morning, everybody. Why are you all so gloomy?"

"This is my wife—Admiral Jourdan," said McMunn.

"Good morning, Mrs. McMunn," said Admiral Jourdan. "I understand you were just leaving the building?"

"Why, yes, I was! I came over from town early, to have breakfast with Micky in the mess. I didn't see him about, so I thought I'd go down to the mess and wait for him. But as I was going out, this marine officer—I haven't met him before—stopped me."

"I see," said the admiral. "What time did you arrive here, Mrs. McMunn?"

"Never mind, Margaret," cut in McMunn sharply. "It's no good. The door's been guarded ever since daybreak. Admiral, the truth is, my wife spent the night in my quarters. She's trying to shield me, but I don't want her to tell any untruths for my sake. I smuggled her in here yesterday evening. That is why I couldn't say truthfully, sir, that I'd seen and heard nothing whatever out of the ordinary routine last night."

"You realize the seriousness of your act, Mr. McMunn?"

"I know, sir," McMunn said miserably.

"Very well. I will take up the question of appropriate disciplinary action later. Mrs. McMunn, did you leave your husband's room at all last night?"

"No, I didn't, Admiral. I was too afraid someone would see me. And—Micky isn't telling the truth when he says he smuggled me in here, either," she added. "It was all my fault. I found out which his room was, and I sneaked in myself."

"Your husband, Mrs. McMunn, is a naval officer," the admiral said. "The sooner you learn that he must obey orders, and that you have no right to involve him in difficulties by such actions as yours of last night, the better it will be for both of you."

"I'm awfully sorry, Admiral; really I am."

"Very well, Mrs. McMunn. Good morning."

"Better go over to the mess and get yourself some breakfast, dear," McMunn put in. "I may not be able to join you right away."

"All right, Micky. I hope—I hope you won't be too hard on him, Admiral. It really was my fault." The girl turned to go.

FOWLER rose to his feet.

"I'm hungry myself," said he. "Admiral, do you need me just at the moment?"

"No, go get some breakfast, Mr. Daniels." Daniels caught up with Mrs. McMunn in the vestibule. She was pale now, as though she had come through some terrible, nerve-racking ordeal.

"If you're going to the mess for breakfast, Mrs. McMunn, do you mind if I stroll along with you? Daniels is my name."

"Why—no, not at all," she said. "What are they going to do to Micky?"

"Nothing very much," Fowler reassured her. "Probably confine him in the station for a few days."

"But why is everyone so upset? They acted as though he'd done something dreadful!"

Either, thought Fowler, she knows nothing of the murder, or she's a wonderful actress.

"I wouldn't know about all that, Mrs. McMunn," he said. "I'm just a reserve officer, here for training. They were saying something in there about an officer having been injured. Nothing serious, perhaps."

Mrs. McMunn flicked one sidelong glance at Fowler—a glance so charged with malice that he all but winced.

"Here's the mess," he said. They went into the little anteroom; through the wide doors they could see several officers eating, and white-jacketed mess attendants bustling about. Near the door, a plump medical officer looked up at them curiously, wiping egg from his full lips. Mrs. McMunn turned away.

"I can't eat," she whispered to Fowler. "The smell of food—ugh! It revolts me. I'm sick with worry, Lieutenant Daniels. Please take me to the hotel. You can get a car, can't you?"

"Oh, of course, if you wish," Fowler replied. "Come along; there's always a taxi waiting by the end of the causeway."

"Then I won't trouble you beyond that point," the girl decided. "I'll be all right; really I will. I just have to go somewhere and lie down."

Fowler said nothing more; he escorted her over the causeway, past the sentry, and handed her into a taxi. He got in beside her.

"The Thames?" he suggested.

"Yes; but you need not come. I'm feeling better, now, and you said you were hungry."

"I am," smiled Fowler, "but eating alone isn't my idea of fun. I'm glad you're feeling better, and I'll just have a bite with you at the Thames if you don't mind."

Mrs. McMunn looked as though she minded very much, but she took refuge in a polite murmur, and nothing else was said until the cab pulled up in front of the Thames Hotel.

Fowler steered her straight for the dining room. She made no demur, though she did pause in the entrance and glance swiftly over the faces of the very few early breakfasters. They took their seats, and Mrs. McMunn stripped off her gloves.

Fowler, pretending great interest in the menu, saw what he'd taken all this trouble to see: the dark red polish on her nails.

But that polish showed no chip or fault. It was unbroken. Had she renewed it within the last hour—since daybreak? Since the murder? It did not have that liquid glitter which newly applied nail polish has. But there was a better way to tell. Fowler let the menu fall. Stooping over to pick it up, he brought his nose within an inch of her hand where it lay on the table. There was no hint of the unmistakable banana oil odor which clings to fresh nail polish for an hour or two after application.

MMARGARET MCMUNN was in the clear—on this count. But did that put Nancy Jourdan definitely on the spot? Surely not in the Yewell murder—Nancy was at home then.

And now it was Fowler who was anxious to be on his way. As for Margaret McMunn, she was in good hands. For Special Agent Rivers, F.B.I., had just walked into the breakfast room, taken a seat and ensconced himself behind the *Boston Transcript*. Good old Larry—teamwork as always. Fowler had worked with him so long, he could follow the course of Larry's thoughts—Dan's going out with this gal. Okay, he wants her covered. Breakfast? Let's check. Left the mess without eating, eh? Went to town in a taxi. Ask the sentry. Thames Hotel? Better get Rivers on the job; so that if Dan wants help, he can have it.

"I'm going back to the station after breakfast, Mrs. McMunn," said he. "I hope you'll hear from your husband soon. I know he'll let you have word of what happens."

"Oh, he will. But I can't help worrying, can I, Lieutenant Daniels? If there is anything you can do for him, I'll appreciate it so much."

Did she ring true? Not to Fowler's ears; and yet he might be wrong. He might be too suspicious, overdoing it because of the terrific responsibility which lay upon him to guess right.

He talked to her some more—trying to compare her sweet, husky voice with the voice of the woman who had spoken while he was being questioned under the Oriental doctor's vicious drug. Was it the same? Was it more like that voice than was the voice of Nancy Jourdan? He could not be sure.

If she were that woman, she knew him. She knew that he was not Daniels, but Fowler; though she did not know that he was of the F.B.I. She would know there was something odd about him. He watched her narrowly for any betrayal of this knowledge, but beyond that one malicious glance he could detect nothing suspicious.

At last the meal was finished; he

rose, walked with her to the lobby. His hand, swinging at his side, had two fingers closed, two pointing downward. Rivers would see that signal. It meant: *Don't lose track of the person I'm with.*

Yes, Margaret McMunn would be left in good hands.

Fowler parted from her in the lobby on terms of perfect apparent friendliness. She thanked him for his escort, she was so sorry to have put him to all this trouble; she was getting a wretched headache, she thought she'd lie down in her room for a while. And would he be sure to let her know if there was anything she could do, if Micky needed her—Micky was so proud. He might not want to tell her everything—

Fowler went out to the cab loitering at the curb. He said, "Naval Station," loud enough for the girl in the lobby to hear him. The cab rolled away. Fowler didn't turn around to see if he, in his turn, was being trailed. He knew a better trick. He took out a cigarette, fumbled in his pocket, leaned forward and asked the driver for a match. And as he did this, he got a squint into the driver's mirror. A black roadster tagged along behind the taxi. It had much the same lines as the green roadster, Fowler thought, in which the false Fowler had left the Naval Station in the day before. Its black paint was new and glistening.

Fowler grinned. They were being just a trifle careless.

Fowler's whole strategy was based on no arrests, no alarm, no disturbance of the course of events until the suspects, or some of them, had led him to that accursed doctor. There, as he had told the admiral, was the kingpin of the spy team. It was through the doctor's knowledge of drugs that they got their information. Just at the moment no one knew enough to make it worth while to use the doctor. They were laying big plans—a "new base of operations" ruled by an "unused agent with social entree." Here they would hope to lure unwary officers, pump them dry.

Fowler's eyes gleamed in the semi-gloom of the cab.

CHAPTER IX

Check-Up

AN FOWLER sat behind a locked door with Larry Kendal, Milton Klein, and Captain Upshaw, U. S. N., of the Office of Naval Intelligence, in Yewell's room.

Kendal was speaking:

"First — about the house where you were held prisoner, Dan. We raided it, of course; and equally of course we found not a damn thing. They'd scammed. The gun you captured had fingerprints on it which were not yours. They've been identified at the bureau; luckily they were in the public enemy file of single prints. They belong to Carl Laski, one of the old Red Hook mob from Brooklyn. Laski crashed out of the pen at Comstock, New York, last April, and hasn't been heard of since. The Red Hook mob was headed by Franko Treyadi, a Hungarian with a very bad record both here and in Europe; he's dropped from sight, too.

"The New York cops are puzzled about him; they can't understand what's become of him. He and his mob just vanished over night, you might say. Not a sign of one of 'em since May. It seems plain enough that our Asiatic friends have hired these punks as strong-arm men; probably the mob has no idea what the spies are after."

"There's a weak point for you," said Fowler.

Kendal nodded. "Right, Dan. Now about the Yewell murder. I got a look at Miss Jourdan's fingernails. Dark red polish, freshly renewed. Might mean anything. The records of all the officers in the building are clean as a hound's tooth, except Commander Lehr's. Captain Upshaw will tell you about that."

Upshaw glanced at a notebook he took from his pocket, cleared his throat uncomfortably.

"Commander Lehr was tried by general court-martial ten years ago," he said, "at the Naval Station, Cavite, Philippine Islands, by order of the Commander-in-Chief of the Asiatic Fleet. The charge was defrauding the United States in connection with certain contracts for Navy Yard material. He was acquitted.

"When the court-martial order was published, suggesting that Lehr had been treated more than leniently, and plainly hinting at his guilt, Lehr went to considerable trouble to find out who had written the order. It was Commander Yewell, gentlemen. Lehr swore that he'd get even with Yewell if it took him the rest of his life. For some time thereafter, Lehr drank heavily, was morose and sullen, inefficient in the performance of duty and a general nuisance—a man with a grievance. He associated with some pretty shady civilians in Shanghai and elsewhere. Suddenly he seemed to snap out of it. He applied for the War College course, passed it with flying colors, was assigned to the War Plans Division, did very well there. He had just been brought to this special duty here. There is no record that Yewell and Lehr ever met until Lehr came here."

"Then," said Fowler softly, "if Lehr still cherished his intention of getting even with Yewell, this is the first opportunity he had."

"Right," said Upshaw.

"**A**NYTHING else, Larry?" Fowler inquired.

"Mrs. McMunn is next on my list," Kendall said. "She is an orphan; her maiden name was Margaret Blakeshire. Her parents died when she was a child; she was brought up by an aunt in St. Louis, who died two years ago, leaving a little money. Miss Blakeshire was teaching French in a girl's school in Washington when she met McMunn; they were married after a very brief courtship."

Fowler turned to Upshaw.

"Captain," he said, "there is a lieutenant-commander of the Medical Corps at this station—man with a plump face, full lips, rather protuber-

ant eyes. Know him?"

"Doc Quillan—sure," nodded Upshaw.

"When was the late Lieutenant Osborn in this jam in Hawaii?"

"In '34."

"Was Quillan stationed there then?"

Upshaw shook his head.

"Damned if I know—wait, though—he *is* just back from foreign service, at that. I remember his being promoted well ahead of time for some research work he did in Hawaii. Yes, he must have been there in '34, because the foreign assignments are for three years. Why?"

"It may be something, I don't know," said Fowler. "I'll check on it later. What about our friend, the gentleman who impersonated me yesterday, Larry?"

"He's vanished."

"All right. Right now, though, we've got a lot of loose threads, but nothing really definite. We've got to work fast. In a week the new plans—am I right, Captain?—will begin to take form; and by that time the leak must be plugged forever, so that those plans shall remain inviolate. Lieutenant Commander McMunn, who is under grave suspicion, is still here. We cannot act against him, or anyone else, until we are sure; we must keep our suspicions to ourselves, work in the dark, follow every clue. Do you agree, Captain Upshaw?"

"Entirely," said Upshaw. "McMunn's stupidity about his wife has caused him to be confined to the limits of the station for ten days. His wife has been barred—good excuse for doing it. That ties up McMunn unless he goes the whole hog and breaks arrest, which is cause for dismissal."

"I don't know but that it would be better to let him loose," Fowler remarked. "Did you get any sort of report of Count Schwarzheim, Larry, as I suggested this morning?"

"Nothing much. Just a flash—Schwarzheim is now in New York, the house guest of Mrs. Reggie Lanchester. More later, the Bureau says."

"Have the Lanchesters a house here

in Newport? Anybody know?"

"They have," said Upshaw. "I've been there. Great folks; they like the Navy crowd."

There came a knock at the door.

"Telegram for Captain Upshaw."

Upshaw opened the door a crack, took the message. It was a long one, in Navy code; not the secret code, but the one usually employed for semi-confidential communications.

UPSHAW, with his pocket code book, quickly translated it.

"It's for Mr. Kendal," he reported. "I'll read it: 'Schwarzheim now with Lanchesters, who are planning to open their Newport house for a fall season. Rumors current in social circles New York that they are going to introduce to society Schwarzheim's daughter, Countess Ermengarde, lately at school in Europe, now reported en route to U. S. aboard liner *Appalachian*. Franko Treyadi reported Cherbourg at approximate time *Appalachian* sailed from there; has been arrested by French police our request, held incommunicado, charged murder and robbery, Brooklyn. Captain *Appalachian* reports Countess Ermengarde attended by one maid, keeps strict seclusion cabin. More on Mrs. McMunn later.'"

"I get it," said Fowler. "This is one big social build-up—the Lanchesters have been let into it by the glamorous idea of introducing a countess to society. Treyadi was sent over to contact a suitable young woman, with the necessary *savoir-faire* to carry off the rôle, the necessary guts and intelligence to serve the purposes of the mob. Captain Upshaw, do you by any chance know the captain of the *Appalachian*?"

"Very well. He was a reserve officer in the War; we served together in the Naval Transport under Admiral Gleaves."

"Good! Can you think of any way that you and I and two other people could board the *Appalachian* at sea without exciting the whole passenger list?"

"Not without a good many of the crew knowing it. Would that be fatal

to any ideas you have in mind?"
"No!"

CHAPTER X

The Countess Ermengarde



BENEATH the shaded lights of the main ballroom, the passengers of the liner *Appalachian* whirled over the glass-smooth dance floor. White shoulders gleamed against white shirt-fronts; jewels glittered. This was the

night of the captain's dinner, the last night before making port.

The first officer, very smart in his blue-and-gold mess-kit, released one of the last season's more promising débutantes as the music died. He hurried on. The *Appalachian* was throbbing with increased speed. On the bridge, the captain stood, peering ahead over the waters of the North Atlantic.

"We're almost there," he said as the chief officer joined him. "We ought to sight that craft any minute now."

"This is the queerest business I've run into in fifteen years at sea," the chief muttered, with a glance to make sure the officer of the watch and the quartermaster were safely out of hearing. "An S.O.S. that isn't an S.O.S. A rescue by order of the Navy Department. Can you beat it?"

"There's something big behind it, or they wouldn't go to all this trouble," the skipper said.

"I'll stand by, sir," the chief officer said quietly.

A buzzer sounded; the captain was at the telephone before the watch officer could reach it.

"Crow's nest, sir," came the voice of the lookout. "Boat ahoy—dead ahead."

A moment later the captain could see the dark speck on the gently heaving ocean.

"Water-logged, I'd say," he remarked. "They're cutting it damned fine—she might founder with 'em.

Mr. Frye, you've picked your boat's crew?"

"Yes, sir. The bos'n and six hands—all American born and bred."

"Then swing out the Number Two lifeboat, and stand by for further orders."

"Aye, aye, sir."

The mate ran down the port bridge ladder, blowing his whistle.

The boatswain sprang out of the shadow of an alleyway; his orders barked crisply. Men swarmed about the patent davits; gear creaked, steel clanked as the lifeboat was swung outboard. The liner's speed slackened; she changed course a little, drawing up on the disabled boat. The wreckage of a mast lay over the side, trailing helplessly in the water; the jagged, broken gap in the bulwarks was plain for all eyes to see in the blue-white glare of the searchlight.

The liner lay dead in the water. Down went her boat; the falls were cast off, the strong arms answered the mate's command: "Give way!"

The boat leaped across the gap of water to the side of the stricken fisherman; every eye on the liner watched the transfer of four men—three of them, apparently, helpless from injuries or exhaustion, to judge from their limp condition—to the lifeboat. Back came the rescuers, with a dark mass of humanity packed into the stern-sheets. The falls were hooked on, the winch clattered as the boat was hoisted in.

Again gongs clanged far below; the throb of the turbines trembled through the ship. The *Appalachian* was on her interrupted way to New York.

Up above, on the boat deck, the members of the boat's crew were carefully lifting the rescued humans to the deck; the medical officer was at hand, with stretchers.

"Into the sick bay with them," was the order. "The doctor must look them over at once."

The sick bay was dim; only a single light burned there, shaded and giving no more illumination than was necessary for the sailors to lift their charges into berths.

"I'll speak to the electrician about these lights," snapped the doctor angrily. The sailors tramped away, under charge of the boatswain; the door was closed, and locked. Only the captain, the chief officer, the doctor, and four rescued people remained within. And then, strangely enough, the doctor touched a wall-switch and the place was at once brightly illuminated.

DOWN in Suite L, the young woman carried on the passenger list as Countess Ermengarde von Schwarzhelm yawned wearily and flung aside the paper-backed novel which she had been reading.

"*Grace à dieu,*" she said to her lantern-jawed maid, "tomorrow we will be in New York, and I will no longer be a prisoner in this *sacré* cabin. It is that the good Franko does not trust me, no?"

The maid shrugged her bony shoulders to her ears.

"It is that the good Franko knows you oh, so well, *ma petite,*" she replied. "When you are in New York, or this—what it is?—Newport, with work to be done and duties to occupy that clever brain of yours, then all will be well. Here, you might forget the Countess Ermengarde, and speak as Juliette Lapointe, born in a Marseilles slum and educated in what the *sacrés* American call the school of hard knocks; and so—perhaps Franko was wise."

The girl on the berth stretched her pretty body and grinned.

"Perhaps he was," she admitted. She shook her blond head, her curls tumbling about her face, and lifted herself so that she could look out of the port. "What's that?"

A sharp knock at the door. The maid moved toward it. "Who is there?" she asked.

"Customs declarations, please," said a clipped, official voice.

The maid unlocked the door, opened it—and stepped back with a quick exclamation as the captain, the doctor, and four others in civilian clothes crowded into the room. Two of the latter were men; two were women.

The Countess bounded to her feet, her mouth open to scream; but that scream was never uttered. One of the men in civilian dress leaped to her side, clapped a big hand over her lips.

"Be still, and you won't be hurt," he snapped. "Shut that door, doc."

"You will suffer for this, American pigs," the maid whispered through clenched teeth. "This lady is the Countess Ermengarde von Schwarzhelm. She has powerful connections. You—"

"Shut up, Suzy," snapped the man who held the Countess. "We know you, and we know Juliette here. Recognized you as soon as I entered the room. International spies, with a damned long record."

He released the girl, who had ceased to struggle. "Who are you?" she asked through chattering teeth.

"I don't know that introductions will do any harm, Juliette," said the grimfaced young man. "This is Captain Upshaw, of Naval Intelligence. I'm Lieutenant Daniels, temporarily on duty in the same department. The ship's captain and doctor of course you know. These ladies you don't need to know. Now then, Juliette, are you going to be sensible?"

"How do you mean—sensible?"

"Well, Juliette, I'll be brief," Fowler told her. "You're going to New York in the character of the Countess Ermengarde von Schwarzhelm. You're going to meet your alleged papa, who never saw you before. You're going to pose as his daughter for the benefit of American society. Right so far?"

"You are the devil himself," whispered Juliette.

"Just how are you to meet the noble Count? What passwords or recognition signs have been arranged?"

"Try," invited Juliette, "and find out."

"**KAY,**" smiled Fowler grimly.

"I will. Juliette Lapointe, alias Madame Sikorsky-Rydzal, alias Olga Yekuninova, you are the woman who stole from a Warsaw bureau the plans of the new Polish tanks. You were hired—and paid—by the German

Government to do this. But you sold the plans to a Soviet agent instead, thus collecting twice. The Germans aren't sure yet just what happened, but the American military attache in Warsaw has come into possession of certain information on the subject which will prove very enlightening to them. Why, what's the matter, Juliette? You aren't going to faint on us, are you?"

"Damn you!" hissed the tortured woman. "Damn you!"

"Now, Juliette," pursued Fowler, "you can be coöperative if you like, you can tell us what we want to know. If you do not, or if you lie to us, you will be deported under guard to Germany. You know what that will mean?"

"Stop!" screamed Juliette. "Stop! I will tell you everything." Juliette Lapointe shrugged her beautiful shoulders.

"Gentlemen of the brilliant American Naval Intelligence," said she, "I am in your hands. I do not care to die. Therefore I will tell you the truth. I am to be met at the pier in New York by Count Schwarzheim. He will wear a fawn-colored topcoat, a dark brown soft felt hat, a brown tie, brown suit, brown shoes, and will be carrying a black malacca stick with a silver knob and two silver bands. He will know me by the traveling suit yonder—all grey, grey hat with the bright feathers, grey slippers, grey squirrel cape.

"He is to say to me: 'My dear daughter! It has been—how long?' I am to throw both my arms *en* his neck and say: 'Exactly two years and eleven days, Papa, for I have been counting them'. Then he is to kiss me on each cheek, and I am to kiss him on the right cheek only."

"Are you to speak in English?" asked Fowler.

"No, in French."

"Write that down, Sally," Fowler ordered. One of the two blond young ladies who stood quietly near the door took out a pencil and scribbled something.

"That is all?" Fowler asked.

"Absolutely all."

"Now as to your duties. What are your orders for afterward?"

"The Count will have friends here. Some people named Lanchester. I am to go with them to their house in Newport. I am to do as the Count instructs. I know no more." Juliette was sullen now.

"No idea what you are to do in Newport?"

"Help the Count obtain military information of some sort. That is really all I know."

"You weren't to work with anyone else? No other person to give you orders but the Count? Remember, Juliette, if you hold out one thing, we'll discover it. It may cost one of our agents his life, but it will also most certainly cost you yours. Remember the gentleman in the red mask!"

"*Bien*, I am trapped, I cannot help myself. If anyone came to me and said, either in English, French or German, 'I wish it were spring, that I might enjoy the apple blossoms on my grandfather's trees,' I was to reply, in the same tongue, 'Apple blossoms are lovely, but cherry blossoms are my favorites,' and if this person then replied: 'An excellent choice, *mademoiselle*, or miss, or *fraulein*,' I was thereafter to take such orders as that person might give me."

"Got that, Sally?"

"Right."

"You, Suzy. Any recognition signals or passwords for you?"

"No, *monsieur*; I am to be vouched for by *la petite* here. I too am unknown to *monsieur le comte*."

"Has any description of you been wirelessly or cabled to America?"

"None, *monsieur*. This I know; for they feared to trust such a message to the ordinary means of communication."

"*Mademoiselle* has held nothing out?"

"Nothing, *monsieur*. She has told you everything I know of. I think she is not anxious to die, *monsieur*."

"Very well. Doc, do your stuff. Don't be afraid, ladies; this will just put you to sleep and you'll wake up in a nice comfortable jail."

THE doctor stepped forward, opening a little case and producing a glittering hypodermic syringe. Neither of the women flinched; they had been through worse than this; both of them. They had steel nerves.

They keeled over almost at once.

"Now, doctor," Fowler said, "we'll put them in your charge. They'll be—carried ashore as stretcher cases tomorrow. Well covered up against the chilly air, of course. They'll be two of the rescued seamen. The other two will be two agents who'll board the ship at Quarantine, ahead of the reporters. They'll be dressed and primed for their part; of course the ship news men will be on them like hawks. Captain Upshaw and myself will disembark in a Coast Guard cutter; no one will notice us, I'm sure. As for these ladies—I think you know what they are going to do. I'm sorry I haven't had time for introductions: this is Miss Sally Vane, of the Department of Justice, who will become Suzy, maid to the Countess Ermengarde von Schwarzheim; and this lady—"

The other blond came forward under the light, smiling sweetly.

"I," she said in slightly accented English, perfectly imitating Juliette's speech, "am the Countess Ermengarde von Schwarzheim."

"We will dispense with introductions here," Captain Upshaw cut in. "This young lady is vouched for by the Office of Naval Intelligence. She is an American, and a true one. We will call her Miss Mary Smith. She speaks French, German, Polish, Russian and Spanish perfectly, and has a working knowledge of Oriental languages. When we received the last minute report that Juliette Lapointe, previously known to us, was coming over as the Countess we were able to select an agent slightly resembling her, and almost exactly her size. But as to gloves, hat, shoes, we must try. Try them, Mary."

Mary tried them, and laughed with delight.

"Excellent fits, all around," she reported.

"We'd better get out of here; the longer we stay here the greater the

risk of some slip up. You both know what you have to do," Fowler said. "You know how to communicate with me in Newport. Sally, the chief responsibility is yours, for you'll have to be the connecting link; the Countess will be too much in the limelight to take any chances."

One single slip—and Sally Vane was done for. That knowledge abode bitterly in Fowler's heart from that moment on.

CHAPTER XI

The Spy Nest



THE Lanchester house on Newport's exclusive "Millionaire Row" was ablaze with lights, for tonight Mrs. Reggie Lanchester was giving a dinner in honor of the young Countess Ermengarde von Schwarzheim.

In a room on the third floor, three men stood close together talking in very low tones. Two were obviously Asiatics; small, swarthy men, with Mongolian features; the other was taller, of Teutonic appearance, with a shock of blond hair, hazel eyes and a loose-lipped mouth.

"It is not my fault," he was repeating. "I carried it off perfectly. But when I recognized the man I was supposed to be impersonating in the act of entering the Naval Station, I maintain that I was right not to return."

"Excuses, excuses," said one of the others, his brown face as expressionless as a bronze mask. "Excuses do not matter, my dear Bernhard. It is very, very sad that you have failed; but you have failed, and your face is known."

The tall blond man went ashy pale. "I can still handle communication matters—I am an electrical expert—I can be useful in some inconspicuous post—"

The third man—a wizened little chap with a face like a monkey's, a high bulbous forehead and a ridicu-

lous little wisp of drooping mustache—spoke eagerly:

"He is a splendid specimen, Nakuma. Let me have him for my experiments!"

"No!" snarled Bernhard, leaping back to set his shoulders against the wall. A gun glittered blue in his right hand. "I'll see you both in hell first!"

The door opened silently; a woman glided into the room—a young woman, dark and very lovely.

"What is this?" she asked in her husky voice. "What are you doing to Bernhard?"

The man called Nakuma bowed politely.

"Mr. Bernhard is becoming excited unduly, I fear," said he. "Quite without reason, I am sure. I had just informed him that his usefulness, as far as our present enterprise was concerned, was at an end. No more than that."

"No more than that!" flashed the girl. "Is not that enough? Does not Bernhard know what becomes of the agents you find no further use for? The agents who have failed? Has he forgotten Chang Li, and Wasserman, and Trepov so soon? But this time you shan't do it, Nakuma. Or if you do, you do it to me, too!"

She walked over to Bernhard, stood beside him, her right arm linking in his left.

"This man is mine," she said steadily. "Make your choice, Nakuma."

"Is this wise?" Nakuma asked, lifting his eyes as though inquiring of some deity hidden in the ceiling. "Do you think it quite safe to defy me in this fashion? I am making no threats; I am merely asking for information."

"I think it perfectly safe," the woman said. "I know very well the place I occupy in your plans. Without me, you will have trouble. You cannot afford trouble, for that means delay. You have less than three weeks. Delay is out of the question, from your point of view. Yes, I am safe, and while that is so, Bernhard is safe."

"While that is so—yes, I think perhaps you are right," Nakuma said in

his calm way. "I do need you. But again—is it wise to—er, preserve Bernhard? He has now every motive to betray us. Indeed, I was relieved to see him here."

"He has every motive for playing your game, Nakuma," the woman retorted. "For—while you can pay my price—your game is my game, and Bernhard is my man. He loves me, and I love him."

"I am afraid, doctor," said Nakuma, "that your experiments must find another subject."

THE wizened little man looked disappointed; but he said nothing.

Bernhard scowled, shrugged, nodded and went out, carefully closing the door behind him.

"And now," said Nakuma, "we must consider what is next to be done. We are well situated here, as the Count's servants. We have a wing of the house to ourselves, and I have seen to it that it is adequately guarded. Our base of operations is established, and it is quite unknown to the enemy—thanks to your courage and quickness of wit."

He bowed to the girl.

"Remember this, both of you. Neither Count Schwarzhelm nor the young lady have any idea of the nature of our operations here. They know nothing of the doctor's work. They are not to know. They are what in this country are called fronts. Is that clear?"

"Perfectly," said the girl, and the doctor grunted.

"The Count is an impecunious nobleman seeking only a few dollars to jingle in his pockets," Nakuma went on. "He has never engaged in any secret service work, and, indeed, is both mentally and temperamentally unfitted for it. His daughter is a very different sort of person; she is an astute and daring secret agent who has served many masters. She is not to be trusted. She is to play her little part, take her pay, and be sent packing. She may deceive a man, but a woman of your intuitive brilliance she will not deceive. That also is un-

derstood?" He lifted his eyebrows. "Quite."

"We must be careful, now," Nakuma said. "We are on the brink of complete success. We must not spoil everything by being too sure. I feel that there is someone directing the moves of our opponents who is unusually astute and resourceful; someone of a type of mind I have not encountered lately. Have you identified this man?"

"I think so," the girl said. "I think it is the man you had here that night, who called himself Fowler, and who is now known at the Naval Station as Lieutenant Daniels. I think he is an agent either of the Secret Service or of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. He has very cold grey eyes; he gives me the creeps when he looks at me; I think he is reading every secret of my heart. I have no proof of all this, Nakuma; but it is my firm opinion."

"I will detain you no longer. Do not try to communicate with Bernhard without my permission; he will be quite safe. I give you my word. That satisfies you?"

She nodded. This little man's word was good; it was his pride that he had never broken it, once given. He was of an ancient and honorable house.

"Go, then. You have much to do; and I. As for you, doctor, be of good cheer. You shall presently have a glut of specimens for your so interesting experiments."

IN that same wing of the Lanchester house, but on a lower floor, a really delightful boudoir had been set aside by Mrs. Lanchester for the use of her guest, the Countess Ermenegarde von Schwarzhelm.

"I'll bet I look like a last year's biscuit," the "Countess" was remarking to her "maid," otherwise Sally Vane of the F. B. I.

"Mademoiselle requires a mud pack," said Sally.

"I think so, yes, Suzy. If you—"

"Mademoiselle forgets how often I have done this for her," cut in Sally deftly. She ensconced Mary on the

chaise-longue and went to work.

She was just beginning to apply the brown mud when a husky voice asked sweetly:

"May I come in?"

Without waiting for permission, a vision of delight in a filmy red negligee floated into the room and seated herself on the foot of the chaise-longue.

"You don't mind my barging in like this, Countess?" the newcomer went on, smiling engagingly. "I just couldn't keep away."

She crossed her legs, the negligee falling away as she swung one shapely foot, bare save for a scrap of gold sandal.

"Did you have a nice crossing? But I know you did—the *Appalachian*, wasn't it? A delightful ship." She rattled blithely on.

Her foot swung easily, like a graceful pendulum.

Sally's quick eyes had not missed that foot, nor the dark red covering on the toenails—nor the irregular triangle of lighter pink where a piece of the polished coating had broken away.

Sally knew all the details of the case so far. Every agent assigned to a case knows every detail that may be useful.

So presently, with the Countess resting mute beneath her brown mask, Sally went to the foot of the chaise-longue, with a murmur of apology, and began trimming toenails.

She procured nail polish from the dressing table, and applied it deftly, neatly.

"I wish you could do that for me," the dark-haired girl said—as Sally had anticipated she might.

"I will be glad to be of service to madam," Sally murmured.

The dark-haired girl chattered along, with what was at least an admirable imitation of light-hearted vivacity, while Sally worked over her nails.

It is just possible that the chatter might not have been quite so merry if the chatterer had realized that Sally had deftly applied a bit of mud to the nail with the mutilated surface and

obtained a perfect cast of that gap where the brittle polish had broken away.

Sally had just finished her work when, through the open casement behind the heavy drapes, came the sound of a low whistle, answered almost at once by another whistle.

"That is odd," said the young lady in the red negligee. "You know, I'll bet somebody's trying to serenade the Countess. I'm going to see!"

She jumped up and ran to the window—and if she thought the maid didn't notice the unusual care she took not to be seen from without, she was mistaken. She listened for a moment, then turned away with a most peculiar glitter in her eyes.

"It's nothing, I guess," she shrugged. "Thanks a lot for fixing my toes—er—what's your name?"

"Suzy!" said Sally Vane.

"I'll not forget you. *Voir, Countess.*"

She was gone, almost running. Her laughter tinkled behind her, brittle and harsh for all its pretense at gaiety.

CHAPTER XII

Death in the Garden



He listened at the door of his darkened room. It was locked; but Bernhard knew that at any moment it might be unlocked by somebody bringing his dinner. He was treated like a prisoner—like a condemned man.

Well, it was a risk that must be taken. He went to the window, raised it very cautiously, inch by inch. Outside, night—a night full of treacherous shadows; here and there a little glow on ground or shrubbery from a window not fully shaded. Were they down there, watching?

He was on the third floor. Below him, a sheer drop to the hard ground. Nothing so easy as a rope of bed clothes would serve him here. He

had no bed clothes; only a bare mattress. Nakuma had seen to that. Nakuma was no fool. He trusted no man beyond what was necessary, and he trusted Bernhard, now, not at all.

He did well not to trust Bernhard. For Bernhard was utterly convinced that Nakuma meant to kill him at the first opportunity. A week, two weeks to live—unless he escaped.

Safety lay not only in flight, but in reaching those whom Nakuma was fighting; they would protect him for the sake of the information he could give them.

Between Bernhard and safety lay only the problem of descending three stories to the ground. Yet it seemed an insuperable problem.

The girl might help—yes, but would she dare? And how to reach her?

There was another girl—Bernhard's heart beat a little faster at the thought of that one. What a fool Nakuma had been! If he had but listened, had but let Bernhard tell him of this golden opportunity—

The glowing dial of Bernhard's watch said it was eight-thirty. They dined late here; the Lanchester servants would be busy now preparing dinner.

Someone was moving down there now; Bernhard saw a shadow dart across a little patch of light, duck out of sight behind a bush. A woman's shadow, Bernhard thought. A housemaid going to some evening rendezvous at the garden gate or—

Bernhard leaned from the window. He whistled softly.

* * * * *

Dan Fowler was a man who never asked a subordinate to do something he ought to do himself.

Reconnoitering the Lanchester house was one of those jobs which, if he were to get the maximum benefit out of it, must be done in person.

He knew the danger. He knew that the house held enemies who would hesitate at nothing; who would think no more of taking his life than of taking the life of an earthworm.

He must inform himself about entrances and exits. He must be ready

to strike when the time came; but he must be careful.

In the grey uniform of a private watchman, with credentials all correct, he climbed over the wall of the Lanchester estate and dropped silently into the garden. To his right was the big house with its wide-flung wings; straight ahead loomed the two-story garage; to his left, the private dock and boathouse, with the gleaming waters of the inlet. All about him, darkness; shrubbery, trees, looming black beneath the star-filled sky.

HE moved cautiously ahead. He crossed a graveled path, stole along the grass beside it, its white-washed border stones his guide. His object was first to make a complete circuit of the house, noting doors and windows; next, to observe something of the driveway, the paths, the layout of the grounds. Also, he wanted to know how many, and what type of cars were in the garage; whether there was a speedboat in that boathouse; all this might be vital knowledge in some moment to come.

He was nearing the house. He halted, took careful note of the path, of the position of a door to which it led, of windows on either side. He could just see the faint outline of another white-edged path which led toward the garage.

There was a trellis here; there'd be vines on it yet, but not dry and crackly at this time of the year. One could climb it, Fowler thought, and gain access to a second-story window; the one up there with the light glowing behind heavy draperies.

He ducked behind a bush; he had heard the light thud of racing footsteps—somebody running, running along behind the house, coming toward him. He saw flying skirts as a slender figure darted across the dim fan of light from the window beyond the rear door. A girl—now she was lost behind more shrubbery.

She had stopped—perhaps to catch her breath—

From high over Fowler's head, a low whistle sounded.

Close at hand, in the darkness, a woman gasped. Then very softly, she whistled in reply.

Bernhard could scarcely believe his luck. This was too much—it could not be true. But it was— There, she whistled again.

He leaned out. "Sweet!" he whispered sibilantly. "Garage—get rope—I'll lower a string—be quick, it's life or death!"

She whistled back, two short notes of understanding, and he heard her footsteps pattering toward the garage.

Bernhard sprang toward the bed. They had left him the pillows. He snatched off their cases, his strong fingers ripped them into narrow strips, knotting them together. Would it serve, this string? Would it be long enough? He must make sure. His belt and suspenders helped—off came his shirt, to furnish more strips. There, that should do.

He was at the window again. Just in time—a low whistle told that the girl was waiting.

He lowered his string. In a moment he was hauling it up again, a rope attached to its lower end.

The head of the bed was close to the window. Bernhard knotted the rope about one of the sturdy posts. Without losing an instant, he ripped off his shoes, jammed them into his coat pockets, and swung himself over the sill. He was a practiced athlete; it was child's play for him to let his body down the side of the house, bracing his toes against the wall.

His feet were on the ground. The girl came up to him, whispering:

"What's the matter?"

"Tell you later, dear." Bernhard kissed her once. "We've got to get out of her. Best way is by the garden gate, if it isn't locked."

"All right. Come on."

A rustle of underbrush, close at hand, checked him as he started to move.

"What's that?" he whispered. "Someone's coming!"

"I didn't hear—" the girl began.

"Shh. Head for the gate. Meet me there. We'd better go separately.

Less noise." Their shadows faded into the deeper shadow of the shrubbery—another shadow seemed to follow.

DAN FOWLER had watched and listened; he had not seen everything, nor heard everything either, but he had seen and heard enough to know that somebody was making a getaway from that house. So he, too, made for the garden gate.

The wall was of light grey stone; even in the starlight, the silhouette of anyone moving along it would be sharply outlined to an observer behind the cedar tree where Fowler took his stand a few seconds later.

Ah, there he was. A man, stealing along the foot of the wall, trying the gate; Fowler heard his brief curse because it was fastened.

Now the woman was coming—coming very silently, very swiftly. The two outlines seemed to merge; Fowler heard a hiss of quick-drawn breath, a murmur of speech—the shadows separated, the woman drawing back, the man going to his knees. A low-pitched, bitter laugh came to Fowler's ears. He started forward, tripped over a coil of garden hose, lost his balance—A grab at a cedar branch saved him from a fall, but swung him round so that he lost sight of the shadows by the gate.

He regained his balance, darted ahead—there was only one shadow now, and it lay in a crumpled mass at the foot of the wall. Fowler remembered that he wore a watchman's uniform; he risked his flashlight.

The man who lay on his face there by the garden gate was dead. Seeping blood matted his blond hair; from the back of his neck jutted the haft of a little knife—a stiletto—

He had died by the same stroke to the base of the brain, delivered with an almost identical weapon, that had slain Commander Yewell.

Fowler turned the head to see the face. It was the face of the false Fowler.

Then he heard, faint but definite, a crunch on gravel just behind him. He did not seem to move, but his hand

slid swiftly to the butt of his holstered pistol.

He heard it again—and with one streak of motion he was on his feet, faced about, gun out and level at his hip, his left hand holding the torch steady on a crouching female figure.

"Don't move!" he warned sharply.

The girl's face was a white mask. Her eyes glittered with fright and rage.

It was Nancy Jourdan, daughter of the admiral. Her arm shot out, index finger pointing at the dead man.

"You killed him!" she whispered.

"You think fast, don't you?" said Fowler. "I'm the watchman, and I saw you do it, so don't bother telling fairy tales. You're under arrest."

"Watchman!" said Nancy Jourdan bitterly. "Don't *you* bother telling fairy tales, Lieutenant Daniels!"

"All right," snapped Fowler, "let it go. Here's the gate—stand right where you are, don't move."

He deftly pocketed the torch, pulled out his skeleton keys, attacked the lock of the gate.

OVER toward the house, a door suddenly yawned into a rectangle of yellow light, a dark figure darted through.

His flash-ray had not gone unseen. The lock was rusty; it stuck—foot-steps came hammering along the path—*click!* The lock yielded. Fowler grabbed Nancy's arm, started to draw her through the opening.

She screamed—a high-pitched scream which echoed back from the walls of the house.

"Stop! Or I'll shoot!" came a shout.

Fowler flung Nancy ahead of him, slammed the gate shut, picked up the kicking, struggling girl in his arms and ran for his life.

He knew exactly where he was going; through the deserted grounds of this adjoining estate, out by an open driveway to the street, and so to a car that waited, parked in dark seclusion, around a corner beyond those grounds.

"Put me down!"

Fowler had weighed the chances in a split second of decision, and had

staked all on his ability to get away with Nancy. They were through the gate now, and after him; he heard the cough of a silenced pistol, felt the death-whisk of a bullet past his ear.

Unburdened by the girl, Fowler would have stopped to fight, but as it was, he could only run. And run he did, holding the girl tight against his chest, his powerful legs driving him onward like a football player charging downfield with the ball towards the enemy goal-line.

The concrete of the driveway was beneath his flying feet.

Another bullet hit just ahead of him, caromed away with the wicked whir of a ricochet. Nancy wailed.

"Shut up," snapped Fowler.

He swung to the right on the sidewalk—ahead, the street lamps glowed amidst the autumn foliage. An automobile whirred past. He was at the corner; a man came suddenly plunging headlong through the hedge, right in front of him, his outflung arms locking themselves about Fowler's knees.

Someone else was racing up behind. By a terrific effort Fowler kept his balance. He swung the girl to her feet, yanked out his gun and brought the barrel down on the close-cropped head of the man who held him.

He kicked free of the relaxing arms, whirled and fired in one motion. The crack of his pistol mingled with the cough of the silenced gun; a bullet seared his arm, the man who was chasing him staggered. Two others loomed up behind; no time to waste—Nancy had started to run; Fowler was after her, had her in two bounds, dragged her shrieking around the corner and flung her into the waiting car.

Far down the street a police whistle shrilled. The car leaped forward under Fowler's deft touch on its controls, took the corner with shrieking tires. It was hitting sixty when he roared past a running cop, and that pace never slackened until, a few minutes later, the lights at the end of the causeway glittered on the bayonet of the marine sentry behind his white-painted barrier.

Quick was the exchange of challenge and reply. Fowler drove on more slowly, up the hill toward the War College. At his side, for the first time on that hectic ride, Nancy Jourdan stirred, lifted her head, spoke:

"You fool!" she said. "Oh, you blundering fool!"

CHAPTER XIII

Nancy Jourdan



OWLER brought the car to a stop before the great building; there was a light in the admiral's office, the admiral was still at his desk.

Escorted by the staring orderly, Fowler ushered the admiral's daughter into the presence of

her father.

The old officer rose in his place, his face reddening with astonished wrath at sight of his daughter's disheveled state.

"What does this mean, Mr. Daniels?"

"It means," Nancy flashed, "that I came upon this man as he was committing a murder in the grounds of Mrs. Lanchester's house, and he is now going to pretend that it was I who did it! He was bending over his victim when I came up; he grabbed me, accused me of being the murderess. Some of the Lanchester servants heard the noise and came running out, he picked me up in his arms and ran. They chased him, but he fought them off and brought me here. Murderer!"

"Well, Mr. Daniels?" said the admiral in a voice of ice.

Very calmly Fowler related what had happened, in precise, accurate words.

"What were you doing in the Lanchester grounds, Nancy?" the admiral asked when Dan had finished.

"I am not going to tell you that, Daddy," said Nancy firmly.

The admiral came round the corner of his desk. The ruddy color had

drained from his face, leaving it grey and very old; the lines the sea and sun had set there seemed to deepen. His eyes were hard.

"Nancy," said he, "ever since young Osborn's débâcle in Hawaii, you've been acting like a silly, reckless child. Now, in the midst of the most critical responsibility which has ever been laid upon me in all my career, I find you involving yourself in affairs of this kind. Flatly, I do not believe that Mr. Daniels, here, murdered that impostor. Nor do I believe that you, my daughter, are a murderess."

"Then I'm a liar!" said Nancy in even, biting tones.

"Wait," bade the admiral. "I do not say that either. You do not say you saw Daniels strike the death blow; nor does Daniels say he saw you strike it. He says he saw a woman's shadow on the wall. He does not assert that it was yours, he merely relates that while he was examining the dead man, you appeared, and leaves the obvious conclusion to be drawn. But I am your father; I do not leap to that conclusion. I ask you again to explain your presence in the Lanchester grounds."

Before the girl could answer, the telephone on the admiral's table whirred.

The admiral made a motion with one hand. Fowler picked up the instrument:

"Admiral Jourdan's office, Lieutenant Daniels speaking," he said.

"Dan!" It was the voice of Sally Vane. "I've got it, Dan, I've got it!"

"Got what?"

"I've only a minute to talk. Dan, when Larry found that bit of nail lacquer, you looked over the finger nails of two suspects. But you didn't think of toes! I've just taken a cast of a polished toenail with a piece missing just like the one you describe. It isn't a very good cast, the material is poor, but I think it'll enable you to identify the murderess. I fixed the lady's toes for her to get it. New dark red polish. I'm out now in the garage; there's a separate wire here. I daren't stay. Send an agent disguised as a Western Union mes-

senger to the house right away with some message for the Countess. I'll take it and give the boy the cast."

"Great work. Who was the—er, subject?"

"I don't know," said Sally. "I don't know her name, but she's here in the house, or was half an hour ago. Seems to be a guest. I'll get a line on her later. She won't get away. Now goodbye, Dan. I can't stay."

THERE was a click. The connection was broken.

Fowler turned to the grimly waiting admiral.

"Admiral Jourdan," said he, "that was one of my agents. I have just received important information, relating to the murder of Commander Yewell. I am convinced that both murders were done by the same hand—the same method, almost the identical stroke was used, and very similar weapons. May I make of your daughter a highly unusual request?"

"Certainly," nodded the admiral.

"Please don't be offended, Miss Jourdan. I assure you that what I am about to ask of you is necessary. Will you remove your shoes and stockings right here and now?"

"Certainly not!" said Nancy.

"One moment, sir." Fowler drew the admiral into a corner of the room, whispered in his ear.

The admiral listened, swore a rumbling oath—but the light of hope dawned in his eyes.

"Off with your shoes and stockings, Nancy," he snapped when Fowler had finished.

Nancy sat down in a chair, kicked off her shoes, and peeled down her hose.

"Very well—"

Fowler turned. One glance showed him what he wanted to see—her ten pink nails were innocent of any artificial coloring whatever. It was impossible that she could have been the girl whose nails Sally had re-polished within the hour. But Fowler had another idea.

"Hold up your right foot so that I may see the sole, please," he said.

The girl obeyed.

"Now the left. Mm-m. Thank you. With your permission, Miss Jourdan—"

He picked up one of her shoes, examined it, carefully scraped a little dirt from the edge of the sole into an envelope and put it in his pocket.

Next he used a pair of scissors from the admiral's desk to snip off a single hair from her head. This he examined under the desk lamp by use of his pocket magnifying glass. Then he again drew the admiral into a corner for a whispered conference.

Nancy put her shoes and stockings on and sat waiting, while the two men muttered, looked at her, shook their heads and muttered again.

"For heaven's sake," she suddenly burst out, "tell me what you're going to do?"

The admiral came over to her, stood looking down at her.

"Nancy," he said, "you have seen fit to involve yourself in matters wholly beyond your normal sphere of activity. You must take the consequences. I cannot protect you."

"But—Daddy—"

"You might as well know, Nancy," the admiral said, "that Mr. Daniels, here, is not altogether under my orders. He has certain reports to make to a higher authority. I should say that your one chance is to make a clean breast of everything, here and now. Lacking your complete coöperation, Mr. Daniels has but one course to follow."

"I-I see," said Nancy in a low voice.

THERE was a moment of silence. Then Fowler shrugged his shoulders by ever so little.

"Very well," said he with grim finality. He picked up the telephone. "Operator, give me Newport Police Headquarters, please."

"No!" Nancy was suddenly on her feet. "Wait, wait! I can't drag Daddy's name into a mess of that sort! I'll tell you—"

Fowler hung up the phone. "As you like, Miss Jourdan," said he indifferently. "Why were you at the Lanchester home tonight, then?"

"It's a long story," said Nancy.

"Daddy'll understand, I think; maybe you won't. It's Jimmy Osborn, Daddy. Poor Jimmy—I wanted to clear his memory. Whatever else he did—to me—to anyone—Jim was no traitor. There were spies around him, yes. I knew that. I couldn't prove it, but I knew it. That woman he—he married, was one of them. And there was another, a man named Bernhard. Daddy, I have seen both the woman and Bernhard at this very station within the last few days!"

"You have? Why didn't you tell me, then?" roared the admiral.

"What could I prove?" retorted Nancy. "I wanted to keep things quiet. I wanted to let them think I suspected nothing until I was ready. I thought I might be in a position to discover what they were up to; and if they were caught dead to rights, somehow it might be proved that Jimmy Osborn was no traitor. Oh, I know it's all vague and stupid-sounding, but that's what I was hoping."

"The man Bernhard," Fowler said quietly, "was the man who was stabbed to death in the Lanchester garden tonight."

"Yes," said Nancy with a shudder.

"You know a great deal, don't you, Mr. Daniels?"

"Tell us the whole story. Had you talked to him before?"

"Yes. Here at the station. I met him face to face on the path outside this building. He knew me, and I knew him, and he saw that recognition had been mutual. He was in uniform—the uniform of a lieutenant in the Navy. He explained that he had changed his name to Fowler because of a provision in the will of a rich uncle who'd died and left him a bequest conditional on his adopting his mother's name.

"He said that being freed from business cares by this bequest, he'd had time to give to his country's service, and had procured a commission in the Naval Reserve. I pretended to believe him. I think I put it over. He started to make love to me. I let him think he was progressing. He was of the type who cannot believe that

any woman will resist him long. But—that evening he disappeared and never came back.”

“Ah,” said Fowler. “I begin to see.”

“And the woman?” flashed the admiral.

“The woman I saw walking from this building toward the officer’s mess, the other morning, with Lieutenant Daniels, here,” Nancy said. “It was the morning poor Commander Yewell was found murdered upstairs. I was at home. I could not sleep, I was looking out of the window when I saw her. I wasn’t sure, so I ran to your room, Daddy, and got your glasses. I verified the fact that she was the very woman whom poor Jimmy had married, there in Hawaii—a woman whom I knew to have been associated with shady characters in Honolulu. I had to do something; so I dressed and went to the mess. She wasn’t there; neither was Daniels. But, just coming out, I met Doctor Quillan whom I’d known in Hawaii. ‘Funny thing, Nancy,’ he said. ‘I’d have sworn that I saw Rita Osborn just now, here in this very room. She came in with some lieutenant, but went right out again. I must’ve been mistaken, though.’”

“Ah,” said Fowler, again, and the glance he exchanged with the admiral was full of significance.

“I WENT home,” said Nancy. “I thought and thought. But I couldn’t get anywhere. I decided just to wait until my chance came. I thought Bernhard would come back, but he didn’t. I thought the woman would show up, but she didn’t. And then, tonight, I was downtown and I saw her—just a glimpse—in a closed car driven by a chauffeur. I asked a policeman whose it was, in a tone of idle curiosity, and he told me, Mrs. Reggie Lanchester’s. So that’s why I was in the Lanchester garden tonight.”

“To find out what you could about her,” the admiral nodded.

“Yes. I was dodging around among shrubbery trying to locate a window I could peek into, when I heard somebody whistle, from upstairs. I took a

chance and answered. Somebody called in a low voice—Bernhard’s voice—asking me to get a rope. You know the rest of it. Mr. Daniels has told the whole story.”

“Except how you—”

“Yes,” cut in Nancy, “how I killed him, you’d say. But I didn’t kill him, Daddy. We got separated, running for the gate. I lost my way. When I did find the gate, he was lying there dead, and Mr. Daniels bending over him with a flashlight. That’s the truth!”

“Then who was the woman I saw come up to him? The woman who unquestionably, stabbed him to death?” Fowler queried.

“If there was such a woman,” said Nancy, “you can guess who she must have been. The one who was with him in Hawaii—Mrs. Rita Osborn.”

Nancy sank suddenly into her chair and covered her face with her hands. Long sobs racked her slender body.

“She can’t tell us any more,” the admiral said. “Poor kid, she’s been through hell. I’ll take her home. I’ll be back in ten minutes. Come, Nancy.”

When they were gone, Fowler turned to the telephone. He called Larry Kendal at the Hotel Thames.

“I just got in, Dan,” Larry reported. “Klein’s keeping tabs on the Lanchester place. He saw you come out. We weren’t quick enough to help you in that little difficulty you handled so well—”

“I didn’t want you in that,” Fowler interrupted. “Better not.”

“Yes, but we couldn’t’ve let ’em scrag you. All right—I’ll get on with it. A cop came running along, wanted to know who was doing the shooting. He found the Lanchester butler in the driveway. The butler was very hoity-toity, and the cop finally went off grumbling to himself. The others had scrambled into the house. He didn’t see ’em. All serene now.”

“Okay.” Fowler now proceeded to give orders about the fake messenger being sent to the Lanchester house. He directed that Agent Klein get the information Fowler needed about the cars and the speedboat, if any. Then

he added some further instructions:

"Get another man to stand by in your room, as a message center. You come out here; I want to have a conference with you and Captain Upshaw. We're getting somewhere. I don't know where, but we're moving in on 'em."

His mind was already busy as he hung up. The net was spread; its meshes were tightening.

AND as Fowler had hinted to the admiral, a pattern was beginning to take form before his eyes—a pattern of events, of currents and cross-currents. Nancy Jourdan had helped him more than she realized.

The admiral slapped open the door. "She's on her way to bed, the spoiled brat," he grumbled, blowing his nose explosively.

"Well, sir," said Fowler, "we have some new facts. First of all, we know that Mrs. McMunn is the woman who married Lieutenant Osborn in Hawaii and dragged him down to hell. We know that she is in close liaison with the Lanchester house. We know that Bernhard, who attempted to impersonate me here, fled from that house in terror of his life tonight—why? My guess is, because he had failed and because our Asiatic friends think a failure is better out of the way."

"Why not raid the place and grab everybody in it? Now?" demanded the forthright admiral.

"No can do, sir. Mrs. Reggie Lanchester is a woman of standing and wealth. Can you imagine the headlines? Isn't Senator Lanchester of Massachusetts her first cousin? And I think her late husband's brother is an Assistant Secretary of State?"

"Lord, Daniels, you keep yourself informed, don't you?"

"It's my job, sir. We can't go off half-cocked, Admiral. Mrs. Lanchester, certainly, will think first of all of her own good name and social reputation. I think, sir, that we ought to wait, to watch, to try to identify their key men—and then lay hands on them under circumstances about which there can be no doubt. They can't carry on active espionage and

stay cooped up in that house."

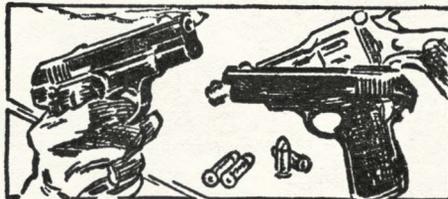
"Hrrrrmph!" snorted the admiral.

"However, I suppose you're right."

"The doctor's still their best bet," Fowler went on, "and their chief threat. The girls will locate him, if we give them time. In fact, it's on their work that I'm largely depending to know when and how to strike. We'll do the outside work; the inside job is in their hands."

"Capable hands, to judge from what you just told me," the admiral observed. "It looks as though we had Mrs. McMunn dead to rights for the Yewell murder, at all events."

"It looks that way. But you must remember that Miss Vane has never seen Mrs. McMunn before; she cannot yet swear to the identity of the person from whose toe she took that cast, as being Mrs. McMunn. If the cast fits the piece of lacquer we have, we'll be pretty sure that the person from whose toe it came was the murderess. We'll be reasonably sure that that person was Mrs. McMunn. But we can't arrest her, either. Not yet. She's apparently their outside agent now, their principal connection with the outer world."



"Hrrmph!" said the admiral again, shortly. "What about McMunn, working right here on these war plans all the time? His wife's in this up to her neck, and it's reasonable to suppose that she's dragged him into it. Are we to leave him at liberty to betray us at any moment? In another day or so, things will be in shape where he'll have something worthwhile telling to his Asiatic pals. What about McMunn, I say?"

"Watch him. Let him make the first move," Fowler advised. "Make use of that day or so. When it comes to the point where your plans are finally crystallizing so that McMunn

is about to acquire dangerous information, then—the case of Lieutenant Commander McMunn will have to be reconsidered.”

CHAPTER XIV

Before the Storm



DAYS had passed—days of watchful waiting.

Not for a single instant had the Lanchester house been free of cautious, hidden surveillance by agents of the F. B. I. and the Office of Naval Intelligence.

But so cleverly had this surveillance been maintained that none within the walls of that house knew of it.

“Or so I hope,” said Dan Fowler to the three men who sat with him in the admiral’s private study—the admiral himself, Larry Kendal, and Captain Upshaw of the F. B. I. “We’ve been very careful. The Newport police and the watchman agency are of course working with us.”

The admiral nodded. “Gentlemen,” he said, “I did not ask you to come here for a pep meeting, but to inform you that tomorrow, we will begin putting together the separate parts of the War Plans which we are working on. Thereafter every officer engaged in this work will have some knowledge of their general structure and purpose. Up to now we have kept Lieutenant Commander McMunn on detail work of a nature which would not be crippling to the United States were it revealed. This situation can no longer exist. We must decide what to do about McMunn *now!*”

The admiral’s fist slammed down on his desk.

“We’ll have to arrest him, I suppose,” said Upshaw wearily. “Has he tried to communicate with his wife, or she with him?”

“No,” admitted the admiral. “He hasn’t.”

“But that piece of lacquer fitted Sally’s cast,” Kendall put in.

“What reports from Miss Vane and Miss Smith?” the admiral demanded.

“Nothing new,” Fowler said. “The spies are there, living in a separate wing of the house. There are at least five different Asiatics. But neither girl has been able to get any concrete evidence that would warrant us in making an arrest. Mrs. McMunn is a house guest there, using her own name. We are morally certain, therefore, that Mrs. McMunn murdered Commander Yewell, and also the spy Bernhard. We could arrest her, but something tells me that she wouldn’t sing, and if she didn’t, we’d have warned the others to no purpose.”

“Yes, yes, but McMunn himself?” stormed the admiral. “We can’t go on letting McMunn run loose.”

“Suppose,” suggested Upshaw, thoughtfully, “that we transfer him. Suddenly, we’ll say, a situation has arisen which requires the services of a trained war plans officer with the European Squadron. We’ll order him to the destroyer *Beale*, which is at New York and can be here in the morning. She’ll sail at once. There’s McMunn out of the way. And no one will be able to say that we suspect him of anything. They may think so, but that’s not the point. They won’t be sure.”

“Excellent!” said the admiral. “Upshaw, get in touch with your office at once, and get the necessary orders issued by the Bureau of Navigation. They’ll have to be telegraphic orders, both to McMunn and the commanding officer of the *Beale*. Or would it be better to use the submarine X-5? She’s here, this minute, lying off the Torpedo Station. No—silly to send a sub to Europe, the *Beale’s* ready to sail, she’s the ideal ship for the purpose. Carry on, Upshaw.”

WHAT about this big shindig that Mrs. Lanchester is throwing tonight in honor of the Countess Ermengarde von Schwarzhelm?” Upshaw asked. “I understand every officer at this station has received a bid to it.”

“Let ’em go,” said the admiral. “I’ll drop a hint to those here—except

McMunn—and by comparing notes afterward we may learn something. McMunn can't go, of course; he's under restriction. Upshaw, you'll see that someone's here to keep an eye on him?"

"I'll take care of that, sir," said Fowler. "I'll be around."

"Don't you want to go to the Lanchesters'?"

"I may show up there later. Fact is, sir, I don't much like the idea of all your officers going—most of 'em know too much now about the new plans, and if—hell, I suppose I'm talking like a fool, endowing these so-and-sos with supernatural powers, mind-reading or something. I do have a feeling that there's something dangerous going on tonight. Usually I want to be at the point of danger in such cases, but tonight I want to stay here. It's just possible that they may try to communicate with McMunn at a time when they may think there'll be less chance of being caught at it."

"That's an idea," nodded the admiral. "I don't much care for this Lanchester party myself, but it'd look funny if we all failed to show up. Look as though we suspected something."

* * * * *

At that moment, in an isolation ward of a New York hospital, a blond young woman was pacing up and down the short length of a cheerless, white-washed room. It was furnished with the barest necessities—two iron beds, a small table, two chairs, a lavatory. Steel bars grilled the windows.

"Suzy," said the pacing young woman, "I am going to try it this time. I cannot endure this any longer."

"Do not be rash, *ma petite*," her companion implored. "Remember Germany—"

"Bah!" snapped the blond girl. "If we escape, we escape the axe and we will be well rewarded, I promise you. If we fail, you will swear that I went out of my mind. And think, Suzy, of the reward! They will pay us well, I promise you, if we can get to Schwarzhelm with our news! Heaven

knows what will have happened to his plans, with those two ladies of the police in the middle of them! Suzy, you won't fail me?"

"Oh, I'll be a fool, as usual," Suzy grumbled. "Where's the soap? I suppose I'd best be foaming at the mouth."

The peephole, a few minutes later, snapped open as Juliette hammered on the door with her fists.

"Well?" came the harsh tones of the matron on duty. "What's wrong in here?"

"My friend—she is very sick," panted Juliette.

The matron took one look at Suzy, who was indeed an alarming sight; she was rolling about on the floor, groaning, her lips spewing forth foam.

KEYS rattled; the door opened; the matron, a burly Irishwoman, stepped inside and bent over the writhing Suzy. Juliette's hand flashed out of the folds of her sleazy grey hospital robe with the speed and viciousness of a striking viper. It rose and fell; the piece of iron piping which she had managed to detach from one of the bedsteads thudded on the back of the woman's head. Suzy rolled away as the heavy woman



crashed to the floor, twitched once, and lay still.

"You've killed her!" she sputtered, bouncing to her feet.

"Nonsense," snapped Juliette, grabbing the keys. "Where are those strips of sheet? Here, help me tie her hands and ankles. She's still breathing; she's all right. Now a gag—"

"She'll strangle!"

"No, she won't. Tie it behind her head—that's it. Come on, *tonnerre de dieu!* We have not the entire day to stand gaping here! The corridor's clear!"

The two women slipped out of the door, closing and locking it behind them, and ran down the corridor, their soft-soled hospital slippers making little noise. There was a stairway at the end; down it they went, along a wide lower hall, checking their pace to a nonchalant stroll. They appeared to be two convalescent patients on their way to the wash-room, or something of the sort. They passed an orderly; he gave them not a second glance. They passed a hurrying nurse, who paid them no more attention. A turn in the corridor; there was the outer door, wide open, with the traffic of the street roaring beyond.

* * * * *

"Everything is ready, doctor?" asked Nakuma, coming into the room in the Lanchester house where his sinister assistant had remained hidden for several days.

The wizened little scientist looked up from a retort which was bubbling over a Bunsen burner.

"Quite ready, as always," said he. "When am I to have my specimens?"

"Tonight; in plenty," Nakuma said. "One after another. They will be here. They will come to you. You shall strip their brains clean of all useful knowledge. They shall depart. And not one of them, you tell me, will remember afterwards what has happened to him."

"That is true," nodded the doctor, his little beady eyes glittering with anticipation. "I have perfected my drug. Before, as you know, one or two did remember when they came out of its influence, though most did not. But I have overcome that difficulty. Repeated experiments on our own men have proved that to my complete satisfaction. I am ready."

"Come, then. What instruments do you need?"

"Only my hypodermics, and they are here." He gathered up the glittering instruments, put each in a

separate case, bestowed them about his person.

He straightened his white waiter's jacket, grinned at Nakuma, who was similarly attired.

"Let us go," said he. "The time has been all too long. I ache to be at work."

CHAPTER XV

The Danger Point



RS. REGGIE LANCHESTER'S dance was in full swing. To the music of a world-renowned New York orchestra, the guests whirled over her perfect floor. New York society was there in force, Beacon Hill was strongly repre-

sented, and the Navy dress uniforms dotted the crowd with blue and gold.

The Countess, in billowy white, stood at Mrs. Lanchester's elbow, smiling ravishingly at Captain Upshaw. She was wondering what Mrs. Lanchester would say if she knew that she was introducing to Captain Upshaw, of the Office of Naval Intelligence, one of his own most valued agents!

Count Schwarzheim, a fat, pasty-faced little man with a row of miniature decorations on his lapel, murmured a few polite words, and Upshaw passed on.

The Navy was out in force that night. Not only the officers from the War College, but others from the Torpedo Station, the Training Station, the Naval Hospital, and from the submarine X-5 were there. Commander Lehr was dancing with the wife of a Wall Street broker. He wanted a drink. He welcomed with delight the temporary cessation of the music.

"Such an enjoyable dance, Mrs. Shannon," he murmured. "If we don't have another dance later, I'm a desolate man. You can't escape me! I'll just trot over to the bar and have a word with the admiral, I think."

Lehr managed to wriggle through the jam about the bar, at least until he was close enough to convey his wishes to the busy little white-jacketed men behind it.

"Rum and lime, please. Ahhhh. That goes to the spot."

"You look warmish, Commander!" said a sweet husky voice at his elbow. He turned, and was immediately grateful to a beneficent Providence. This girl was delightful—her dark beauty wonderfully set off by her crimson evening dress, daringly cut to reveal the most perfect arms and shoulders Commander Lehr had seen for some time. Her eyes, great brown pools of liquid promise, were sparkling as they lifted themselves to his.

"Too much handicap the last race," he chukled.

"I'm Margaret McMunn," laughed the girl. "I've seen you at the Station—you're Commander Lehr, aren't you?"

"Righto," nodded Lehr. "You wouldn't have a quick one with me, Mrs. McMunn?"

They drank together. The orchestra began its barbaric beat.

Once around the floor—Margaret McMunn floating like a feather in his arms—this was something like dancing! High-powered rum Mrs. Reggie was putting out—getting like an oven in here—

They were near a dark and inviting doorway; a doorway through which came a breath of sparkling fresh air. Lehr heard himself saying something about cooling off beneath the stars—felt the gentle pressure of a hand on his arm—he was out on the terrace, Margaret McMunn close at his side, and the crisp evening breeze fanning his face. . . .

IT was cold, beastly cold. Lehr shivered as the breeze seemed to bite savagely into the marrow of his bones. He shook himself—Lord, it was dark. Where was he? Where was that girl—lovely thing—

He sat up on the hard stone bench at the end of the terrace, blinked, looked about him. Three or four

strolling couples were in sight, a fan of light from the open door lay in golden radiance across the terrace; but Lehr was alone on his bench.

"Must've passed out," he muttered, annoyed. "The heat—and that rum. Hope I didn't make a fool of myself. Lord, what a headache."

He rose to his feet. A little woozy yet—only had two drinks, funny they'd affect him that way. What was it the admiral had said? Watch your step? Lord, if the old boy'd seen him! Bet that McMunn girl was disgusted. Left him flat, she had. He moved toward the door. He wanted another drink. Do him no good, maybe. But he wanted it. Straight rye this time; no more of that rum.

In the doorway he almost barged into another couple—Captain Upshaw and a vision in girlish white.

"Hello, Lehr. Have you met the guest of honor? The Countess Ermengarde von Schwarzhelm—Commander Lehr."

"Delighted." Lehr managed a correct bow, cursing himself for the thickness of his speech. "What's wrong with you, Lehr?" asked Upshaw sharply.

"Nothing—nothing 't all. Just got overheated—in there," Lehr insisted.

"It is insufferably hot inside," the Countess put in. "Me, I do not like to dance so much—I like better to stroll on the terrace."

"Take care of yourself, Lehr," Upshaw directed, and would have passed on with his pretty companion; but at that moment a footman in the Lan- chester livery came hurrying out.

"Captain Upshaw—telephone—"

"Just my luck," growled Upshaw. "Shall I take you to your father, Countess?"

"Ah, no. I shall stay here—with Commander Lehr. If he will allow me to impose—"

"Keep him out of mischief, then, Countess!" said Upshaw, already on his way.

The Countess tapped Lehr on the arm chidingly.

"I ought not to encourage you," she said. "You are much too favored already—it will go to your head. Me, I

an observant. You spend half an hour on the terrace with quite the prettiest woman here, and expect that no one will notice. *Méchant!* You will be torn limb from limb by angry males if you venture inside. I must save your life. Come, shall we stroll toward the garden?"

What was this? Lehr knew better than to suppose himself suddenly the cynosure of feminine attention. Half an hour—he hadn't been out here any half hour, either! There was something strained in the voice of the girl at his side. There was a purpose beneath her light chatter.

But what purpose? And there had been some purpose in Mrs. McMunn's actions, earlier. The same purpose, perhaps?

Lehr's brain wouldn't function with its customary clarity. He couldn't think it out, couldn't concentrate—

A little man in a white jacket suddenly materialized out of the very ground, as it seemed. "Countess-lady!" he said, bowing and hissing. "Missie Lanchester, she say please come to her in lib-ary."

"But of course!" agreed the Countess. "I shall be happy."

"This way quickest, I show," said the servant, trotting toward a dark corner of the house.

HE held open a door. There was a narrow entry, with a single light, and beyond, a ponderous oak-paneled door.

Commander Lehr bowed over the Countess' slender fingers, just outside that door.

"I shall hope," said he, "that this is *au revoir*. A dance later, perhaps?"

"With pleasure," smiled the Countess.

Lehr started away—there was another passage here, and at its end lights and music. The servant had opened the door for the Countess; Lehr heard it close behind her. But—what was that? Did he also hear a muffled cry of terror or pain? He stopped short, turned around. The servant stood there, watching him, but as the man caught his eye, he bowed respectfully and went back to-

ward the terrace and disappeared.

Lehr was still woozy. Mustn't, he thought, make a fool of himself again this evening. He went on, his thoughts fixed upon the bar and a straight rye.

As he emerged on the dance floor, the first person his eyes fell upon was his hostess, Mrs. Reggie Lanchester, dancing with Admiral Jourdan.

But she was supposed to be in the library. She had sent for the Countess. Something wrong here—damned wrong—

Lehr spun on his heel. Three quick purposeful strides he took, back toward that closed library door. Then he hesitated—a girl in the frilly cap and apron of a lady's maid came suddenly into view, knocked at the door, went in.

He was being a fool, Lehr told himself. There was some perfectly reasonable explanation for all this.

He turned again, resolved this time to let nothing keep him from that straight rye. And thereby prolonged his life for some years; the white-jacketed man who stood at the narrow window which opened from the terrace into that passage pocketed his silencer-fitted gun with a grunt of satisfaction and faded into the shadows. That gun had, a moment before, been trained on Lehr's heart. One more step. . . .

* * * * *

Dan Fowler finished checking over the last of the reports that had come in from headquarters that day. He leaned back in the admiral's comfortable swivel chair and let his brain pick to pieces the problem before him.

McMunn—Mrs. McMunn—they were his key pieces now. Mrs. McMunn was guilty as hell. McMunn himself—Fowler was not so sure. There was something about that young officer which Fowler liked. Something clean and honest and straightforward in his manner, his eyes; and yet a hint of suffering, too. Bah! It was acting, that was all. McMunn was in this up to his neck.

Fowler's mind ranged back to poor Osborn. He had the answer to the

Osborn problem, right enough. He'd heard Mrs. McMunn's voice, of course or caught a glimpse of her—and fled. He had not had the heart to tell his friend, nor the courage to meet her face to face. There had been spies watching; they had recognized him, known that he must have recognized Mrs. McMunn, feared that he might tell McMunn, or report to the Navy Department. Yes, Osborn's story was plain to Fowler, but McMunn's was still obscure.

THE telephone rang. Fowler picked it up, answered.

A voice said: "Is Lieutenant Daniels there?"

"Speaking."

"Are you alone?"

"Yes."

"Operator okay?"

"Yes."

"Dan! This is Kingman, New York field office. I've got bad news. Those two janes crashed out of the hospital this afternoon."

"What! You don't mean Juliette and Suzy?"

"I certainly do. They're wanted for murder now; they bumped a matron during their getaway."

"Good Lord! Why wasn't I notified sooner?"

"Nobody knew it till six o'clock. The reception clerk saw 'em scam, but he thought nothing of it, anyway he was afraid he'd be blamed and didn't report it. He didn't know they were prisoners. When the head nurse missed the matron at supper time, she found her tied up in their room, head bashed in, and strangled by a gag. She called the cops; and the cops muddled around all evening trying to find the girls, before some bright soul finally got it through his solid ivory skull that these were Federal prisoners and it might be a good idea to notify us. I just this minute got the flash, Dan. They might be in Newport by this time; they got out about two o'clock."

"All right, stick there till I call you back. No time for more details now," snapped Fowler. He hung up, grabbed the phone book, thumbed through

it with frantic fingers, found the Lanchester number.

He'd called Upshaw there earlier in the evening, and found all serene. Now if he could only get him again as quickly—

"Mrs. Reginald Lanchester's residence," said a very British voice.

"Get Captain Upshaw to the phone as quick as you can. Naval Station calling. Government business," rapped Fowler. "If you can't find him, get Admiral Jourdan."

"Veddy well, sir."

Fowler waited, sweating blood—Sally! Sally was there—in deadly peril—those two women might already be in the house, conferring with their pals—Three minutes—four—

"Are you theah?" said the British voice.

"Yes—yes—"

"I'm veddy sorry, sir. I can't seem to locate Captain Upshaw, and Admiral Jourdan is—"

Abruptly the phone went dead. Fowler jiggled the hook madly.

"Operator!" said the voice of the petty officer at the Naval Station switchboard.

"Get me that number back—quick."

Fowler could hear the man calling—could hear the voice of a phone-girl say:

"Sorry to keep you waiting—Newport 705 seems to be out of order."

They'd cut the wire then—

HE flung the receiver on the hook, sprang to his feet. He'd waited too long now. Thank the Lord, a car was outside. Ready for emergency. He could be at the Lanchester house in ten minutes. The office door opened. Lieutenant-Commander Endicott McMunn, U.S.N., stood there staring at the swiftly moving Fowler.

"In a hurry?" he asked.

Fowler came to a sliding halt. His hand went for his gun—this must be a trap, McMunn might have orders to stop him. But McMunn made no hostile move.

"Sorry you seem to be on your way," said he. "I was lonesome; wanted company. Couldn't concentrate on what I was doing."

Fowler wanted company, too—wanted it as badly as he'd ever wanted it in his life. No time now to go by the marine barracks for help. It would take maybe another ten minutes to turn out an escort. If McMunn was on the square, a companion at this moment might mean a lot—another gun might make the difference between victory and defeat.

"McMunn," said Fowler, "I'm going out to the Lanchester house. There's trouble there. Will you go along and lend a hand?"

"Spies?" snapped McMunn.

"Spies," affirmed Fowler grimly.

McMunn's eyes lit up like twin candles.

"Lead me to them!" he begged.

"Got a gun? No? Here, take this one." Fowler grabbed a service automatic out of the admiral's right hand drawer. "Let's go."

For good or ill, Fowler had made his choice. He realized that as he sent his car roaring over the causeway, crashing through the flimsy wooden barrier which he didn't give the sentry time to raise. McMunn, silent, crouched at his side, was on the edge of the seat, the very picture of determination and grit.

But Fowler's instinct had been right, at that. He could not have left McMunn behind in any case. If McMunn was loyal, he needed him; if a traitor, he must not be left without any check on his movements. Giving him the gun, however, might be a mistake. Only time would tell.

CHAPTER XVI

The Storm Breaks



AS the door of the library closed behind Mary Smith—alias the Countess Ermengarde von Schwarzheim—with a soft but definite click, a woman rose from the depths of an armchair before the grate.

One glance at her was all that Mary Smith needed. She

leaped backward, her hand darting through a slit in her skirt for the little automatic strapped to her thigh. But that hand never reached the gun. Muscular arms were around her. A hard palm was over her mouth, muffling her attempt to scream.

"A charming costume, Countess," said the girl by the fire with silky emphasis. "And how delightful to meet you again so soon, after our all too short encounter on the *Appalachian*?"

"We waste time," snapped the man who was holding Mary. "All has been done, or nearly all. We have talked to three. They have told us enough. Let us go, then, and quickly. Let none suspect how much we know. It will be thus that victory shall be ours. The needle for this woman, doctor."

Struggle as Mary might, she could not avoid the needle. It pricked her arm. She felt unconsciousness stealing over her.

"Put her in the chair—thus—so that the maid may not see her when she enters—and not be warned in time."

She heard those words, and they were the last she heard ere darkness engulfed her.

She did not see Sally Vane come in. She did not see Sally Vane seized, as she had been seized—

As for Sally, she was not quite taken by surprise. She had expected trouble when the summons came. Just a hunch—but she was learning the value of such hunches, which are really an instinct acquired by all secret agents after long experience. They can smell trouble or danger just as a veteran seaman can smell bad weather. So Sally, as she entered, took a swift step to one side and whirled to see who was behind the door.

She saw Nakuma—not that she knew him by that name—in his white jacket, coming toward her with outstretched arms. Had she screamed, in that moment—but she was not a screaming girl. Instead, her gun snapped out, leveled itself at Nakuma's head.

"Stand where you are," she snapped. "One move, and I'll drill you. What is this? Kidnaping the Countess?"

Nakuma paused. The gleam in this young woman's eye told him that she'd shoot if he didn't stop.

"It is nothing," he told her. "The Countess is ill."

From the corner of her eye, Sally could see the white dress of the girl in the chair. But Mary didn't move; and Sally knew that something was very wrong indeed. She could not see the Asiatic doctor, who was crouching behind the chair. Nor could she see Juliette Lapointe, who was sidling along the wall behind her, silent as an adder.

Sally knew she had to act. She made up her mind.

"Back up," she said to Nakuma. "Three paces behind you, in the wall, is a button which will summon a servant. Press it."

"But I am at your service, miss." said Nakuma.

"Do as I bid you," snapped Sally, "or take the consequences. If you have not done it by the time I have counted three, I will shoot you through the stomach, and do it myself. One!"

Nakuma started to back. Sally misread the glitter in his eyes for fear.

"Two!" she counted.

Nakuma's hand went out toward the bell button.

Sally drew in a breath of relief—if she could send the servant for Upshaw, they might yet save the situation—

A RUG, with the weight and drive of a wiry body behind it, came down over her head and outstretched arm, completely muffling the crack of her little gun. Nakuma and the doctor were upon her in a single rush. She was borne to the floor, fighting like a wildcat, but fighting a battle already lost.

"The needle!" Nakuma gasped. "Quick—we can hold her—"

The doctor let go of Sally's leg and fished a leather case from his pocket. Sally, half strangled as she was by a

corner of the rug held over her mouth, jabbed a fist straight into Juliette's snarling face; with beautiful accuracy she kicked up and out. Her high heel crashed against the doctor's wrist; the syringe flew across the room and landed in the fire in a little shower of sparks. The doctor darted after it, letting go a little wail of rage and pain.

But the flames rose higher—he drew back, muttering something in a strange tongue when Nakuma spoke.

"It will be necessary, then, to tie this young lady very tightly, and to gag her. I trust you will pardon any unseemly rudeness, madam? Believe me, this is quite, quite necessary." He was actually smiling as he helped the doctor tie Sally's knees and ankles with cords from the drapes, knot her wrists together behind her back, and gag her with her own apron; Juliette standing by the while with Sally's gun, and a feline threat to shoot Sally if she uttered a sound while the gag was being put in place.

"Now comes the ticklish task of getting these two ladies to the boat-house," Nakuma observed. "Doctor, go back to your duties. We have another patient, who should prove important. Send me all the others—singly, carefully. It is understood?"

The doctor nodded, hurried away.

"We should be very, very happy to leave you here for your friends to find," Nakuma said, bowing politely, "but that is, alas, impossible. They must not guess that we have accomplished our mission. They must think that we have fled in fear and despair. They must believe that they have won; until it is too late. Therefore you must accompany us on a sea voyage. Do not be afraid; you will not be injured if you do not attempt to escape. Nor has your friend yonder suffered any permanent harm.

"You are a very brave young lady. You have served your country well and gallantly, and they should be proud of you. You were beaten by simple mischance, for which no man or woman is responsible."

Sally contrived to shrug her shoulders. It was the only gesture of con-

tempt she could achieve. She was sick at heart.

Two Asiatics in white jackets slipped into the room.

"Go to the boathouse," Nakuma ordered. "Go by the French windows—through the garden—" He broke into rapid speech in his own tongue.

The two men picked Sally up.

"*Au revoir, mademoiselle,*" said Nakuma. And they carried Sally Vane out into the night, bound and helpless.

IN another room of that enormous rabbit warren of a house, a little room once used by the gardener as a storage place for tools and bulbs, the little Asiatic doctor knelt on the floor beside a prostrate man in the dark blue coat and light blue, red striped trousers of an officer of Marines. The gold stripes on his cuff, with loops of gold above, proclaimed him a colonel. He lay very still.

The door opened. Silent as a ghost, Nakuma slid through, surveyed the colonel in the tiny ray of the doctor's flashlight.

"Quickly," murmured the doctor. "I give you five minutes."

"Quickly indeed," answered Nakuma. "For soon the guest of honor will be missed, and we shall have difficulties. As it is, I cannot understand why the escape of Juliette has not been reported and caused an uproar. Very well. I proceed. Colonel Esterling!"

"I am here," said the man on the floor in a soft voice, without opening his eyes.

"You have been working on what part of the war plan?"

"The plan for the seizure of an advanced base in the Bonin Islands," was the reply. "It will be a surprise stroke, carried out by Marines from San Diego and Pearl Harbor."

"Their strength?"

"Two regiments of infantry, one of base-defense artillery, a company of engineers, a signal company, and a chemical company."

"Carried in what ships, and with what escort?"

"In the naval transports *San Juan*

and *Santiago*, and in five fast merchant ships specially earmarked for this service. The *San Juan* and *Santiago* have been secretly refitted and are able to do twenty knots, though their published speed is only fourteen. The escort will be provided by destroyers and submarines supposedly out of commission at San Diego, for which crews will be assembled under a special mobilization scheme within forty-eight hours after the declaration of war."

"What about aircraft?"

"The ships now under construction at Seattle and San Francisco, supposed to be tankers for the Universal Oil Company, are really fast aircraft carriers," Colonel Esterling answered. "Each can carry two squadrons of pursuit planes and one of bombers. All these planes have been assembled at secret airdromes in the isolated regions of Northern California, and are ready to take their places on board the carriers, which are all ready for sea, though nominally still incomplete."

Nakuma's eyes glittered. Not a word of all this had he heard before. The secret agents of his Empire on the Pacific Coast would have much to answer for. They had been royally deceived. But, thanks to the favor of the gods, he had learned the truth in time.

"And the use of this base?"

"The blockade of the coast of the Asiatic Empire by submarines and destroyers, cutting off oil and food supplies; and the launching of air attacks against her vulnerable cities in case air attacks are made on our Pacific Coast. Also the establishment of a firmly held base in the Western Pacific for the use of our fleet."

It fitted; it fitted with all the rest he had heard that night. The United States, if war came, was not going to stand on the defensive, as all previous plans had assumed; it was going to carry the war into Asiatic waters by a series of bold strokes, and fight the Asiatics to a finish in their own part of the world. The result would have been devastating to the Asiatic plans—had these American projects

(not been discovered in time. Now—now they could be met. Now there would be but worse disaster for the bold Americans. For the one essential element of their plans was—surprise. Without surprise, such plans were foredoomed to failure.

"One minute more," warned the doctor.

"It is enough. I dare not waste another instant," Nakuma snapped. "Too much depends on my getting away with this news. I go. Join us at the boathouse, and lose not a second."

He slipped through the door—and a hand of steel locked itself about his throat, shutting off his breath in one fierce clasp.

"So that's your scheme, you rat!" snarled a voice he knew very well—the voice of Lieutenant-Commander Endicott McMunn, U.S.N.

WHEN Fowler had stopped his car in the street as close as he could get to the Lanchester home—the street was jammed with parked limousines—he had hardly made up his mind how to proceed. He was in full evening dress uniform, borrowed from the useful Tufton.

He would go boldly in, and if Mary Smith was still carrying on as guest of honor, he'd know he had a breathing spell. He'd find Upshaw, tell him what had happened. An officer could be detailed not to let Mary out of his sight; Mary could be warned, could get Sally off the premises temporarily. Maybe the Lapointe woman wouldn't show up at all; she might not dare attempt to get in touch with these people, though Fowler had little hope of that.

Once the safety of the two girl agents was assured, he could consult with Upshaw as to what other steps had best be taken. It was a vague plan, beyond that point. But it was the best he could do at the moment.

As for McMunn, he was in service blues. He would not pass as a guest. The appearance of a naval officer in service uniform might arouse instant suspicion, might cause the spies to

put into action any scheme they were hatching against the girl agents.

He glanced at McMunn's stern young profile as the two got out of the car. He felt that he could trust the young officer. But how could he be sure? Damn it, he had to take a chance. He'd started on this course, he'd follow it out.

"Look here, McMunn," said he, "I'm going inside. I'm dressed for the damned party; you're not. Stick around out here; if you see anything wrong, use your best judgment. You'll be here when I need you?"

"You're damned well right," said McMunn.

Fowler went up the well lighted walk to the imposing front entrance, permitted a footman to relieve him of his cap, walked swiftly into the swirling ballroom. A uniform came to stand beside him. He recognized Commander Lehr.

"Seen Captain Upshaw, sir?" he asked.

"Oh, hello, Daniels! Yes, Upshaw's here somewhere. Dancing, if I'm not mistaken. Best way is to stick here and tap him as he comes round. Quite a party, this."

"It is all of that," said Fowler, grimly. "How is the guest of honor bearing up?"

"Well enough, I think," Lehr said. "Queer thing about the little Countess, just now. It's got me puzzled."

"What was it?"

"Damn it, man, you've got a grip like a vise! You needn't twist my arm off! It wasn't that important. She came out on the terrace with Upshaw a while ago. Somebody called Upshaw to the phone; left the Countess with me. I was feeling a little rocky, had some rum that was rather strong. Anyway, one of these Oriental servants of Mrs. Lanchester's came for her, said Mrs. Lanchester wanted to speak to her in the library.

"I escorted her there, she went in. I was part way down the passage when I heard a funny sound like strangled cry. I didn't think so much of that, but, lo and behold, when I got to the ball room the first person I saw was Mrs. Lanchester, dancing

with the admiral. I turned around, half a mind to go back and see what was up. But just then a neat little lady's maid came from somewhere and went into the library, and she looked so trim and cute and sort of all right that I thought I was being a fool.

"She didn't seem to see anything inside that wasn't on the up and up. Went right in. So I decided on the bar and a drink to settle my nerves. But you know, it's queer—I haven't seen our guest of honor since!"

"Could you take me to that library now, Commander?" asked Fowler.

"Certainly. Right this way." They started off.

"You don't happen to have a gun on you, do you?" Fowler asked as they went down the passage.

"Lord, no. Not in this rig. Is it as bad at that?"

"I'm afraid so." Fowler slid his own weapon into his right hand. With his left he suddenly flung open the library door.

THE room was empty. The fire still burned in the grate. Before the long French windows, the drapes hung loose—all but one, which was caught back with a cord. A crumpled rug lay, a note of crimson disorder, near the door. Fowler swept the room with one penetrating glance; then he crossed quickly to the fireplace, pointed to a bit of blackened metal.

"Hypodermic syringe," he said. "Bullet hole in the floor over there. Cords gone from the curtains—used to tie somebody up, of course. Scratches on the floor near that rug—fresh ones. There's been dirty work here, all right, Commander. We're too late."

"They've kidnaped the Countess, then?"

"Let it go at that. They wouldn't go out through the corridor. Let's see these French windows. Huh—here's one unlatched. Opens on the south terrace; garden's beyond that. The garden—and the boathouse. Commander, will you go quickly, please, and telephone to the Naval Station? Tell 'em to have a fast

launch come round here to cover this inlet as quick as they can.

"Halt any motorboat coming out, hold it. Then find Captain Upshaw, ask him to get together what officers he can trust, and come to the boat-house on the run? I'm going down there. That's the way they've gone, I'm certain. We've known for days that they had a motorboat there."

"You're going alone?"

"Yes!"

Fowler waited for no more words.

He plunged across the terrace, down the inclined bank, and went racing through the garden. If he could only be in time.

* * * * *

Lieutenant - Commander McMunn was not the most patient of young men. He didn't like being left on the sidewalk to bite his nails and ask himself questions.

But he'd promised; and he stuck—until, looking toward the house, he saw a woman appear for just an instant at the corner of the west terrace, where the light from a window showed her crimson dress, her white ermine wrap, in clear relief.

"Why, that's Margaret," said he; and forgetting everything except the desire to speak to his wife, he ran across the lawn and gained the terrace in a bound. He was just in time to see her running like a deer toward the rear of the house; she vanished even as he glimpsed her.

McMunn ran in pursuit. What the devil was wrong with her? Why was she running, like that? He reached the corner of the house; she was not in sight, it was dark back there. There might be a door, there might be two or three doors through which she had gone—

Here was one. McMunn's hand was on the latch when he heard someone say inside:

"What about aircraft?"

McMunn stiffened. He listened, frozen with horror, to the answer of Colonel Esterling. He listened to further questions—and he recognized, with a chill of horror, the voice, the very accents of the questioner. He recognized, too, the voice of

Colonel Esterling, queerly flat as it was. He opened the door the tiniest crack. He saw the prostrate colonel, the reflection of the light on the wrinkled face of the doctor, brooding over the scene like a presiding demon. He understood, then, what was being done; and he understood—many other things.

HE leaned against the doorpost and trembled from head to foot.

Horror chilled the very blood in his veins. But he gripped himself, straightened—the fellow who'd been asking questions was coming out. McMunn flattened himself against the wall. Nakuma emerged, carefully closing the door behind him; and as he did so, McMunn grabbed him by the throat.

"So that's your scheme, is it, you rat!" said he, choking the little Asiatic so fiercely that Nakuma had no chance to utter a cry. "Well, you haven't won your game yet, damn you!"

He shook Nakuma as if he'd been a terrier and Nakuma indeed the rat he'd named him. Nakuma managed to bring up a knee; pain shot through McMunn's body, horrible searing pain that never loosened his grip for a moment. He was killing mad; he had forgotten his gun, forgotten Fowler, forgotten everything but the savage determination to kill this man, here and now, with his bare hands.

So when the pistol-butt thudded down on his head from behind, it took him utterly by surprise. He went to his knees, still hanging on to Nakuma's throat; another blow dropped him, stunned, on the turf.

Nakuma fell beside him, gasping for breath; it was a full minute before he could do anything but fight for the air his tortured lungs craved. The man who had struck McMunn, a little Asiatic in a white jacket, lifted him to his feet. Nakuma leaned on him, contrived to speak in a hoarse croak of a whisper:

"Are the women in boat? All—four?"

"Yes, master."

"The doctor?"

"Here," said a shadow nearby.

"Pick up this man—quickly—he may be of great use—and we dare not leave him—carry him—boat. I'll get along—alone. Hurry—hurry—"

They obeyed; they faded swiftly and silently into the shadows of the garden, the doctor and the other man carrying the limp form of McMunn, and Nakuma staggering along behind, fingering his mishandled throat.

It had been a near thing—a very near thing—but the favor of the gods had not departed from him in his hour of need.

Nakuma offered up respectful thanks to his deities.

It was, as may be calculated, about three minutes afterward that Dan Fowler went running down the garden path which led to the boathouse, gun in hand and cold fear clutching at his heart.

The boathouse was dark and silent when he reached it. The door was locked. Had he been wrong? Had they gone some other way? Or were they perhaps still hidden in the house?

His answer came with a sudden clamor of sound; the boathouse trembled to the roar of a powerful, starting motor.

Fowler drew back and hurled himself, right leg stiffened out before him, against the door. There was a cracking sound, but the door held. He charged it full tilt with his whole weight; it gave, with a crash, and Fowler plunged into the interior of the boathouse.

Right ahead of him was a gleam of water, and a dark mass—the boat. Unhesitatingly he leaped for it—just as the boat shot ahead as someone threw in the clutch.

Fowler landed in the water of the slip with a terrific splash.

He came to the surface sputtering, chilled to the bone by his sudden immersion; he could hear the receding purr of the motor, muffled now, as the boat shot out into the inlet.

HE swam round the edge of the slip till he found a ladder, climbed out of the water. Just as he dragged himself to the edge of the

coaming, Captain Upshaw and Commander Lehr, followed by two other officers, came rushing into the boat-house. Upshaw had a flashlight.

"Daniels!" he exclaimed. "What's happened?"

"They've got away, that's what happened," said Fowler, bitterly, through chattering teeth.

"Scrammed, eh?" cried Upshaw. "Got scared when they found out we were on to 'em!"

"That's what *you* think," snapped a voice from the far depths of the boat-house—a voice which set Fowler's heart suddenly to pounding.

The captain's flashlight swept in a long arc to probe the long shed. It swept over the concrete walks on each side of the slip; there was no one there.

"Up here," said the voice, echoing along the roof.

The ray lifted. Clinging to a cross-beam above the slip, perilously balanced on that narrow bar of steel, was a slender girl in what was left of a maid's black uniform. Her blond hair hung down about her face, but her eyes were bright and her grin was still in evidence.

"Sally!" cried Fowler.

"Get me down from here, and get after that boat," Sally retorted. "They've got away with the whole damned business—all your plans!"

"What!" roared Upshaw.

Fowler was reaching out a helping hand to Sally. Upshaw held the light, while Lehr assisted Fowler in swinging the girl to the safety of the concrete.

"How'd you manage it, Sally?" asked Fowler.

"Nothing to it," Sally answered. "You know your old trick of hiding a thin razor blade in the hem of your sleeve? I didn't forget it. When they loaded me into the boat, they just ignored me. I was all tied up and gagged, safely as they thought. I cut myself loose. If I could have got a gun, I might have shot the lot of them in the darkness, and I would have, too," she added grimly. "It would have been my duty to my country. But, as it was—well, they used

a flashlight when they were loading in the officer, and I caught a glimpse of those crossbeams. I had to jump for the beam I selected in the dark, just as the boat started; but I made it!"

"I'll say you made it, Sally! You're wonderful!" said Fowler.

"Let go of me!" snapped Sally. "You're sopping wet! And listen—we've no time to waste. Those yellow devils know the whole business—every plan you've been making, Captain Upshaw!"

"Lehr, run and get the Naval Station," interrupted Upshaw. "Order out every launch, every available patrol boat. Get armed crews in 'em—machine-guns, if any are available. Use apprentice seamen from the training station to reinforce the Marines. Call Fort Adams; ask the Army to cooperate. They'll have a few launches. Call the Coast Guard, too. Radio the *Beale*, she's on her way up the Sound. Have her proceed at full speed, watching for suspicious motor-boats. We've got to stop 'em, if the young lady is right."

Commander Lehr made off at a run.

"Now then, Miss Vane," Upshaw said. "How do you know they have these plans? It seems impossible—we haven't even coordinated them yet, though the separate parts are complete.

"Is there anyone present who shouldn't hear details?" asked Sally.

UPSHAW'S flashlight inspected faces. There had been no general alarm among the guests—no excitement, as yet.

"Then," snapped Sally, "let me tell you what they know, what I heard the head spy whispering to his chief assistant, in case anything should happen to him—a plan to seize a base in the Bonin Islands, a plan for a vigorous naval offensive based on Hawaii into the Western Pacific, separate air plans for the sudden bombing of Asiatic bases in the Caroline Islands—"

"Good Lord!" cut in Upshaw, "that's enough! More than enough! If they know all that, they must be

stopped! But how? And how did they find out?"

"I haven't the faintest idea," said Sally. "But they know."

"They've beaten us," snarled Captain Faxon. "Upshaw, are we to stand here twiddling our thumbs?"

"No. Come on!" Upshaw cried. "I've got to find the admiral."

They started back toward the house.

"The library," suggested Fowler. "Let's not alarm everyone. We can go in through the French windows, and someone can bring the admiral there. Everything is being done that can be done to stop that boat; for the moment, at least. Maybe we can think of something else, but time spent in making a plan won't be wasted. We mustn't go off at tangents."

"That's sensible," said Upshaw. "Faxon, you and Nylund go and look for the old man. Bring him here, and bring him quick."

He whirled back to Sally. "What about Miss Smith?"

"I had to leave her," Sally said. "She was drugged. I hated to do it, but I thought it my duty to let you know the truth."

"Right, of course," said Upshaw.

"What about this officer you spoke of?" Fowler asked.

"A lieutenant-commander in service uniform. I didn't see his face, but I did see that his hair was matted with blood. He was out, cold. They carried him aboard."

McMunn! Fowler knew it instantly.

"And how many are there on that boat?"

"Four or five Asiatics, I think; Juliette and her maid; and I had the impression that there was another woman somewhere about, though I couldn't see well enough to be sure."

"Arms? Any machine-guns?"

"I didn't see any, but I'll bet there are some."

"You didn't hear any hint as to where they are going?"

"No. But they were boasting that they had everything they needed. They were depending on your think-

ing that they had fled in panic."

"You blocked that, Sally. Fine work." Fowler was stripping off his wet coat and vest, wringing water from his trousers in front of the fire.

"You are a gallant young lady," Captain Upshaw said. "Daniels, we're up against it. I've done what can be done. But I don't think the launches from the station can get round the point in time to cut off that fast motorboat. They're away. Our chief dependence is—you. You've got to outthink 'em. Which way will they go? Where shall we make our search?"

FOWLER groaned. "That's a lot of responsibility you're handing me, Captain," he said. "First of all, I think every Coast Guard station and every police force up and down the coast of Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island should be notified to watch out for a strange motorboat attempting to make a landing. Next, the *Beale* and any other vessels available, Navy or Coast Guard, should be ordered out to search for suspicious steamers hanging off the coast. But they'll know that's what we'll do. They'll try to outthink us, just as we're trying to outthink them.

"They could not have known that they'd be compelled to flee tonight. Carefully as they may have planned their coup, they must have anticipated a longer stay in Newport, and were forced into swifter action by the arrival of Juliette Lapointe. Assuming that to be correct, they could not have had any steamer ready to carry them away. One may be in the vicinity, but not ready, right at hand, to pick up that motorboat. What would I do if I were their leader?"

"I'd say to myself, the Americans will be combing every inch of the waters about here. I'm not safe for an instant at sea. I daren't try to land up or down the coast, for their highly efficient Coast Guard will get me. Then what? I'll double right back to Newport. That's the last place on earth they'll be seeking me!"

"Back here, you mean?"

"Not exactly. I think I'd try sneak-

ing along close to the shore into Narragansett Bay. Once they've past the Naval Station they can land at Bristol, or Warren, or even go on up to Providence or Fall River. They can land one of their men at each of those places, in fact, and take a chance that one of them gets clear with the information. That's why they're passing it on as Sally overheard. They can be doing all this while we're looking for them in the open sea."

Admiral Jourdan burst into the room at that instant, followed by Captain Faxon.

"I've spread the net," said Faxon before the admiral could speak. "And just in time, too. Fort Adams got a searchlight on a motorboat sneaking past. They lost her almost at once, but they think she's heading into Narragansett Bay. I've got a car in front, and there's a launch at the ferry landing."

"You guessed right, Fowler!" Upshaw cried.

"Come on, gentlemen!" ordered the admiral. "This hunt's begun! And the safety of our country depends on the outcome!"

CHAPTER XVII

The Death Trap



NEWPORT HARBOR, scene of many a peaceful regatta, had never, since the far-off days of 1812, presented such a spectacle as it did that night.

Armed launches everywhere darted about, their searchlights probing into dark coves, sweeping over anchored yachts, searching the black surface of the waters. Many an indignant yachtsman was routed from his comfortable berth while his vessel was searched by grim-faced bluejackets, or Marines, or Coast Artillerymen, and he himself was subjected to stern questioning.

On the admiral's barge, a powerful, brightly polished little craft, the ad-

miral himself, Upshaw, Faxon, Lehr, Fowler and Sally Vane were crowded into the cockpit. Forward, Lieutenant Tufton and a guard of Marines manned a machine-gun.

They were shooting around the north end of the island on which the Torpedo Station stands when the searchlight picked up a trail of foam in the water, followed it, caught one glimpse of a motorboat, all lights out, streaking into the channel between the Torpedo Station and the city of Newport.

"Heave to, there!" bellowed Tufton through a megaphone. The machine-gun fired a burst of tracers—

"Keep that searchlight on him, quartermaster! That's our man!" roared the admiral. But the darkened boat had slipped out of sight.

"He must have dodged into one of the Torpedo Station piers," Captain Upshaw exclaimed. "Train the searchlight left, quartermaster! Search those piers— There he is! They're landing on the Torpedo Station!" The searchlight's glare showed little, dark figures leaping from the motorboat to a wooden pier. A bluejacket sentry came running into the light, bayonet glittering; there was a flicker of pistol shots, the sentry tumbled over backward. The dark figures ran in a body along the pier and disappeared round the corner of a brick building.

The barge was speeding for the spot, her bow-wave rising higher in response to Tufton's frantic shouts to the engineer.

"Hardly a handful of men on the Torpedo Station, sir," Upshaw cried to the admiral. "Most of those who weren't in Newport on liberty have been rounded up to man launches!"

"Do you think they're going to dynamite the torpedo factory? Be a nasty thing, that. It'd hurt us—"

"No, sir," said Fowler. "I don't think they're going to commit any overt act of war. That'd start hostilities before they were ready. They have some scheme of escape. Something they've worked out."

The launch swept alongside the dock, where the motorboat lay.

"Tufton!" shouted the admiral. "Take that boat in tow, and stand off here. Don't come ashore for any hail unless you recognize the voice of the officer calling you. Keep the barge's crew with you. Marines, follow me! Gentlemen, if you please!"

WITH half a dozen bronzed Marines and his little group of officers at his heels, the gallant admiral scrambled ashore and went racing down the dock. Gaining the corner where the spies had vanished, the flashlight in Upshaw's hand showed a long alleyway between two adjacent buildings. An arc light burned at its farther end, but even as they looked, a pistol cracked and the arc went out in a snapping sputter of incandescence.

"Captain Faxon, take three Marines and go round the west side of this building. Others with me. Forward!" came the admiral's command.

A crackle of pistol fire broke out somewhere ahead as they raced along. The spies were fighting with the remnant of a guard at the Station.

Fowler, gripping his gun, ran at the admiral's heels. His eyes were alert—but behind them, his brain was busy. Why had they landed here? Not in panic, but in pursuit of some well-grounded plan, of that he was certain.

Why? This was an island. Once landed, there was little hope of escape. The ferryboat was at the Newport pier; all launches were out in the harbor engaged in search. Why immerse themselves in a trap like that? Fowler feared some hellish treachery, and his eyes strove in vain to probe the darkness ahead.

The admiral stumbled; Fowler grabbed his arm, saved him from a fall.

Captain Upshaw's flashlight snapped on, shone on the upturned, bloody face of an officer in uniform, lying dead at their feet.

"Chief Gunner Sorenson," said Upshaw. "A fine man. God rest him—"

They were running onward. No time now for pity of the dead. Again a spatter of pistol shots.

"This way!" cried Captain Faxon's voice. "They're in the powerhouse now!"

They could see him run beneath a dim incandescent, his Marines after him. They were clear of the big buildings; ahead loomed a smaller one, with a single lighted window; the powerhouse.

"They're trapped, then," panted Upshaw. "There's only one door, and the windows are all in front. We've got 'em."

For answer, a machine-gun chattered savagely from the powerhouse window.

Upshaw went sprawling. "Got me in the leg," he called. "Go on—never mind me."

"Spread out!" shouted the admiral. "Spread out and lie down. Watch those windows, that door. Don't let 'em come out. We can't get in, but they can't escape. Captain Faxon!"

"Here, sir!"

"Run back to the pier, order Tufton to come in as close as he can to this spot and turn his searchlight on that powerhouse. Keep it well illuminated. Then get to a telephone and order the commanding officer of the Training Station to send over a field piece and a crew of apprentice seamen, with fifty rounds of H. E. shell. Send the ferry to bring 'em. It'll cost the United States a new powerhouse, but the price will be cheap. Thank God for your quick brain, Daniels. You outguessed the rats! They're trapped!"

The admiral's voice was ringing with the joy of victory.

FOWLER didn't feel so gay. It just wasn't like the very astute man who was commanding the spy group to let himself be caught in a *cul-de-sac* like this. Could it be that he had already landed one of his agents, who even now was streaking away to the nearest railway station, and so, by devious means, to the Canadian border or a ship? Was this simply a diversion? Were the men in the powerhouse offering up their lives to hold the attention of the Americans while others escaped?

Yet Fowler did not see how it would be possible for them to have landed anyone. When they were sighted off Fort Adams, they had had barely time to reach that spot; and since then they had been hunted so vigorously that he doubted if they could have touched shore and made off again.

Rat-tat-tat spoke the machine-gun from the powerhouse window. They were in there, all right. They were caught. And yet—and yet—Fowler's unfailing instinct was not convinced. Trumpets of warning were sounding in his soul's depths. He was being tricked—

He was crouching behind an ancient cannon on a triangular little plat of ground perhaps a hundred yards from the powerhouse. To his left were the piers for the accommodation of destroyers and submarines. To his right the machine-shop. Straight ahead the powerhouse.

He peered about him, able to see nothing save the faint gleam of reflected light on the flashlight which the admiral had grabbed from the wounded Upshaw.

The admiral was at the other end of the cannon. The Marines were strung out beyond him, alert and watchful.

Fowler looked to his left; he thought he saw something move. In a whisper he spoke of it to the admiral.

"Slip over there and investigate," the admiral ordered.

Fowler stole silently toward the dark piers. He was jumpy—he was seeing things. He came to the cement walk, to the wooden planking of the first pier. Nothing here. Nothing. The lights of the city gleamed on the waters of the channel, beyond the pier's end. There was no sound, no sign of movement.

He walked slowly, carefully, along to the next pier. A bulky mass loomed in the darkness beside it—a ship? No, no tracery of masts and rigging against the sky. Then what was it?

Behind, the machine-gun chattered again; the crack of a Marine's rifle

answered. The enemy was there, not here. Yet Fowler went out on that second pier, impelled by a force that would not be denied. Some sort of vessel was moored alongside it. Some dark misshapen mass—Fowler paused by a bollard to listen again. Had he heard a sound? There it was again—a faint metallic clang, as though, in the heart of that queer-looking craft, someone had closed a steel door. What was the thing, anyway? Not a light showed on it—

Fowler, half crouching, every nerve tingling, moved along the stringpiece of the pier. There ought to be a gangway here. Yes—his foot struck a single plank. He walked across it, felt a steel deck underfoot. His outstretched hand touched a steel wall, barring his way.

Feeling along the wall, he came to a door, also of steel. The door was closed, secured by heavy "dogs." Fowler tried one of them tentatively. It could not be moved without using all his strength—and Lord knew how much noise it would make as it yielded.

His eyes were becoming more accustomed to the darkness now. He went along that wall, feeling his way, came to where it ended, or rather turned back on the other side, forming a sort of streamlined V.

THERE was something else up there—some smaller mass—he tiptoed toward it, his fingers touched canvas, with a hard rounded shape underneath. The breech of a gun. Then he knew, in a flash, where he was.

This craft could be but one sort of vessel. He was standing on the deck of the submarine X-5.

Beneath his feet he heard the faint *tap-tap* of a hammer. He was not alone aboard this ship. Yet she showed no lights, no sign of activity about the decks. If her own crew was aboard, or any part of it, they would surely have heard the firing by this time and be out to see what was going on. Then—the spies were below.

Fowler whirled to run; he must tell

the admiral, must get help to trap them—

His foot slipped on the smooth steel deck, flew from under him. He fell, striking his head heavily against the gun-mount—and beneath him, the steel deck throbbed to the purr of mighty motors.

Half stunned as he was, Fowler tried to yell—he couldn't, his vocal powers were temporarily paralyzed by the blow—he couldn't move—

He saw the light in the powerhouse window moving—but it wasn't, of course. The submarine was moving—sliding away from her pier silently, under the impulse of her electric motors, unnoticed, unchecked, carrying the spies to sea and safety.

A small searchlight snapped into life near the ferry slip, bathing the powerhouse in its pitiless radiance. That was Tufton, with the admiral's launch. But here, in darkness, the spies stole away, while one or two of their number stayed behind in that powerhouse to cover their retreat.

Fowler could know and feel all this, while the paralysis persisted in its hold on his muscles. The submarine was not moving fast, but she was moving steadily. Fowler could see something above his head—the little bridge atop the conning tower—swinging against the stars. She was changing course. He saw a round head above the weather-cloth. If he could but lift his gun—

He had no gun. It had slid away from his relaxing fingers, gone over-side, probably. If the motors hadn't started just then, they'd have heard it below; they'd be out here by now if they had. But there could not be many of them. They'd be busy at multifarious duties. They had not heard.

It was up to Fowler. One man, alone, unarmed, against a desperate crew of spies.

He must stop them; for they carried with them secrets which would cripple, if not ruin, his country.

He must stop them; for if they were stopped, his country would be saved from war.

The doctor was aboard, of course.

And the chief spy. They were the kingpins of the Asiatic spy system in the United States. Once they were laid by the heels there would at least be respite. Fowler found that he could move his arms and legs a little. He could have yelled, too, but it was too late for that. He'd be committing suicide, and all depended on his living until he could somehow stop these spies.

There would be launches in the harbor; they'd see the sub. But would they fire at her? Of course not. They'd think she was helping them search.

And they probably wouldn't stop here even if they suspected her. But the guns at Fort Adams could! The sub could never get past the guns and searchlights at the fort, if the fort could be warned.

The channel wouldn't be deep enough for her to submerge until she was past the batteries. Or would it?

FOWLER thought this over.

He tried to remember the depth of water marked on the charts he'd seen at the War College. He couldn't be sure.

The red and green running lights of the submarine suddenly came on. She was emerging into the open harbor. The clever men who were handling her meant her to look as innocent as possible.

The Torpedo Station was well behind; ahead, the harbor, the narrows, and then the broad Atlantic. Once through the narrows, and she was safe. They were safe. And the war clouds would gather thick and black and menacing above America. Fowler lay close to the gun-mount, aware that his own shadow merged with it, that so long as he lay still he was safe.

He considered rolling overboard as soon as he saw a patrol launch close at hand, swimming to it, and getting ashore to telephone the fort. But there might not be time enough. The artillery officer might not be willing to fire on a United States warship just on Fowler's word.

There seemed to be only one man

on the bridge. He would be steering; the others must be below, standing by the motors. Fowler could delay no longer. He slid away from the gun, rolled across the deck to the shadow of the conning tower. There was no sign of his having been observed, no cry of alarm.

He crawled round the conning tower to its rear. Here was a steel ladder leading upward. Very cautiously Fowler lifted himself, rung by rung, till he could peer over the edge. He could see the whole of the little bridge in the faint glow from the great main hatch, which was open. The huge slab of steel stood up directly in his path, offering him a shield behind which he could crouch while reconnoitering.

There were two men on the bridge, not one. A man at the wheel, and a man who stood near him with something across his arm—a tommy-gun, Fowler thought.

No chance for a surprise attack here. He couldn't get them both at once. The man at the wheel had a dark lump at his side which was certainly a pistol. Whichever Fowler attacked first, the other would shoot him down.

A searchlight's beam swept over the sub from stem to stern—another little light, a launch's light. Fowler squeezed close to the hatch-cover.

"Ahoy, submarine!" hailed a hoarse voice.

"U. S. S. X-5," called back the man with the tommy-gun. He wore a naval officer's cap, Fowler saw now. "Searching outer channel by order of Rear-Admiral Jourdan."

"Good luck, X-5!" replied the man in the launch, and the light winked out.

In the instant of comparative blindness which followed, Fowler swung himself round the hatch cover and dropped down the main hatch of the submarine. He knew where he would find himself—in the conning tower, where there were arrangements for steering the ship when steering was not being done from the bridge. Short-handed as the spies were, there would be no reason for anyone being

here. Fowler had staked his life on that—and he'd been right. The conning tower was empty.

Above his head was the huge wheel used for closing the main hatch; ahead of him, a steering wheel and a little engine-room telegraph. At his feet, another, smaller hatch glowed brightly from the lights in the main control room, which was directly under the conning tower.

CAUTIOUSLY Fowler peered down. There was no one there, either. About the steel walls of the compartment were ranked the innumerable valves and levers and switches which controlled the ship when submerged. There was no need for manning them while she was running on the surface.

What was that? Over to one side, on the steel grating that formed the control room floor, he saw a foot. Two feet—and ankles, bound tightly. A man lay there, half hidden by the big air manifold.

As Fowler looked, he saw the feet draw themselves up an inch, twist to one side, then the other. The man was trying to get free. The trousers, Fowler saw, were blue.

He dropped through the hatch, descended into the control room, slipped round behind the air manifold—and looked down at the face of Lieutenant-Commander McMunn, a face bisected by a cruelly tight gag.

Fowler took out his pocket knife, cut away the gag. "Quiet," he warned. "How many aboard here?"

"Six of the devils," said McMunn. "Four that came from the Lanchester house, two others that were at the Torpedo Station."

Fowler was cutting the ropes that bound McMunn's arms and legs. Dried blood streaked the officer's face, but he could move. He sat up.

"Now what?" he demanded, wasting no time on useless questions.

"There are two men on the bridge," said Fowler. "Both armed. Can we go back up there and take the ship?"

"We can try," said McMunn grimly.

He reached out his right hand and

took a spanner from its place in a rack on the bulkhead. He hefted the bit of steel in his hand.

"Let's go," he invited.

Fowler found another spanner. The two men started for the ladder.

"Ho!" said a sharp, alarmed voice.

A man—an Asiatic—was just coming through the door in the after-bulkhead of the control room. His hand streaked to the gun at his hip.

Fowler threw his spanner with beautiful accuracy. It cracked against the fellow's skull; he tumbled backward over the door coaming, his gun going off with a terrific roar in that confined space.

"That's torn it," snarled Fowler. He pounced on the limp form, twisted the Luger away, fired another shot at somebody who was running forward along the alleyway between the two big Diesels—which were now thudding steadily, having taken over from the electric motors—and then whirled to charge up the ladder. McMunn was ahead of him, was already in the conning tower. A face appeared at the hatch, a face on which the light from below beat in ghastly reflection; beady eyes glittered as they saw Fowler coming up.

He rolled over the edge of the conning tower's deck, rolled clear just as the tommy-gun roared above.

He fired one shot. There was a cry above, the tommy ceased fire.

"A hit," said McMunn, "but it's only an instant's respite. Give me a hand, quick!"

He was tugging at the dogs of a door—Fowler realized that it was the same door which he had encountered outside. It gave on the deck.

The dogs clanked loose, the door opened. McMunn and Fowler slid through just as a fresh spray of lead spattered and ricocheted from the deck and inner walls of the conning tower.

"The ladder!" gasped Fowler, and went up with a rush. The gunner was just rising; Fowler fired around the edge of the shield which the big hatch-cover afforded, was answered by a burst of shots.

It was stalemate; he could not ad-

vance, the gunner could not get to him.

Beside him, McMunn panted:

"Down the ladder, till you're just clear of the edge. Cover me, for a moment. I've got an idea. Don't let 'em shoot down or jam the hatch. I'll fix 'em."

HE was gone, then; and Fowler could do nothing but obey.

Suddenly he realized that the big hatchcover was closing. The man with the tommy-gun gave a cry, tried to shove at it.

Fowler fired; the man swung his tommy into action, but Fowler had ducked down the ladder again. The hatchcover was half closed.

In panic, the gunman dropped his weapon and leaped to a voice-tube, babbling staccato syllables. Slowly, inexorably, the great hatch closed. The man at the wheel was steering with one arm—he'd be the one Fowler had hit from below. As the hatchcover descended, Fowler took careful aim and fired again. The man went down, his leg shattered by the bullet.

The other grabbed for his tommy; in the uncertain light Fowler missed his shot, and had to duck once more. The tommy-gun's bullets rang on the steel edge of the tower just above his head. But he heard another sound—a deep jarring *clunk*. The main hatch was closed.

The gunner screamed, suddenly, like a man gone mad. Fowler dared to lift his head. The gunner was tearing at the edge of that hatch with his bare hands, as though he could move that half ton of inexorable steel.

Fowler scrambled to the bridge, darted forward, and struck—once, twice. The man collapsed.

"Nice work," said the voice of McMunn, weakly, from the ladder. "I just made it."

He dragged himself over the edge, lay shuddering at Fowler's feet.

"Nice work, yourself," said Fowler happily. "Know how to signal from this craft? No launches around—we're almost in the narrows—"

The trampling tremor of the Diesels had ceased.

"They've stopped the engines," Fowler observed.

"The engines stopped themselves," said McMunn, wearily, dragging himself to his knees. "No air."

"You mean—"

The wounded man, whom Fowler had shot in the leg, began to mutter a string of syllables which sounded like—and indeed were—curses on the souls of all Fowler's ancestors to the *n*th generation.

Fowler relieved him of his gun. McMunn was up now, and fumbling at something which lay bundled beneath the signal locker.

"We can't stay here, McMunn," Fowler said. "We've got to guard the other hatches, fore and aft, till we can signal for help. Those devils will be up and out at us."

"No they won't," said McMunn in the same weary tone.

"Why not?" Fowler demanded.

"They're all dead," answered McMunn.

"Dead!"

"Dead. There was no other hatch open. I saw that. When I closed the main hatch the Diesels used up all the air in the interior of the ship in exactly thirty seconds. In just thirty seconds more every living being within the hull was dead."

"My God!" gasped Fowler. Then, at a sudden thought, "Mary!"

McMunn finished what he was doing, dragged something white out from under the signal locker.

"Mary—if that's her name—is here," he said. "They tied her up and rolled her in here to be out of the way. She's still drugged, but she's alive. I knew where she was. I saw 'em put her there. My wife—wasn't so lucky."

"McMunn! You don't mean to say—your wife's down there?"

SHE was in the officers' quarters, with the two French she-cats. She—I had to do it, Daniels. It was the only way—for our country. I couldn't save her. And—she had it coming to her. I'd have rescued her if there'd been time, but there wasn't. So—she had to die that—America—might live."

He choked, turned away. Then, in a strangled voice, he went on:

"They'd have been out the other hatches and at us from behind. It was the only way, I tell you. It had to be quick—and it was. Quick, and merciful. They're dead, except these two. Damn them! I've a good mind to cut their throats, as they did the crew of this ship. They stabbed the anchor watch, then murdered the others in their bunks. They hoped to win free with the sub—and then she'd just disappear. Everyone would think that the young officer in charge of her had taken her out to help in the search, and that, short-handed, she'd been lost at sea. We'd never have known, so they figured, just what did happen. But—thanks to you, Daniels—they didn't get away with it."

"Thanks to you, you mean, McMunn."

"I did what I could. I had to. They knew everything—everything. They'd drugged four officers at the party, drained their minds of all they needed to know—Lehr, Uhrig, Trevor and Esterling. They had the whole story; and they'd have got mine, too, as they used to do in Washington. My wife was working with them, Daniels. It's a terrible thing to have to tell you, but that's the truth."

"She was drugging me in Washington every night, and they questioned me after I was under the influence. I used to have awful dreams of a voice questioning me—that was the voice I recognized last night, questioning Esterling. I knew why sleep never seemed to do me any good in Washington— To think that Margaret—Margaret could have—"

He could say no more.

He went to a little box next to the signal locker and opened it; a moment later a match flared in his hand, a fuse sizzled, and a rocket soared off into the night in a shower of sparks, to burst in crimson glory high in the dark heavens.

"That'll bring help," Fowler said.

The man he'd knocked out stirred, sat up. Fowler jammed a pistol-muzzle against his neck.

"No funny business," he warned.

"You are now placed under arrest."

Nakuma sat perfectly still, staring at the last, falling star of the rocket—falling, as the star of his Empire was falling, into oblivion and the night. His gods had failed him in the end.

"Margaret!" whispered McMunn, and buried his face in his arms atop the signal locker.

A launch was streaking toward them across the harbor, searchlight ablaze.

Below, four men and three women lay locked in silence and in death. They were spies, all. They had paid the price.

This, Fowler thought, was victory.

He had saved the United States. He—and Endicott McMunn.

McMunn's whisper came to him through the gloom—

"Margaret!"

Words written by Abraham Lincoln long ago seemed to whisper themselves in Fowler's ears. He hoped McMunn could hear them too:

"I pray that our Heavenly Father may assuage the anguish of your bereavement and leave you only the cherished memory of the loved and lost, and the solemn pride that must be yours to have laid so costly a sacrifice upon the altar of Freedom."



IN NEXT MONTH'S ISSUE

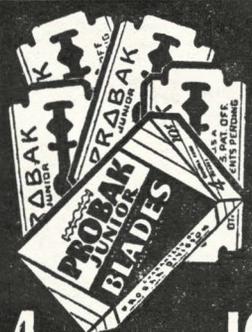
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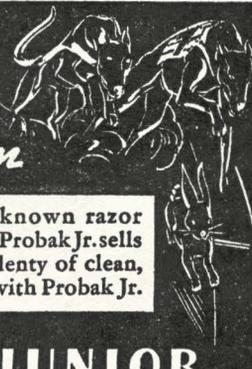
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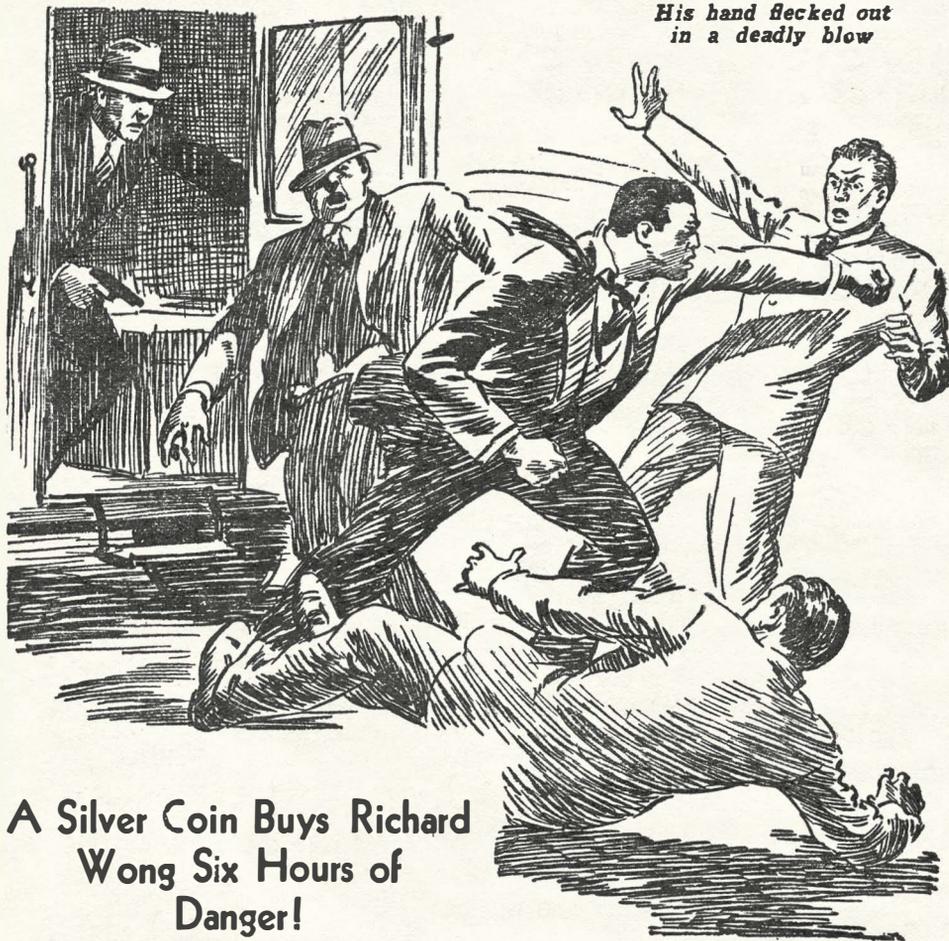


4 BLADES FOR **10¢**

PROBAK JUNIOR

FACE VALUE

*His hand flected out
in a deadly blow*



**A Silver Coin Buys Richard
Wong Six Hours of
Danger!**

By LEE FREDERICKS

Author of "Blue Lotus," "Spinning Death," etc.

RICHARD WONG didn't pause in the outer office to make his report that afternoon. He was too full of important news. He passed directly through the inner doorway and strode to the office of his chief.

Pete Durbano looked up and grunted at Wong, gesturing at a chair. "You got something new?" he asked.

Wong reached into the vest pocket of his ultra-modern Occidental suit and pulled out a coin—flipped it

across the desk. Durbano picked it up and looked it over. "Thanks for the tip," he said. "What is it? Payment for a compliment?"

"Does it fool you also?" Wong asked. "I brought it in as evidence that I should have a free hand to work where the case takes me."

Durbano gave the coin a more careful scrutiny, whistled softly. "Yes, the milling is rough," he observed, "A sure sign of counterfeiting, but why—"

"Silver is low enough now that they

could be buying it up in the old metal stores," Wong said soberly. "I hope that's it. I say hope, because I've reason to believe that a large amount of counterfeit, or the metal to make it, is being shipped into the country and the counterfeit coin is so perfect that it avoids detection even at a bank."

"Where did this come from?" Durbano asked.

"Wu Lun's store," Wong replied. "I made an arrest only after examining all of his change and finding that every half dollar piece in the place was false. Wu Lun is the man I've been investigating about alien smuggling. He is a cousin of Yun Ku, the smuggler of narcotics and aliens from Mexico. I believe—"

Suddenly he broke off. "Yun Ku has sworn vengeance on me for my part in breaking up his airplane smuggling ring," he said. "I wonder—" He shrugged. "If it is possible I would like to have two thousand dollars in five and ten dollar notes, all in series K."

Durbano nodded. "Right. When are you starting?"

"As soon as the money can be obtained," Wong decided. "Incidentally, it would be well to put a guard around Chinatown for the next few days. If I don't come back—" He pulled a slip of paper from his pocket. "These are the men you will hold for questioning." He put the paper on his chief's desk and headed for the outer office, where he kept a suitcase packed and ready for emergencies.

The currency arrived soon. Not more than twenty minutes later a bank messenger delivered a canvas sack to the office. Wong signed the receipt and stuffed the money into his Gladstone bag. A minute later he was on his way.

At the Newark Airport, Wong looked over the other passengers awaiting the takeoff of the huge airliner on the first leg of its journey to the Mexican border. Richard's keen black eyes missed nothing and took especial notice of the passenger who at the last moment ran to catch the plane.

WONG watched closely as the last-minute passenger refused to turn his bag over to the co-pilot for storage in the baggage compartment. The man held his bag gingerly on his knees while the ship took off, handling it as though it contained dynamite.

Most of the passengers dozed off but Wong kept alert. Wong knew that the counterfeiters would have quickly learned of his arrest of Wu Lun. They would make some plan to strike at Wong, but when or where he could not tell.

The plane was circling over Camden, when the man started to fumble with the lock of his bag. In a second Wong was on his feet. Without warning something hit him on the back of the head and he crashed to the floor.

He awoke with a buzzing in his ears. He opened his eyes to look around what seemed to be a small, narrow room with two men in it. Wong realized suddenly that he was in an ambulance and that two of the passengers from the plane were riding with him—the man who had held the bag so nervously in his lap, and the other a florid beefy man.

This one now looked coolly at Wong. "It's funny how people can be so careless," he said slowly.

Wong's eyes flashed. "The United States Secret Service will be after you before you have a chance to take me to whatever destination you have in mind."

The man laughed so that he could hardly speak. "We're takin' you to a hospital by the authority of the airline officials themselves. My hospital, see? And Dr. Ferdinand here will diagnose your illness as heart trouble. Won't you, Doc?"

The man with the bag coughed. "I—uh—believe that is what you will presently die of," he said slowly. "I had the certificate made out this morning. I can assure you that your body will be turned over to the proper officials at the proper time. Our sanitarium enjoys a fine reputation."

The beefy man's eyes twinkled. "Oh, yes, you'll find the sanitarium

right up to the minute." His voice took on a heavy threatening note. "There are several ways of dying from heart failure, some pleasant and some extremely unpleasant. You can take your choice."

Wong looked at him. "When death is inevitable one would naturally pick the easiest way. But then, of course, you demand a price for a comfortable death, do you not?"

"Yeah, I want to know how much Wu Lun told you, and why you took that plane heading south in such a hurry."

Wong's voice was calculated to instil belief. "Wu Lun told enough," he lied, "so that even now there are other agents closing in around you and your band. Of course, if you wish to add murder to the other charges—"

The beefy man's face was not a pleasant picture. He knew only too well the penalty for the murder of Government men.

"He is bluffing," the doctor snarled. "You know they can't have that much. Wait until we get back to the sanitarium and we'll find out."

The ambulance turned into a gravelled drive and pulled up at the side door of the sanitarium.

WONG had been saving his strength for this moment. He hunched and waited for the driver to open the door.

Both men moved to block the exit as the ambulance came to a stop. The beefy one called out to two internes who came to the house door.

"Careful," he warned. "This one is dangerous."

The internes approached the ambulance from either side, to catch the patient in case he leaped.

Wong smiled as he watched. As the door came open, he lunged out. With a spring that would have done credit to an Olympic athlete, he landed simultaneously on the doctor and the beefy man.

Both of them shot out the door, falling before Wong's trip-hammer blows to their Adam's apples. The internes had no chance to grab Wong. He lurched by, over the two men and

headed down the hospital drive full speed.

A pistol cracked viciously behind him and the gravel kicked up beside his feet. Once outside the walls Wong slowed. He ducked along the wall a little way, then vaulted over it back to the sanitarium's grounds. A second after, the ambulance came roaring down the drive hot on his trail and turned into the road. A quick glimpse showed Wong that the two internes were in it, but neither of the two men from the plane.

Wong smiled, tight-lipped. He sought some way to enter the building without attracting attention. He was startled to see the owner and the doctor, heavily loaded with suitcases, come hastily out and head for the ambulance garage at the rear.

Hastily Wong followed them and reached the garage door in time to hear a powerful motor cough and roar to life. He jumped out of the roadway as the garage door swung open and a Hispano-Suiza leaped from the garage and tore off down the drive.

Wong had no choice of procedure. He ran into the building to see if there were any cars in which he might pursue them. He found himself face to face with an amazed ambulance driver who was tuning up the motor on one of the high-powered ambulances.

The driver's hand dropped to his hip but before he had chance to draw his gun, Wong was climbing all over him. Back against the ambulance they staggered. Wong's opponent broke through his hold with a stiff crack to the jaw.

The driver tried to follow it with another blow, but this time Wong was ready. His hand flicked out, knuckles first, and caught the man sharply and scientifically on the jugular vein. The driver gasped. His eyes popped and he sagged limply against the ambulance.

Again Wong's hand flicked out in a rabbit punch. The man slumped for an instant, his mouth agape. His face went blank, and he collapsed in a heap on the concrete floor.

WONG didn't wait to see any more. He leaped to the seat of the ambulance and jerked at the siren cord as he steered the speedy machine out of the garage and sent it down the roadway at express-train speed.

He knew the direction which the fugitives had taken and now he swung after them, the siren whooping full tilt.

The Hispano was out of sight when he turned into the street. Through red lights he speeded madly.

At last he sighted the car he was pursuing. It was turning into a side street. Wong took the corner on two wheels, caught up with the fleeing car and forced it to the curb.

A shot sang through the window of the ambulance cab. The two men jumped out of the car and ran down an alley between two houses, shooting as they ran.

Wong jumped from the ambulance reaching for his own revolver, then remembered it had been taken from him while he was unconscious.

Out on the thoroughfare a police whistle shrilled. Wong stepped out of the alley in time to see a blue-uniformed traffic policeman round the corner, gun in hand. Quickly he signaled to him.

"United States Secret Service," he snapped. "Call the box and have them cover the Haines Sanitarium immediately. I'll go to the box with you. Get the radio cars here right away."

By the time the radio cars arrived, his quarry had disappeared. "We've spread the net so that they can't leave the state," the police captain said. "I've got every road watched at major highway intersections. All bridges are guarded." A small crowd had collected around the ambulance, attracted by the shots. A small boy was peering into the back of the vehicle.

"Is that a dead man in there?" he asked excitedly.

Wong mounted the rear step and flung wide the door. He whistled at what he saw.

"I think the Secret Service will impound this ambulance," he told the captain in low tones. "Also I would

like a police guard to go with it until it is properly taken care of. Unless I miss my guess this is the delivery wagon that they have been using to transport the counterfeit money."

"They'd want to hide the queer in a better place than that," the police officer said positively. "An ambulance is open to everybody to look into."

"Did you ever read Edgar Allen Poe's *Purloined Letter*?" Wong asked. "The most obvious often proves to also be the safest of all hiding places."

"Then you think we will find a plant for making queer over at the sanitarium? We can clean that joint out in a jiffy. Come on."

Wong smiled and proffered his silver case. "Have a cigarette," he countered. "There is no need for haste. I can assure you that the plant is not in the sanitarium without bothering to look. But the back of this ambulance may contain something interesting."

THEY climbed in and Wong pulled the sheet off what seemed to be a stretcher and disclosed a long heavy box. He threw back the lid, they stared at the box full of shining half dollar pieces.

"And they are all full-weight coin silver, captain," Wong said. "The quantity of the coins here tells me that this business must be stopped at once before it makes irreparable inroads into our Treasury."

He turned on his heel and headed toward the alley down which the criminals had disappeared. "I will call on you if I need further aid," he told the captain and was gone.

As Wong walked through the alley he thought furiously. One thing was certain. Neither the doctor nor the beefy man was the real ringleader of the counterfeiters. The way they had handled his kidnapping showed that. The sanitarium was maintained by criminals as a hideout. But the gang headquarters must be somewhere in the vicinity.

He examined the path between the two houses and saw that between the two concrete strips forming a road-

way for the wheels of automobiles was a strip of soft velvety grass.

The deep footprints of the beefy man and the lighter impressions made by the doctor were still plain. Wong followed them hoping for a clue. They turned off in the middle of the alley and led to the side door of a house.

Wong looked the place over carefully before he veered toward the door. The house had every appearance of being unoccupied, but Wong knew that it might be teeming with gangsters. Across the alley he went and turned the knob of the door.

It swung open silently. Richard had a borrowed service thirty-eight ready for action. But the place was empty, he saw as he entered. The room was topsy-turvy. Several suitcases, including Wong's own Gladstone bag, lay open in a corner. Wong studied the room carefully, careful to overlook nothing.

His bag had been ransacked. Every penny of the two thousand dollars he had drawn was gone. His clothing was scattered helter-skelter and mingled with other clothing, evidently from the other bags.

He stooped to pick up a bright object that winked from among the debris on the floor. It was some kind of coin. He read the wording on it. The coin was a Mexican *peso*, one of the large silver cartwheels with which *peons* are paid. Hastily he headed for the nearest telephone booth.

A FEW minutes later he was talking with the Commissioner of Immigration at Gloucester, N. J.

"I want two things," Wong requested after he had identified himself. "A complete list of shipping and the fastest speedboat you have in service."

The speedboat was ready and waiting for him when he reached the Division pier. The motor hummed softly, but with a deep reserve of power.

As Wong had specified, the officers were dressed in civilian clothing and the boat had nothing to indicate that it was a government craft.

Richard nodded. "There is a fishing gear aboard, of course."

One of the officers nodded and grinned. "Enough tackle for some pretty big fish," he said, and led the way into the small cabin, pointing to the three-inch gun that took up most of the space.

"The front of the cabin can be lowered," he said. "Shall we shove off, sir?"

"We should have time to spare," Wong said, "but it is best that we proceed leisurely."

The officer nodded, left the cabin and a few seconds later the boat throbbed its way into the channel of the Delaware River. They reached the bay without having sighted anything unusual.

The boat anchored just outside the channel buoys and they got out the fishing tackle. Several ships passed and Wong scrutinized them carefully through the binoculars. Four sharp toots made him look up sharply from his fishing. A nondescript old tramp was making her way around the breakwater and heading for the passage up river. Wong took up the glasses and focussed them on her. Across her bow he read *Ciudad Mexico*, and from the stern floated a Norwegian flag.

As Wong watched a flag was run up alongside her drunken smokestack. The immigration officer looked at it curiously, and shook his head.

"The flag's nothing that's in the book," he volunteered.

A small boat suddenly put out from one of the innumerable little inlets that lined the shore. Wong saw the tramp slow down. The donkey engine on her deck started to work furiously. Wong had seen enough. He slipped his shoes off and went to the far rail of the Government boat.

"Do not halt the steamer until you are sure the small boat is ashore," he gave orders. "To stop it before would be to warn the ringleaders on land."

He took out his service revolver and fastened it to his belt where it couldn't jog loose and went overside into the water.

He swam under water as much as possible, coming up only when his lungs were bursting. As he neared

the steamer he felt the suction from her propellers drag at him and, with a desperate twist, he fought his way toward her bow.

The steamer had scarcely any headway when he cut across her bow and came around to the shoreward side. He saw that a rope had been passed to the small boat, and several heavy boxes were being transferred to it via a loading sling.

As Wong neared them, he saw that the high-piled boxes offered protection from spying eyes and noticed a group of huddled figures. Six, he counted. He caught a handhold on the mushroom anchor and took a firm grip.

It seemed to him that he clung there for an endless eternity before the motor started up and he felt the surge of water as they got under way and pulled out from the steamer's side. He clung like a bulldog and, even though his head was under water much of the time as the boat gathered speed, he hung on.

As they neared the inlet the boat slackened speed. Wong shifted his position so that he wouldn't be crushed between the hull and the river bottom in case they went over a bar.

Suddenly the motor was cut. Wong peered across the inlet and saw a tiny dock. They were drifting now and he could hold on with one hand. With the other he pulled his revolver from his belt.

As the boat warped into the dock, Wong dived and came up under the pier. He waited while the men heaved the lines ashore and made them fast. Then he scrambled up the dock and faced the men. "Raise your hands," he purred. "You are under arrest in the name of the United States Government."

The men stared, their jaws dropped. One by one they slowly and reluctantly raised their hands in the air. Coolly Wong looked them over—three white men and the six Chinese he had seen huddled on deck. The blue denim gowns of the Chinese convinced him that they were being smuggled into the country.

Wong repeated his order in rapid Cantonese. Listlessly, the Chinese obeyed.

"Remove the gowns of your ancestors," Wong said in Cantonese. "Tear them in strips and bind the foreign devils."

As one of the Chinese moved forward to obey Wong's instructions, Richard saw one of the white men stare past and in back of him. Without turning Wong ducked nimbly to one side. A descending blackjack missed his head by a hairbreadth and caught him on the shoulder.

The blow caused his gun hand to waver for an instant and in that split second, pandemonium broke loose on the deck.

As the men behind grabbed for him, Wong saw the others leap toward him. Quickly he went limp and threw the man behind off balance. Before one of the onrushing men could bring his revolver up to finish him, Richard had thrown his assailant over his head and into their path.

WHILE they were unscrambling themselves, Wong went over-side again and under the dock. Bullets buzzed like gnats over the water as Wong came up under the dock. Wong heard the men argue about sending one of their number under after him, but none would chance it. Then they decided to run for it in the boat. Wong didn't try to detain them. The Government boat would be looking for the small boat and would surely pick them up. He now knew their hideaway and probably their plant. He heard footsteps run over the dock, then the roar of the motor as the boat got under way.

Wong came out cautiously. The dock was clear but back from the inlet was a large house and in its front yard men were working feverishly at loading a truck. Keeping to the few small bushes that surrounded the house, Wong crept up on them. As he stepped out into the open with his gun raised, a loud explosion sounded from the bay.

The men loading the truck jumped in amazement and saw Wong. "Thank

you, gentlemen," he said softly, as they raised their hands. He saw what they were loading on the truck—a complete stamping outfit for counterfeiting coin. "You have saved me the trouble of calling in the State Police to round off the job."

As he finished his speech, Wong saw why they had been so ready to surrender. Concealed behind the door of the house he glimpsed the doctor and the beefy sanitarium owner, guns raised, ready to fire.

Before they could fire, he sent a shot ricocheting against the wall by the door. Then they were only too ready to come out with their hands in air.

As Wong was rounding up his prisoners, the Government cutter, with the captured speedboat in tow, tied up at the little dock. The doctor was found to be in possession of the series K banknotes that had been Wong's.

Richard let the immigration officers take the prisoners away while he requisitioned a car standing by the large house and headed for Atlantic City and the New York plane.

A car was waiting at the Newark airport. Durbano, chewing a big cigar, sat in the back seat.

"Nice work," his chief grunted as Wong climbed in. "But why didn't you call on the department for our help?"

"Things moved so fast that I didn't have a chance to," Wong explained. "You see the *peso* told me how they were working it," he said. "On the rate of exchange, Mexico gives three

silver dollars to one of the currency of the United States. Also the old silver *peso* of Mexico has a silver content that is slightly higher than ours. So the counterfeiters were buying up Mexican coin and melting it up. In that manner they could make *more than three dollars* in counterfeit for one that they spent in actual money. A pretty nice profit and the coins were easy to dispose of, working as they did through the Chinese merchants who are connected with the smuggling racket."

"But how did you know all this?" Durbano interrupted impatiently.

"One of the Secret Service training courses should include the study of the philosophers of the Orient," Wong replied. "Ming Lze Che once said the god of restlessness is also the god of guilt."

He let the conversation wait while he pulled out his cigarette case and puffed on a cigarette.

"When I arrested Wu Lun, I knew the others wouldn't rest until they trailed me to find out how much I had learned. My boarding the plane wasn't altogether blind. I knew they weren't using the New York harbor—too well guarded. But Philadelphia was possible. And then on the plane they gave themselves away by kidnaping me—the restlessness of guilt, you see."

Durbano bit off the end of his cigar. "Okay," he said. "We'll leave it in the lap of the Chinese gods, or"—he paused—"to your knowledge of psychology."

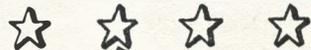
Next Month: Another Richard Wong Story by LEE FREDERICKS



A CLUE!

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Exposing the
Phoney Stamp
Racket

Uncle Sam's Agents Crack Down to Cancel Bogus Stamps
with Government Bullets!

By **TOMMY WILSON**

AN EX-RACKETEER AND FORMER PUBLIC ENEMY

I WASN'T exactly on the bread-line but I was so near to it that the crumbs were blowing in my peepers. So when I ran into Tot Calber, a small-time mugg with a small-time brain, and he offered me a chance to earn myself some coffee-

cake money, I heave myself a sigh of relief.

He takes me to see the lug he's working for—Fred Irkle, a long-jawed gent with gimlet eyes and a face like granite. "Fred's got smart ideas," Tot tells me. "He's heading

for the big money. You won't make no mistake stringing along with him."

It turns out that what I'm supposed to do is to peddle three-cent stamps. I ask you. Three-cent stamps. Me, that's worked for most of the big shots around this man's village, playing post-office!

Still, I must say that Irkle's got enough stamps to mail twenty letters an hour for the rest of his life, if that's what he wants to do with his time.

"Think you can get rid of 'em for two cents a throw?" he asks me out of the side of the thin red line he uses for a mouth.

"Sure. How hot are they? Where did you snatch 'em?"

"They ain't hot. And running a question-and-answer column ain't my way of doin' business. You sell the stamps. Two cents each. Half a cent for you. Take Tot along with you, and bring the money every week to Ike McCaffery's place on Third Avenue.

"Tot ain't goin' to be no good to me," I tell him.

Irkle slits his eyes at me. "He might be good for your conscience, in case you was planning on any fancy bookkeeping. Tot says you're all right, Wilson. But I trust nobody. Nobody, get it?"

It was going to be nice, friendly work, I could see. But the soles of my feet were too close to the asphalt for me to be fussy about where I got my shoe leather.

I didn't have much trouble selling the three-penny lickers. I figure Irkle must have a whole flock of salesmen out, because east of Broadway and South of Union Square is my territory.

Most of the small stationers and cigar-store boys I put the bee on are glad to do a little illegitimate stamp-dealing anyway, as an accommodation to their customers, and the extra penny gravy doesn't exactly make them fight for their honor, either. It don't run to much for them, of course, any more than it does for me. But dough is dough no matter how small it comes.

OF course I steer clear of the regular sub-stations, and on the whole I don't run into much opposition. And when I strike a guy that don't want to play games with me, I use the same technique I did selling beer in Brooklyn for Frankie Uale.

It goes like this. I say, oh, yes, he does want to buy my stamps. He says, oh, no, he don't. At which point I bring a small leather-covered billy from my hip pocket and crack:

"You'll buy these stamps—or a nice hunk of lead-pipe." At which point I waggle the billy, thoughtful-like, about an inch from his nose.

This does the trick nine times out of ten, but sometimes when I think the guy needs to be taught a little respect, I toss the billy through the plate glass of his cigar counter. The broken glass makes the cigars pretty hard to sell.

Everything goes along like a breeze in May. Naturally I'm curious to find out where the big dough in this racket comes from—one look at Irkle told me there was real money in it some place. Tot spills, a little at a time. It seems Irkle, besides having a flock of stamp-handlers out on a string, does a nice business with wholesale houses, and joints that ship out a lot of packaged stuff and aren't too fussy where the stamps come from. He's also behind a couple of stamp-service agencies, strictly on the up and up, selling the stamps to business houses in fifty and sixty dollar lots, charging them full money for the stamps, plus an accommodation fee of one per cent.

In fact, Irkle seems to have thought of just about all the angles. There's two things Tot keeps his mouth firmly shut about: what's the real lowdown on the stamps, where they come from and whatnot; and where the main hang-out is. The only time I ever see Irkle is at McCaffery's, and it's a cinch he isn't operating from there.

Things, as I said, were going dandy. My cut was averaging close to forty bucks a week, even at a half cent, and I was doing so good that Irkle decided to play Santa and up

my split to a penny even. I wasn't having trouble with nobody. I should have known it was too sweet to last. But why go into that? You must've heard about the well-known calm before the storm.

It first clouds up when I drop in on one of my customers one day to tell him I'll be making a delivery tomorrow. I tells him.

"How many shall I put you down for? I don't have any with me."

He sticks out his chin at me and tries to look brave. "I sold my last one this morning. And I ain't taking any more!"

"What's the matter—the stamps are okay, ain't they?" I say, figuring out whether to let him have one on the jaw for good luck.

"Mister, even if those stamps were good, I wouldn't like 'em. And they ain't any good. My kid, Joe, collects stamps, and I let him have a couple of the ones you gave me. He says they're phony!"

"Nerts," I say. "I'm coming back tomorrow and you're buying!"

Then, coming out of his store, who do I run into but Tim Mahoney, who's a pal of mine in spite of the fact that he's not on my side of the fence. I hadn't bumped into him for about a year.

"Hi, copper," I greet him. "Where's your uniform?"

He grins his good-natured Irish grin. "I'm working for Uncle Sam now, Tommy."

Cripes! A G-man. I eye him with considerable respect. "Having fun?"

"Having plenty. Working with the post-office department on a case now. They've been chasing down a flock of phony stamps—and when the phony stamps began turning up in New York and Jersey, too, that let us in on it. State-line angle, you know. Say, Tommy, don't you know you oughtn't to make people buy things they don't want to buy?"

I FIGURE he's traced the stamps to some of the cigar stores, and seeing me has tipped him off. He knows my line. But he's only guessing, so I bluff it out. We go back in

TOMMY WILSON

Ex-Racketeer



Says: "The old gent with the whiskers sure don't miss when he aims at a racket!"

the store—Tim finds no stamps there, of course, and none on me. So he's stymied.

"Look," I say, outside on the sidewalk. "If you wasn't having a pipe dream, and if I was peddling stamps, and the stamps were phony, what would be the matter with them?"

Mahoney squints at me. "Plenty. For one thing, whoever's doing your counterfeiting has pretty fair plates, but he hasn't got Government water-marked paper. See, Tommy, you dip a stamp in benzine, and the letters U.S.P.S. show up on it in dark lines. Your stamps haven't got any more watermark than a duck's back. I'm warning you, guy, get out of this while the getting's good. And give my love to Sam Marson."

"Never heard of him. Who's he?"

"A guy who used to be an engraver for Uncle Sam. He went crooked and got the bounce to Joliet. He's out now—but if he's not turning out your plates, I'll eat 'em."

I'm burned plenty. The nerve of Irkle shoving phony stamps at me

and all the other guys who work for him! Stamps so phony that a kid can spot 'em, and all you have to do is put 'em in benzine to make sure. No wonder he stays covered so well, the rat. If there's any raps to be taken, he's in the clear.

I'm taking Mahoney's advice—and clearing out. But I've got a piece to speak to Irkle first.

I contact Tot at McCaffrey's but he won't take me to Irkle. So I pretend to have no more on my mind than a hairless Mexican pooch has fur, and tell him I'll be seeing him around.

But I tail him—all the way down to a deserted stretch of Staten Island waterfront. And black my boots if Tot don't get into a boat tied up at the wharf and head out into the harbor. There's another outboard motor skiff there, so I help myself. Irkle's hideout is on an old flatboat anchored in a cove!

I clambered aboard. There's a light in the deckhouse. I went in. What a layout! Flat presses, inks, rolls of paper, and a lot of complicated machinery. There's Tot and a couple of gorillas and an anemic, white-haired guy, who turns out to be Marson. And Irkle.

Before Irkle can yell at me, I spill what's on my chest. That dead-pan of his goes whiter than paper. "Why you rotten—" he begins, taking a step toward me.

I yank out my rod and back for the door. "Hold it, Irkle. I didn't sing to Mahoney. Anything he knows he didn't get from me. So let's us part friends, you rat!"

Irkle jogs his head sideward. The two gorillas jerk to attention. I'm not near enough to the door to suit

me, but I keep backing for it. I can't watch everything; Tot sneaks around behind me. Only the first I know of that is when I fall over the foot he's stuck out to trip me.

As I go down, I hear Irkle say: "Take him, boys!"

FROM that point, everything becomes a little mixed up. There's the gorillas clawing at me, and my gat making an arc through the air, and Irkle bellowing, and fists popping into my face. Just as I'm going under for the last time, I hear the sweetest music that ever hit my eardrums—the siren of a police-boat.

I see, quick, what's happened. Mahoney has given me the business, hoping I'd come running to Irkle with the word to scam. While I'm tailing Tot, he's tailing me. Pretty smart, these gents from the ould sod.

So while Irkle and his boys is concentrating on that police boat, letting go with their gats and tommies and getting as good as they're giving, or a little better, I sort of fade into the night. I do a sneak from the deckhouse and let myself down easy into the water. It's cold and has an odor that don't come from twelve dollars an ounce bottles, but it's better than the cold grey stones at Joliet, and it's a big improvement on a slug in the ribs, too.

Over the grapefruit and toast the next morning I get sort of a kick out of the headlines:

STAMP-COUNTERFEITERS ROUNDED UP BY GOVERNMENT MEN.
WHOLESALE ARRESTS FOLLOW GUN BATTLE.

The old gent with the whiskers sure don't miss!

AN INSIDE STORY OF OUTLAW SECURITIES

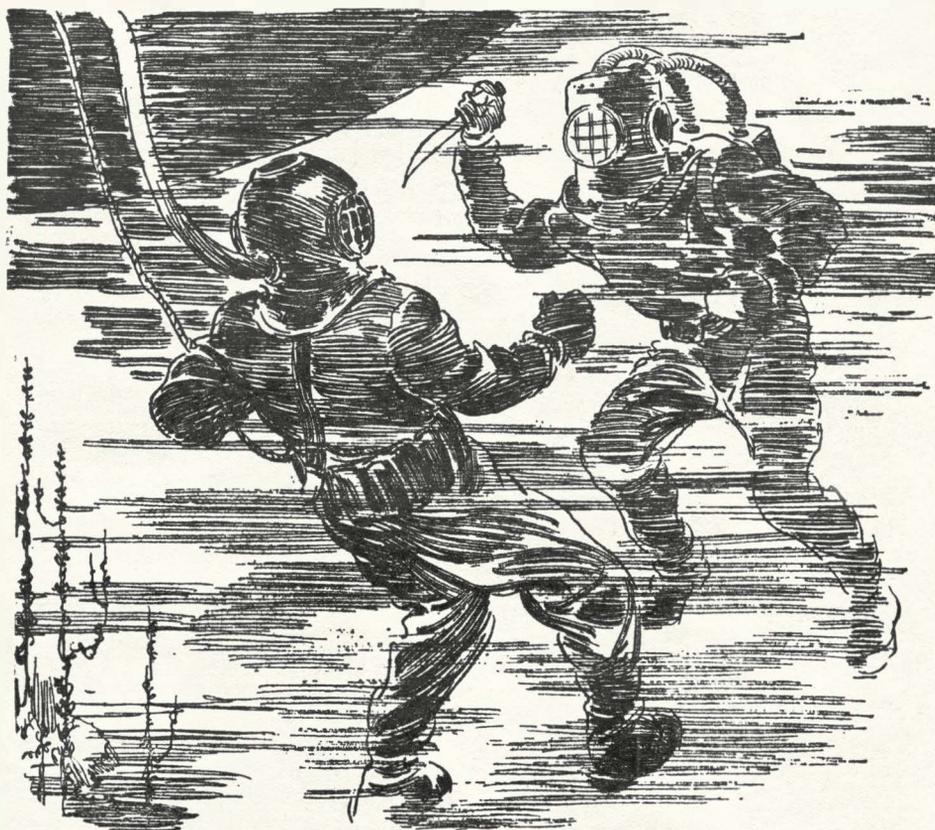
HOT BONDS

By COL. WILLIAM T. COWIN

Former Assistant United States Attorney

In Next Month's Issue of G-MEN

HELL'S HOSTAGE



The face of the other diver, dim behind his face-plate, was savage

A Fierce Battle at the Bottom of the Sea—Where a G-Man Faces Hideous Death in the Line of Duty!

By KENNETH L. SINCLAIR

Author of "The Bandit Brand," "Cottonwood Party," etc.

IN the sandy bottom, the G-man moved slowly forward, peering through the face-plate of his helmet. A few yards above his head was the giant, rounded hull of the *Haisha Maru*. The water was fairly clear, and Carter could see the whole length of the docked liner, from the slim bow to the four great propellers at the stern.

Two yards ahead of the G-man was

the thing he was seeking—a shiny tin can, about a foot high and six inches in diameter.

The can seemed to be suspended in the water, waist-high. As the G-man neared it, he saw that a cord ran from the bottom of the can down to a weight that was half buried in the sand. There was enough air in the sealed can to keep it buoyant, tugging at the cord—thus the diver who would

presently come to gather the contraband would not miss it. And the weight would act as an anchor, to prevent the can being swept away by the currents set up by ships entering and leaving the slip.

Looking around, Carter saw that at least a dozen cans, identical with this one, were scattered along the bottom.

Here, then, was the answer to the riddle that had baffled the best men of the Department for nearly a year. A flood of "snow" had been entering the country through this Pacific Coast city. Coöperating with the Customs Service, the G-men had bottled up every known channel through which dope could enter, had jailed every known smuggler. They had gone aboard ships at the moment of docking, had searched pursers, stokers, officers.

All without result. The flood of white hell had kept coming in.

A taut grin came to Carter's lips as he thought how simply the thing had been done. These cans had been dumped overboard, probably while the ship was sliding into the slip. Perhaps they were put through an airlock in the bottom of the ship. This was a big-business proposition, and the men behind it would go to any expense that seemed necessary to outwit the vigilance of the Government man.

At any convenient time, a diver could come along, gather up the tins. . . .

A new sound, slashing through the steady clacking of the air-pump valves, reached the G-man's ears. A hissing sound.

He turned, as quickly as he could. Even as he did so, the sound of the incoming air ceased entirely, and the inlet valve in his helmet closed with a final, deadly little click.

Then the G-man was facing the other diver, just as the man straightened and tossed away the knife with which he had cut Carter's air line.

THE slanting rays of the afternoon sun, probing down through the green depths, made the copper helmet of the would-be murderer glisten weirdly as he hunched forward,

thrusting himself through the water as he headed for the G-man.

Carter reached up and closed the exhaust valve on his helmet. Thus he would keep what little air he had—but it couldn't possibly last him more than a few minutes. There was no phone in this outfit that the G-man had borrowed from a salvage concern.

The only way of communicating with the crew on the barge was by jerking the life-line—and the man who was now rushing Carter had made sure that no signals would be sent that way. The life-line could not easily be cut, so the man had caught hold of it and was dragging it with him. The men on the barge would think Carter wanted more line, and would pay out.

The G-man lunged, as best he could, through the water. As he did so he noted that his opponent had no lines. His was a self-contained suit. Which would make it impossible to locate his base, even if—

The two men met with a jarring impact. And, instantly, Carter understood why his opponent had thrown away the knife with which he had cut the air-line. It had a curved blade, was made for cutting lines quickly. But the man had another knife, a long, straight one, that was made for stabbing. With this gripped in his hand, he slashed at the G-man's suit.

Carter had no knife, no weapon of any kind. All he could do was try, desperately, to fend off the attack of the other man. And all the time his scant supply of air was diminishing, his strength was giving out.

It was a queer, savage, slow-motion struggle while it lasted. The face of the other diver, dim behind his faceplate, was savage as he tried again and again to stab Carter. At last he succeeded. The keen blade of the knife bit through Carter's suit, into the muscles of his shoulder. He felt a warm rush of blood—then a stinging, blinding pain as the cold salt water reached the wound.

The water was rushing into his suit, rising into his helmet. He was finished, now. Gasping for air, weak-

ened. The ceaseless pressure of the chill water, even at this depth, seemed to pinion him. G-men have died, in the line of their duty, before blazing guns on lonely roads, in lead-riddled banks, in hurtling railroad cars. But this chill green hell—what a place for a G-man to reach the end of his rope!

Rope. The word drummed in Carter's pain-racked brain. Rope! His life-line. His one chance. If he could get hold of it, give three sharp jerks—

ILD "Dismal Dan" Maples paced back and forth, back and forth in the bedroom of the house which the G-men had made their secret headquarters for this investigation. Maples was old only in point of service. Hardly thirty, he had been a G-man for six years, in one branch of the service or another. He had slicked-back hair that was greying around the temples, and his face was scarred by a dozen buckshot wounds.

Slowly Maples' figure came into focus before Marvin Carter's eyes.

"You're wearin' out the carpet," Carter said.

Maples halted, whirled, grinned tautly. "Hi, Marve! You think you could sprout fins down there in the water? We thought you were dead when we hauled you up. But you spit out a couple gallons of water, cussed, and bawled us all out because we were talking about sending another man down. What in hell happened down there?"

"Practically everything," Carter said. "The dope is being tossed off the ship in air-tight cans, fastened to anchor weights. A fellow came along to pick it up while I was there. He cut my air line—"

"I know. And gave you that gash in the shoulder. We saw blood come to the surface, alongside the ship, just before we got your haul-up signal. We figured there was another man down there, but we couldn't locate any lines coming up. When we talked about getting another suit, sending somebody else down, you yelled your head off, said no."

Carter sat up in the cot and grinned ruefully. "I don't remember a thing about saying that. But I must have had a reason. You couldn't find that guy's lines because there weren't any. He had a self-contained suit, with oxygen tanks on the back."

Maples whistled soundlessly. "He could have walked along for miles, on the bottom! His base could be anywhere!"

"Yeah." Carter swung out of the bed. His shoulder was tightly bandaged, cramped. "How long I been out? We've got to get back to the dock, nail those guys when they try to pick up the rest of that hop."

Maples shook his head. "You've been out for three hours. It's getting dark. And Carter—I've got bad news. We know who's running the hop, now."

"What?"

"Fellow by the name of James Tsue."

Carter, swaying on his feet, ran his fingers through his still-sodden hair. "Wow!"

"I see you've heard of the gent," Maples said, dryly. "Chinese-American, so bad he is an outcast from both races. He started as a leg-man for a lottery syndicate, worked up. Smooth, deadly as hell. Never crossed us until now. Never been identified with dope-running before this. But he's a big-business sort of a guy, now—and he thinks he's bigger than the Government."

"How'd you find out that he—"

"He told us."

"What?"

"Not directly." Maples rounded the end of the cot, put a firm hand on Carter's good shoulder. "Marve, Tsue's diver got back to their base, wherever it is. Tsue acted like a streak of light. Grabbed Frank Bristol. Frank was cruising around in that motorboat we hired, you remember. Tsue is holding him—says if we make one more move, Bristol dies, and not pleasantly, either."

CARTER'S face went white, taut. "Tsue must have a hundred thousand dollars worth of snow in this

bunch. He figures to get it without interference."

"That's just about it. Worse yet, he didn't send word to us direct. Maybe he didn't know where to reach us. He sent it to the local police! Liking us like they don't, they promptly spilled the yarn to the news-hounds. The papers dramatized the thing, splashed it all over every front page in town. 'G-man held hostage by dope king—will Government dare to act at cost of his life?' 'G-men outwitted!' You're head man here, now that Bristol is gone. We've been waiting for you to come around. It's a tough spot for us all—especially for you."

Marve Carter dropped heavily into a chair. Ordinarily lithe, active, quick-moving, he now seemed listless.

Frank Bristol a hostage! Bristol, the lean, stooped, kindly, fatherly G-man who had made it possible for Marve Carter to get into the Service. Bristol, who had guided the energetic, quick-thinking Carter right from the start, whose guidance had made Carter one of the most valued men in the Service.

And now the whole load of the decision was on Carter's shoulders. Tsue's diver would be gathering up that hop as rapidly as possible. The one chance for the G-men to break the case was now, by nailing that diver, and through him, by locating Tsue's hangout. But Tsue's men would be watching the docks, and at the G-men's first move, Frank Bristol would die. Stooped, kindly, cigar-loving Frank.

Carter banged his fist on the windowsill and leaped to his feet.

"I've got it!" he exclaimed. "It must have popped into my mind while I was in the water. That's why I yelled about not sending another man down there! We can find their base—"

"But how?" Maples demanded. "That self-contained suit has no air lines that we can trace."

Carter was already darting into the next room.

This house, picked for the purpose, was on a hill overlooking the docks. Before a large window a powerful telescope had been placed. For

twenty-four hours a day, the G-men alternated at that telescope, watching everything that went on down at the Asiatic Dock.

Six of the G-men were now in the room. One was at the telescope, the rest were sitting tensely in chairs, or pacing slowly about. The air was thick with tobacco smoke.

"All right, boys," Carter snapped. "Got your rods oiled and loaded? We're going to get moving!"

"Where to?" somebody asked.

"First," Carter said, "to the University, to get hold of a chemical research professor. Then to a blacksmith. Then to the dock."

"What's the play? What are we going to do at the dock?" Maples demanded.

"Just one thing. We're going to drop from that ship a can that will be exactly like those dope-cans. Only this can will have a special anchor that will ram 'way down into the sand, and hang on like the very devil when Tsue's diver tries to gather up the can."

CLUTCHING an unwieldy bundle, a man who wore the blue jacket, the faded blue trousers of a seaman ambled along through the shadows of the Asiatic Dock. It seemed evident that the man had had a little too much shore leave. His walk was a trifle erratic, and his breath reeked of cheap whiskey. The distinctive walk of a seaman, however, is something that even liquor cannot erase—and it is something that cannot be faked, except by a G-man who has made a long and profound study of such matters.

The man passed the inspection of two calm, gimlet-eyed gentlemen who loitered unobtrusively in the shadows of the dock. Under the glare of powerful lights, he climbed the gangplank of the *Haisha Maru*, swayed toward the officer on watch, and engaged that brisk Oriental in conversation. Presently both the seaman and the officer went below.

Minus the bundle, Marve Carter presently reappeared, and came down the gangplank. The gimlet-eyed gentlemen were waiting for him—and,

slightly behind them, stood James Tsue.

"Just a minute, buddy," one of the men snapped.

"What yah want?" Carter retorted. "I got a date with a li'l red-headed waitress, and I—"

The face of James Tsue was bland, his voice soft and cultured.

"Your acting was excellent, Mr. G-man. But unfortunately for you—and for Bristol—I have friends aboard this ship. They sent word to me immediately you went aboard. I know that you went below, locked yourself in a stateroom for ten minutes. Now I desire to know—"

Carter, playing the part of the seaman, leaned indolently against a pillar.

Swaying slowly, he sent a gust of alcoholic breath into James Tsue's moon face.

"Hell! I was—hic!—lookin' f'r clues. Couldn't fin' a damn' thing, nowheres. You guys are too damn' smart, that's wha—wha—"

His elbow against the pillar, slipped off, and he nearly fell. After staggering around in a circle, in the manner of a sidehill drunk, he finally got hold of the pillar again. Pulling himself up, he faced Tsue with drunken defiance.

"You c'n smirk!" the G-man rasped. "Some day I'll get even. Ri' now I wanna get another drink—"

Swaying, he staggered away. One of Tsue's gunmen gestured significantly with the gun which he held in his topcoat pocket. James Tsue shook his head.

"One of the invincible G-men," he said musingly. "Up against something he can't fight, he breaks down and gets drunk. This will develop my egotism."

Carter, who seemed not to hear, ambled along the dock, swearing loudly and complaining about local police who refused to give a man any cooperation.

Bitterly, the G-man detested this act that he was putting on, but the thing was necessary, if Frank Bristol's life were to be saved. And Bristol's life, to all men in the service and

to Marve Carter most of all, was a mighty important thing.

FIFTEEN minutes after Carter left the dock, a disreputable looking fishing boat came nosing into the slip. Frayed nets and untidy gear were scattered on the decks of the craft. Its starboard navigation light was out. It reeked to heaven of decayed fish, and the coughing of its asthmatic motor echoed back and forth between the sides of the docked liners.

A man, standing atop the boat's pilot house, bawled something to the wheelman in a voice that was obviously Scandinavian. The boat promptly wheeled and turned, as if it had come into this slip by mistake.

One man, who stood in the bow, wore thick, dark-lensed glasses. He said nothing. Carefully he scanned the water—and, behind his back, he made signals to the wheelman. This man with the dark glasses was Marve Carter.

He was not wearing the glasses for a disguise. That was not necessary, in this inky darkness. And certainly, to any casual observer, the use of those glasses seemed silly.

The boat chugged its way out of the slip, rounded the end of a dock, and moved slowly through the gathering fog. Carter, in the bows, kept signaling the wheelman.

Once the boat slowed, with a grinding of reverse gears. For a time it coasted, then it gathered way again.

Suddenly, in response to Carter's quick signal, the boat nosed into a slip between two dingy docks. Grim-faced G-men came scurrying through a hatch, lined along one rail. The skiff which was being towed astern, was hauled alongside. Carter raced aft. Followed by the rest of the G-men, he leaped into the teetering skiff.

One powerful shove, by the man in the stern, sent the skiff gliding between the pilings that supported the dock.

This was a world of green slime and foul smells and the ceaseless, wet gurgle of waves against cross-brace

timbers. The darkness was like jet-black jelly, quivering with menace.

Then suddenly there was a creak of rusty hinges. A trapdoor, in the floor of the dock building, dropped open, and dim light shafted down. The light glistened on the rungs of a ladder that ran down into the water, and on the copper helmet and the suit of the diver who was climbing that ladder.

The G-men, clutching at the pilings on either side, sent their skiff gliding swiftly toward that light.

"Ready, boys," Carter snapped, softly, as the boat streaked into the glow of the light.

The bow of the skiff struck the ladder. The diver, clutching a rung of the ladder with one hand while he held onto the cords of a half-dozen of the tins with the other, turned his body to peer through his face-plate. Faces, in the trapdoor opening above, twitched and gaped in astonishment. Hands streaked for guns.

"Let 'em have it!" Carter yelled.

As the G-men went into action, the diver dropped from the ladder and landed in the water with a terrific splash. No matter. He would have to come out sometime; and he wasn't very important anyhow.

Guns thundered, flame-streaks lashed out eagerly, as if anxious to put the finger of death on the G-men who were swarming up the ladder. But the G-men answered with an accurate blast of their own lead.

Savage, battering echoes of the gunfire seemed to pack the choking, acrid powder-smoke into the nostrils of the G-men. But nothing could stop them now. Men, in the room above, screamed and fell back. Others scuttled away, squalling in fear of these grim, relentless fighters who could not be stopped. Others held their ground, pumping lead from hot, smoking guns, cursing as they did so.

The G-men swarmed into the room, forcing their enemies back to the dingy walls. Somebody snapped on more lights and in the sudden glare,

the fighting spirit of those who were left seemed to evaporate.

James Tsue was darting toward a door. Carter beat him to it, sent the smuggler chieftain staggering across the room with a savage blow to the chin. Tsue's wildly clutching fingers found no support—and, foolishly, he sat down, on the floor.

BOUND to a chair in an adjoining room was Frank Bristol.

"Good work, Marve," was all he had to say. But it was plenty.

The G-men trooped back into the room where James Tsue still sat on the floor. Tsue was shaking his head, like a man trying to rid himself of a terrifying and diabolically persistent nightmare.

"But you—you were drunk," he told Carter, plaintively.

"Only an act to throw you off your guard. We had hired an old fishing boat, Tsue. When I went aboard the liner I carried a tin that was an exact duplicate of the ones your diver was busily picking up. I threw the tin overboard. It had a special anchor weight, one that would stick in the sand. When your man tried to tear it free, it resisted, and the strong pull on the cord released a trigger inside the tin. That, in turn, released a chemical that floated to the surface, leaving a trail that showed me the exact course your diver was taking in his stroll along the bottom."

"But—but I had lookout men stationed all along the way! They would have seen this chemical trail in the water, would have phoned a warning to me—"

Carter shook his head. "The chemical was invisible. to the naked eye. But it produced an infra-red light, visible only through some special glasses I wore."

"You—are—just a little too smart for me," James Tsue muttered resentfully.

"Smart—and a fighting fool," Frank Bristol said. "That's why he's a G-man."

Next Month's Novel: NIGHT RIDERS, by C. K. M. Scanlon

Public Enemies



By Clayton Maxwell

GABRIEL VIGORITO

A Regular G-Men Feature

GABRIEL VIGORITO, KNOWN TO HIS ASSOCIATES AND THE NEW YORK UNDERWORLD AS "BLA-BLA THE BLACK MAN," WAS HEAD OF AN INTERNATIONAL AUTO THEFT RING. G-MEN FINALLY CAUGHT UP WITH HIM AT THE HEIGHT OF HIS CAREER.

HE WAS BROUGHT UP IN THE GREENPOINT DISTRICT OF BROOKLYN. LOUD-MOUTHED, HIS PALS GAVE HIM THE NICK-NAME OF "BLA-BLA," AND LATER ADDED "THE BLACK MAN" BECAUSE OF HIS BLACK HAIR AND SWARTHY SKIN.

DURING HIS CRIMINAL CAREER, HE CLEARED OVER A MILLION DOLLARS FOR HIMSELF, AND WAS PURSUED IN VAIN BY NEW YORK POLICE AND INSURANCE COMPANY DETECTIVES. MANY OF HIS HENCHMEN WERE CAUGHT, BUT THEY NEVER SQUEALED ON VIGORITO



VIGORITO JOINED THE GANG OF YOUNG TOUGHS WHO COMMITTED PETTY THEFTS IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD. WE'LL WAIT TILL THE COP MOVES ON, THEN MAKE TH' GRAB!



IN 1918 POLICE CAUGHT HIM IN A STOLEN AUTOMOBILE. HE WAS CONVICTED OF AUTO THEFT AND SERVED A TERM IN THE NEW YORK COUNTY PENITENTIARY. HERE HARDENED CONVICTS TAUGHT HIM HOW TO ENGAGE IN A SUCCESSFUL CRIMINAL CAREER.

LISTEN, KID, YOU GET NO- WHERE BEING JUST A PUNK. YOU'LL ALWAYS BE CAUGHT. BE THE BRAINS OF THE OUTFIT!



RELEASED FROM PRISON, VIGORITO ORGANIZED HIS OWN GANG OF AUTO STEALERS -- NEVER ACTUALLY DOING THE STEALING HIMSELF

SO YOU WANT TO JOIN MY GANG? REPORT TO PHIL -- HE'LL SHOW YOU A CAR TO DRIVE AWAY -- YOU GET THIRTY BUCKS!



SOON, LARGE NUMBERS OF CITIZENS REPORTED TO THE POLICE THAT THEIR CARS HAD BEEN STOLEN. DETECTIVES WOULD LATER FIND THESE EXPENSIVE AUTOS AT USED CAR DEALERS IN NEW YORK CITY, WITH THE MOTOR NUMBERS SKILLFULLY ALTERED. THEY SOUGHT OUT VIGORITO -- RECALLING HIS PRISON TERM FOR AUTO THEFT

SAY, I WAS JUGGED ONCE FOR STEALING A CAR. IT WASN'T PLEASANT IN THE JUG. I'M THROUGH WITH THAT STUFF -- I'M GOING STRAIGHT NOW!



NEW YORK DETECTIVES CAUGHT A NUMBER OF CAR THIEVES AND CONVICTED THEM. BUT VIGORITO WAS UNKNOWN TO HIS MENIAL HENCHMEN -- AND THE ACTUAL THIEVES WERE AFRAID TO REVEAL ANY OF THE GANG SECRETS

NO! NO! I DON'T KNOW NOTHIN!



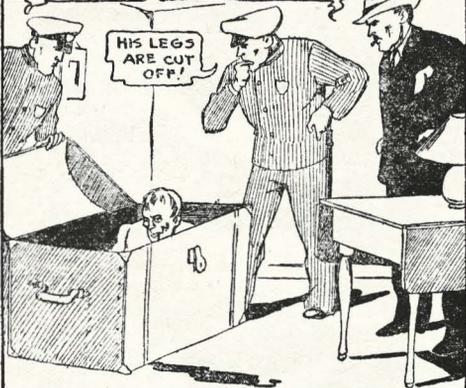
FINALLY, POLICE AND INSURANCE COMPANY DETECTIVES ARRESTED TWO OF VIGORITO'S LIEUTENANTS -- A GANGSTER AND AN ATTORNEY. WHEN QUESTIONED, THEY BROKE AND IDENTIFIED A ROGUE'S GALLERY PHOTO

YES THAT'S THE LEADER OF THE G-ALWAYS SUSPECTED HIM!



VIGORITO QUIETLY DISAPPEARED FROM HIS USUAL HAUNTS. HIS HENCHMEN WERE RELEASED ON BAIL, BUT BOTH JUMPED THEIR BAIL AND WENT INTO HIDING. LATER, POLICE FOUND THE DEAD GANGSTER IN A TRUNK IN A CHEAP APARTMENT HOUSE IN BROOKLYN

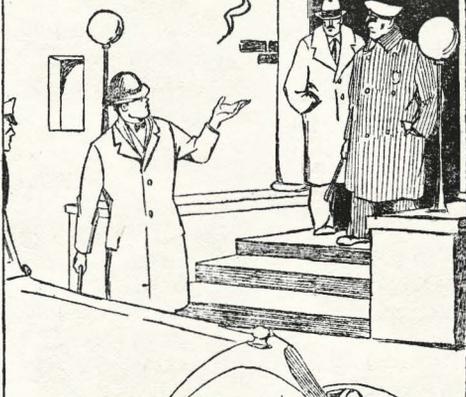
PLEASENT LITTLE SIGHT, EX BOYS? THAT'S THE THUG WHO IDENTIFIED VIGORITO'S PHOTO!



HIS LEGS ARE CUT OFF!

WITH THE WITNESSES AGAINST HIM GONE, THE BLACK MAN CAME OUT OF HIDING AND CHEERFULLY SUBMITTED TO THE POLICE. HE WAS RELEASED FOR LACK OF EVIDENCE

I HOPE YOU WILL SOMEDAY UNDERSTAND THAT THIEVERY IS FAR BEHIND ME. WE'LL GET YOU YET, BLA-BLA



AND NOW VIGORITO BEGAN EXPANDING HIS BUSINESS. STOLEN CARS FROM NEW YORK WERE FOUND IN NEW ENGLAND, PENNSYLVANIA AND NEW JERSEY, AND SOUTH AS FAR AS GEORGIA AND FLORIDA. THIS INTERSTATE BUSINESS BROUGHT BLA-BLA'S ACTIVITIES TO THE NOTICE OF THE G-MEN

BOYS, THIS NEW YORK RING OF AUTO THIEVES ARE EXTENDING THEIR RACKET ACROSS STATE LINES. IT'S OUR BUSINESS NOW. GO AFTER THEM!



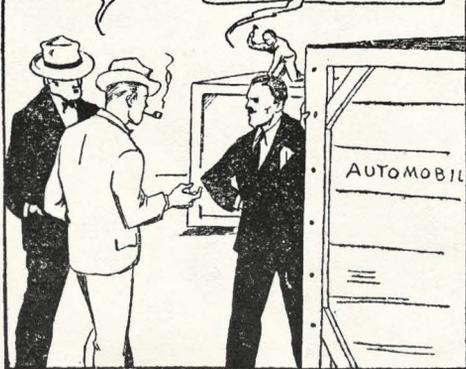
ONE DAY G-MEN AND DETECTIVES CAME UPON A SUSPICIOUS LOOKING CHARACTER DRIVING AN EXPENSIVE CAR, THE MAN WAS STOPPED AT THE CURB AND THE CAR EXAMINED CAREFULLY

IT'S A BENT CAR, ALL RIGHT! THE NUMBERS HAVE BEEN CHANGED! OKAY, SPAGHETTI, WHO ARE YOU? THE NUMBER CHANGER AND VIGORITO'S BROTHER-IN-LAW!

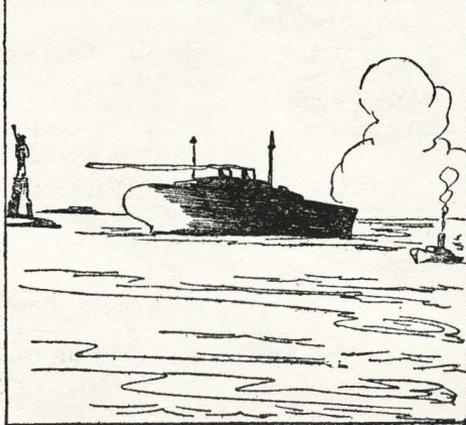


PAPERS WERE FOUND ON FIOTO THAT CONVINCED G-MEN THAT VIGORITO'S ACTIVITIES WERE INTERNATIONAL. THEY INTERVIEWED A CONCERN AT TRENTON, NEW JERSEY, THAT CRATED USED CARS FOR SHIPMENT ABROAD

WE'RE FEDERAL AGENTS. WHERE DO ALL THESE USED CARS COME FROM? THEY'RE BROUGHT TO US BY A TRUCKING CONCERN. I UNDERSTAND THE SHIPPERS ARE THE BORO HALL AUTO EXCHANGE IN NEW YORK!



BOTH THE TRUCKING CONCERN AND THE CRATERS BELIEVED THEY WERE DOING BUSINESS WITH A LEGITIMATE COMPANY. G-MEN FOUND THAT THE BORO HALL AUTO EXCHANGE WAS NON-EXISTENT. A SPECIAL AGENT WAS SENT ABROAD TO TACKLE THE CASE FROM THAT ANGLE



THE G-MAN FOUND THAT SO MANY STOLEN CARS HAD BEEN ENTERING EUROPE THAT THE MARKET WAS FLOODED

HERE'S A CABLE FROM OUR AGENT IN EUROPE. IT SEEMS THAT A CERTAIN PERSON GOING UNDER THE NAME OF "OSCAR NEILSON" HAS STOLEN THE EXPORT CAR BUSINESS FROM LEGITIMATE DEALERS. INTERVIEW STEAMSHIP COMPANIES AND EXPORTERS. WE'LL PICK UP THE TRAIL SOMEWHERE!



IN THE COURSE OF THEIR INVESTIGATION, G-MEN QUESTIONED A NEW YORK EXPORTER

YOU PROBABLY KNOW THAT AT ONE TIME I WAS THE LARGEST AMERICAN EXPORTER OF USED CARS. A MAN WHO CALLED HIMSELF BOB, ASKED ME TO SHIP HIS STOLEN CARS. I REFUSED. LATER, AN OSCAR NEILSON WENT IN BUSINESS WITH ME. HE SEEMED TO BE ON THE LEVEL -- BUT AS SOON AS HE KNEW THE ROPES OF THE BUSINESS, HE PULLED OUT AND PRACTICALLY WRECKED ME BY SELLING CARS ABROAD MUCH CHEAPER THAN I COULD BUY THEM HERE!



I SUPPOSE THIS NEILSON IS A SWEDE!

STRANGE AS IT MAY SEEM, HE LOOKS LIKE AN ITALIAN. HE'S TIED UP IN SOME WAY WITH A FELLOW NAMED VIGORITO WHO IS SOME SORT OF A RACKETEER!



HERE ARE SOME ROGUE'S GALLERY PHOTOS. CAN YOU IDENTIFY ANY OF THEM?

THAT'S -- THAT'S BOB! THE MAN WHO WANTED ME TO SHIP STOLEN CARS!

THAT IS ALSO GABRIEL VIGORITO!



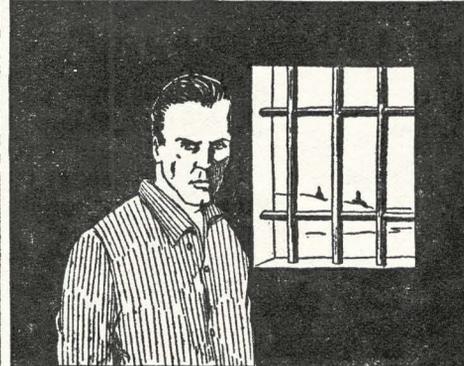
G-MEN, HAVING LEARNED THE IDENTITY OF THE REAL CULPRIT SUCCEEDED IN SECURING EVIDENCE OF ACTUAL SHIPMENTS OF STOLEN CARS PERSONALLY SUPERVISED BY VIGORITO

DON'T TRY TO RESIST US, VIGORITO, WE'RE FEDERAL OFFICERS!

YOU FLATFEET GIVE ME A LAUGH, ALWAYS PICKING ME UP -- AND YOU NEVER HAVE ANYTHING ON ME.



NOW VIGORITO WAS PROSECUTED ON A FEDERAL CHARGE. G-MEN SUBMITTED REAL EVIDENCE AND INTRODUCED WITNESSES WHO WERE NOT AFRAID OF HIM. HIS LAWYERS HELD OFF HIS CONVICTION FOR MONTHS BUT ALL THEIR APPEALS WERE DENIED. HE WAS SENTENCED TO TEN YEARS IN THE FEDERAL PRISON AT LEWISBURG, PA



NEXT MONTH -- ANOTHER THRILLING G-MEN ADVENTURE IN PICTURES

The Black Chamber

*How to Solve Secret Ciphers Told by a
World Famous Cryptographer*

By M. K. DIRIGO

SINCE the very first day when G-MEN appeared on the newsstands with **THE BLACK CHAMBER** prize contest, solutions have been arriving like an avalanche. Everybody seems to have entered the contest—and there's still time for you to send in your entry, if you haven't already done so. Get into it! Your chance for prize money is as good as the next one's, and the contest is being held open until midnight, February 1, 1937.

If you have any additional questions to ask which were not covered in the Contest Rules, send in a stamped, self-addressed envelope for reply and you will get immediate attention. And don't let the tough ones discourage you!

Beginning with the cryptograms in this issue, we would like to know who solves the greatest number during 1937. A chart will be kept and for every cryptogram that you solve your name will receive a credit. At the end of the year this chart will indicate not only the 1937 **CHAMPION SOLVER**, but also the second and third and all other ratings. A **PRIZE** will be given to the winner.

In this issue we offer you the second of a series of charts displaying letter characteristics.

This chart was compiled from a dictionary containing 51,750 words and shows the **FINAL** and **PENULTIMATE** letters of the entire list. It shows how many words end with the letter A; with B; with C; etc., down to the letter Z. It also shows in every instance the **PENULTIMATE** letters of each word in each alphabetical index, and the highest frequency letters in each case indicated by being enclosed in a darker square than the others.

HOW TO FOLLOW THE CHART

To illustrate further how to read this chart, notice, for example, that of the 51,750 words analyzed, 1,223 end with the letter A; 158 with B; 1,790 with C; 1,830 with D; 9,817 with E,

etc. At this point your attention is directed to the letter S, showing a total of 5,783 words, and ranking third from the highest, viz: E, 9,817; Y, 9,122; S, 5,783.

THE LETTER S

In a previous issue in which we presented a table showing the frequency of final letters, we showed the letter S as being of greatest frequency. The discrepancy is accounted for by the fact that the letter S, which forms the **PLURALS** of such a vast number of words, and which accounts for its being such a high-frequency letter, has been omitted from our chart in this particular characteristic, because dictionaries do not give the plural form of all words.

Cognizance will therefore have to be taken of this fact, and for practical purposes it is suggested that the letter S be considered as the highest frequency **FINAL** letter.

This chart further shows that of the 1,223 words ending with the letter A, 313 are preceded by I; 141 by R; 131 by L; etc.

Just to test your knowledge of word construction, cover the chart with your hand and see if you can tell which letter precedes **FINAL E** more frequently than any other.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	
A	1	19	41	37	51	7	22	26	313	2	16	131	119	120	19	7		141	13	91	6	19	2	2	4	14	1228
B	35	2			5				16			2	35		23			23			27						158
C	51				11				1704		1		5	7				6	4		1						1790
D	130			5	670		1		345			85		247	112			202			26		4		2	1	1830
E	23	50	766	363	195	21	469	79	105	2	109	1904	175	716	21	176		579	611	1811	177	825	6	2	18	484	9817
F	8				20	57			15			22			17			10			1						148
G	36				10		1		25					911	30			7				21					1041
H	55		264		3		42				3				4	115		3	461	181							1131
I	8	7		10		1	3	9	2	1	3	23	6	13	5	5		20	5	16	3	2	1	1			144
J	3			1																							4
K	41	1	232		17				6			28		70	28			74	32		7		9				545
L	938				256		2	177				181			51			27		1	200		27		16		2876
M	118				43		5	5	49			17		2	93			266	719		439		1		13		1770
N	916				356		29	2	402			1	8	5	2517			123	1		26		39		3		4428
O	2	17	35	54	4	1	53	10	38	1	5	28	20	42	32	5		36	22	89	2	9	2		7	5	513
P	54				24				158			10	58		65	2		22	12		24				3		432
Q																											-
R	423				3147			2	61						599			12			144				4		4392
S	55	3	107	33	188	1	42	1	416		21	21	4	38	28	23		48	2864	41	1818		9		22		5783
T	144	3	187	2	464	53		89	181			76		1440	144	55		170	986	11	77		1	6			4097
U	26	3		4	4		1	4		1		4	1	3	24	1		3	1	4							84
V	1								1																		2
W	43				60													113									216
X	30				48				55			1			11	18											183
Y	140	52	379	111	101	166	369	290				97	4104	182	202	40	111		1300	103	1272	9	24	21	22	27	9122
Z	1				3				5												5					6	21
	4272	157	2011	620	5680	307	1037	519	4071	7	254	6719	608	3833	3991	500	-	3072	5834	3522	3018	949	722	33	97	537	51,750

CHART OF LETTER CHARACTERISTICS

The horizontal alphabet represents the PENULTIMATE letters.

The vertical alphabet represents the FINAL letters of words.

There are close to 10,000 words ending with E. That is about 20% of all the words in the dictionary. Do you think it is important to know the characteristics of all the letters that appear so close to this one?

Now look at the chart. Was your answer correct?

The practical application of this chart and the great store of valuable information that it discloses is very obvious.

Say, for example, that you have located in a cryptogram the character substituted for E at the end of a word, through its high frequency. Now—if you had no other clue for a continua-

tion, wouldn't it seem logical to try to locate high frequency adjacent letters as in this particular case? We see that the highest frequency penultimate to final E is L. If it becomes necessary to experiment, why not start with this letter for L?

Look along the horizontal of letter C. Only nine letters precede FINAL C and I ranks first with 1,704 out of 1,790 appearances.

Now glance down the vertical column. Notice that A is the *only* letter to appear in the PENULTIMATE position, which is followed in the FINAL position by every letter in the alphabet—except Q. As a com-

parison notice that J, V, and X, in the penultimate position, have each only five possible letters as FINALS.

MORE CHARTS TO COME

The same is true of E (horizontal), which is the *only* FINAL that has as penultimates every other letter in the alphabet, except Q.

Compare this with FINALS J and V, which have only two possible penultimates each.

Some letters are highest frequency only as finals, some as penultimates, and some as both. For example, T is the highest frequency final following N, and N is the highest frequency penultimate preceding T.

As a comparison notice that E is the highest frequency final following L; but L appears most frequently as a penultimate preceding Y.

There are a great many more characteristics which you will find in this chart if you examine it closely.

In addition to the positive characteristics there are many of a negative nature that are of great importance.

There are more charts to be published in this department, each displaying different letter characteristics.

All of them are of great importance in cryptogram solving.

NOW TRY THESE

Here are some new cryptograms! Put your thinking caps on and go ahead!

No. 34.
EH PRAPS DIYESTD CALYD
APRO CAN UMPO DIYESTD
APPLY WLYEPX HLRR
WMO?

No. 35.
AGN IGBZ NCII CU UFS
D HIGH S UG KULCSD UN
DIED CM CU UFS DK KCO
KDH GBPK UG KULCSD KCO?

No. 36.
EFFECTS GLIF GAHSZ GFLN
OEPQ LG ODEUACT PEFXZ
ZL WVEW LCDU GLIF OAOZ
LG SEP V ZVEDD RS HAZ
ARDS.

**FOUR-LETTER
PATTERN WORDS**

INDEX 14 (Continued)

RAER	SIPS	TAPT	TWAT
RAIR	SIRS	TART	TWIT
REAR	SITS	TAUT	—
ROAR	SKIS	TAXT	—
ROER	SOBS	TEAT	UNAU
RUER	SODS	TELT	URDU
RUHR	SOC S	TENT	—
—	SONS	TEST	—
SACS	SOPS	TEXT	VALV
SAGS	SORS	THAT	—
SAIS	SOTS	TIFT	—
SANS	SOUS	TILT	WHEW
SAOS	SOWS	TINT	—
SAPS	SUBS	TIPT	—
SARS	SUDS	TOAT	ZUNZ
SAWS	SUES	TOFT	—
SAYS	SUMS	TOIT	—
SEAS	SUNS	TOLT	—
SENS	SUPS	TOPT	—
SEPS	SURS	TORT	—
SETS	—	TOST	—
SEWS	—	TOUT	—
SHAS	TACT	TOWT	—
SIMS	TAFT	TRET	—
SINS	TAIT	TROT	—
—	TANT	TUFT	—

(This concludes Index 14. Next instalment commences Index 23.)

No. 37.
ABCD EFGHIJ KLMFND CL
GFOB PILL DBCE IKQBDR
CN KDN DJKSPI CHTUI
IKQBDR?

No. 38.
KNOCKING BNU XCLYXM-
SOPL UXNXOIIYU BIC
QNYM GOSSLKLYX XORV-
LXU NKL KLAZOKLG RIYY-
LRXOYD LPLKM UXNXOIIY
COXB LPLKM IXBLK UX-
NXOIIY?

No. 39.
UGCTTCPIG NGVVG TU QH
VJKU WPKPVGNKIKDNG
YQTF— "GCLREM NAY"—VQ
HQTO IQQF *GPINKUJ YQTF.

POCA HAUNTUS



The old man pulled out two .45s and began shooting.

Agent Dan Harwin Faces a Machine-Gun Wedding—
and It's All the Fault of that Cagy Old Chief of His!

By **TOM CURRY**

Author of "Scotched," "Death Dodger," etc.

MY gill-sized Scotch Mussolini, Inspector Duncan McIntosh of the Eastern District, sits up all night in free waiting rooms, thinking of ways to make me suffer. So it seems to me, anyway, for though we solve crime incidentally, no one could get in the squeezes I do without forethought.

I had just wiped the blackboard on a ghastly assignment in Brooklyn,

capturing forty gorillas with a paw tied behind me and balancing a toothpick on my nostril, and had thrown my aching two hundred bangs on the springs for a few blinks, when I had to crawl over to answer the ding-ding.

"Daniel Harwin?" asked the operator. "This is long distance. Will you accept a reverse charge from Tantom, sixty-five cents plus tax?"

I knew it must be McIntosh; he has cross-street pockets—one way.

"Daniel," growls my boss when we were hooked, "I want ye to rush up here immejatly. Murder is rampant and the river flows crimson with gore."

"A pleasant spot, and how poetic," I sneered. "Shall I fly?"

"Na, na, don't waste the Government's cash on sich fol-de-rols as air-planes," he snapped. "Take the night bus, it's cheaper."

"And harder on the spinal column," I growled, but he had rung off, not wanting to wear out the wires unnecessarily.

It was still gloomy, as the express bus I flipped ran into the mountains, Tantown ten miles ahead in the river valley. I had managed to snooze off and was dreaming I was a canary bird in a gilded cage with nothing to do but eat, sleep and hunt bird lice, when the air was shattered by the roar of a big car overtaking us.

As they passed me waking to my misery, a man leaned out of the rear seat and screamed, "Help—Murder!" Then he was yanked back like a cuckoo returning to the clock. Shots rattled in the car, and I dove for my trusty .45, shooting after the sedan. In response I drew a basket of lead plums that sent the bus driver into the nearest ditch.

"Cut it out," the driver bawled. "You want to git us moidered?"

"Follow that car," I shouted.

"Whaddya think I'm driving, a squad car?" he snarled. "I am paid forty-two dollars and twenty-five cents per to drive a bus, not a hearse, which it's what this will be if we get too near those gunmen."

It was too late, anyway. The black sedan was already out of sight. The bus pulled from the ditch and we jogged on, me resuming my interrupted dreams. We had gone only a few more miles when the driver jammed his brake on so hard I banged my sore nose on the front seat.

"Now what's wrong?" I snarled.

"Nothing," he replied. "Just another corpse. We're comin' to Tantown."

I peeked through our punctured windshield. A body lay on the highway, head and trunk on the Tarvia and dogs in the sanded shoulder. I hopped out for a better view.

Now, I have to know all the recorded crooks possible. The F. B. I. in Washington has a Hall of Fame for them, and one of my duties is to go to school and learn them. I spotted this hombre as a heist man from Chi. He was so full of bullet holes that if he had been stood up he would have cast a shadow like a sand-strainer. But he had only been dead a short while, and I figured he had been tossed out of that sedan.

I YAWNED and was about to ankle back to the bus when I noticed the marks his heel had made in the sand of the road shoulder. The headlights lit them up like day. Evidently he had not been quite through when they tossed him out; probably they felt hurried because of my shooting. With his heel he had managed to scratch several letters in the sand before he checked out.

I bent down and made out "R-I-C-A-R—", then a smear as he weakened, and a half circle standing up. I rubbed it out with my foot—I am not in business to assist other sleuths.

We drove on and pulled into the Tantown terminal. I found McIntosh waiting for me in the hotel room—I keep away from police stations as much as possible so as not to be leoparded.

My boss looks like an undersized flea with horn-rim cheaters. He gripped my biceps so hard I yelped, as my muscles were sore.

"Daniel," the inspector says very solemn, "the au-thor-i-ities of Tantown have appealed to the mighty Federal Government to put a stop to these murders in their ceety. In the past months forty killings have taken place. Bathers in the towns below here complain they cannot go for a dip in the river without bumping into corpses. Most have been identified as criminals, but ye know the underworld comes to prey upon the honest citizens after it settles its own wars.

Of course there have been the usual holdups and crime going on."

"Looks like some one bunch is running the town," I observed keenly.

"That's elementary," complimented McIntosh. "And it's up to ye, laddie, to put a stop to it." He reached up and patted my shoulder. "I am putting my faith in ye, Daniel. You must ferret out this passel of murderers and nail them to the mast. I have it figgered out: you pose as an out-of-town crook—"

I broke in with a yip. "Why, every one of them gets gunned and thrown on the road or in the river! That old roping gag won't go in an organized gang—the lads are wise to it."

McIntosh scowled. "Ye a i n ' t afeared, are ye, Daniel?" he inquired icily.

"Yes," I yelped, just as bergy. "I have been trying to reduce lately, and I don't fancy taking in several ounces of lead."

"If ye'd cut down on pie and other silly eating expenses, that would be best," the inspector shrugged. "Myself, I have a fine game that is 'most as funny as eating. Conjure up in yere mind tasty snacks ye have been treated to in the past and consume them again in retrospect. It don't cost ye a penny nor is it bad for the waistline. Now, since you agree my plan's good, put on yere old clothing and dig into the Tantown underworld."

I squawked that on the salary I got I had nothing but old rags anyway, and then told him of the corpse I had seen on my way in.

"Looked like he tried to spell out the name of his murderer as he died," I went on. "Phone the chief of police and ask have they got a criminal here whose handle begins with *Ricar* and ends with an *e* or an *o*."

"Let me have two nickels," he said, "and I'll do it."

"Why two?" I demanded. "One's enough to phone."

"I might lose the feerst in the box," he replied.

After a while he came back and told me he had saved both nickels by using the manager's telephone, but he

didn't give my nickels back to me.

"The police say there is a mon here named Felix Ricardo, a Spaniard who dwells on the riverfront. He is known as '*El Jacalo*,' the Jackal, and is a mighty tough patron. He has an old police record but lately they have not been able to catch him out. He is sending over Ricardo's picture. It's a good tip I'm givin' ye, Daniel, so get busy, lad."

When the police photo and description came and I had it down in my aching brain, I hooked on a .45 automatic and jammed my soft hat down over my ears.

"Farewell." I said, holding out my hand to the inspector. "Send what remains you find to my folks."

"Ye're a light-headed young feller, Daniel," McIntosh said, shaking his head. "Now mind, I'll be doing some snooping myself the night, and if ye need me, look for me on Main Street near the big white bank. I'll pause there now and then to look for you."

"Hokay," I answered, and went out into the misty morn.

I SPENT the next day getting familiar with Tantown. It was a busy little city. I can't say I was in a hurry to show myself to those killers. It was some assignment I had—to work into a closed mob that didn't fancy competition. They are mighty careful these days and you need a blue ribbon and a diploma from Alcatraz before they will cut anything with you except your gizzard.

It was along toward dusk that I picked up Ricardo. He bounced out of the river café where he hung out. His picture did not do him justice. I had made allowances for the police mug being a lot uglier than the original, like a passport photo, but Ricardo in life was forty times worse.

He was a thin hombre with a hooked snorter, shiny white fangs and eyes green as French peas. He had oiled black hair under the robin's-egg-blue skimmer he tipped, and all in all was a nasty looking playmate. The Jackal was dressed fit to kill!—his specialty.

The idea of horning in on his

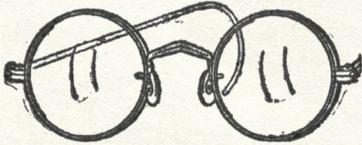
BACKACHE

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marbles was none too sugary. I supported my knob against a lamp post as he passed and he shot a glare my way that actually made my liver turn over. He got into a yellow racer and chugged off.

I had no way of trailing him then. "Where there's a jackal, there's a lion," I told myself—not that it helped much.

Along toward nine P. M. I spotted the yellow racer parked outside "El Toro" nightclub, and oozed in for an ogle. Ricardo was in there, at a table with a young woman. And what a woman!

She was tall as I, two yards, hefting around one hundred seventy. Attractive enough in her way if you liked them that way, her eyes were inky, hair to match with a fancy Spanish comb standing up in it. She wore an expensive low-backed evening gown and looked as though she packed a mean wallop. One OO told me Ricardo was woozy about her. They were eating, drinking and, when the swing band oscillated, they rumbled.

Now, I'm no ladies' man. To me, woman is spelled T-R-O-U-B-L-E.

But often you can hook a crook through his dame and duty is duty—especially when McIntosh is jawing you about being a useless expense on the payroll that had better be lopped off. So when a dark-faced man signalled Ricardo from the doorway and the Jackal excused himself and loped out, I sidled closer and let my Irish orbs rest on the señorita. She spotted me and showed her pearly dental work. She was coy and dropped her fan so I could pick it up.

"Oh, thank you," she said, rolling her headlights.

"Don't mention it, ma'am," I replied gallantly. "I wish I could be of more service to you."

Knowing Ricardo would waltz back any minute and just wishing to contact his dame, I was starting to Waterloo when the band swung into a Spanish piece. The girl rose and put a hand on my arm.

"Let's dance thees one," she says, and so help me I found myself on the

floor doing a fancy step with her. "You iceve in Tantown, señor?" she asks.

"Uh—I'm a stranger here, just got in," I answered, one eye on that door. I had an idea Ricardo would not like anyone else to dance with his friend, and boy, was I correct.

WE were halfway around the floor when the Jackal came tootsing back. He missed the señorita at the table but spotted us prancing, and the tornado in his face made me want to run for the cellar. His map twisted and he bit his yellow lip so hard he yelped. His hand made a move for his coat pocket—evidently for his gun—but then he held it and plunked down at the table, sinking his dimple on his chest.

When I took the young lady back and thanked her for the dance, I tried to scoot, but she insisted I sit down for a snifter. Ricardo's teeth ground together and his glare nearly knocked me head over heels. He had a nasty temper he had never tried to control.

He couldn't stand me and burst into a long spout of Spanish that made the girl, whose name was Teresa, go red as a ruby. She jumped up.

"Weel you pliz to take me home, señor?" she asked me, holding out her arm. "I do not weesh to stay with thees Spanish pig!"

Ricardo grabbed my wrist, held me a minute.

"Then I'll cut off your ears, nose, arms and legs and maybe your head for thees," he hissed, or words to that effect.

Well, I can be cut up just so far and then I snap. I hauled off and landed an old Irish argument on his snoot, and he crashed on the floor. I strolled out with the señorita and hailed a taxi.

"Where to, ma'am?" I asked, and she gave me the address. She kept looking at me as we rode out Main Street.

"What's wrong?" I asked.

She shook her head. "I'm worried," she admitted.

Well, I was too, but I pretended not

(Continued on page 118)

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(Continued from page 117)

to know what she meant. "About what?" I asked.

"Ricardo. He likes me *mucho*, though I am only lukewarm. He ees so ug-lee. You are brave man, señor, to heet heem the way you did, but—" she broke off with a shrug. "Maybe I can help."

She wouldn't go into details. We pulled into the grounds of a big mansion, a regular millionaire's joint. Teresa made me come in to meet her old man, Señor Don Barca. He was a short, very broad Spaniard of forty, with cold blinkers and a set face. He only grunted at me as she knocked me down as Señor Dan 'Arwin. He called her 'Poca Mia'—my little one.

When I was leaving she came to the door with me. "You'll come again?" she asked.

"Oh, sure," I promised.

"You go straight home now," she advised anxiously.

I nodded and started back to the riverfront, where I had a room booked in a cheap hotel. I cut over toward Main Street, thinking that I would perhaps see McIntosh near the white bank and tip him as to what I had accomplished.

There he was, walking slowly ahead of me. The street was deserted, as it was pretty late and everybody went to bed early in Tantown. I had just caught up to the inspector when I heard a car brake squeak and, out of the corner of my peeper, I saw Ricardo's yellow racer right across the way!

McIntosh, having heard me behind him, was turning and I figured he would say something that would sure give me away. I thought fast, whipped out my .45 and pointed it at the inspector, growling, "Your money or your life!"

"Go ahead and shoot," he said.

Then he recognized me and his chin hit his collar. "Why—" he began, but shut up as he saw my frantic winks. He dug into his pocket quick and handed me over some papers but he kept his money. I stuffed the loot in my pocket as though I had robbed him, and started him on his way, then

ducked back around the corner, figuring maybe I had fooled Señor the Jackal anyhow.

I LOPED off a way, pretending to lam. McIntosh set up some yelps when he saw I was clear.

After I had left the district, I circled back toward the river and my hotel, being pretty weary. It was dark along the side streets, and Ricardo's yellow racer kept following me at a distance. I was busy watching it, thinking he might gun me then and there. While my head was turned I walked right into the arms of half a dozen tough hombres waiting for me near the river.

I managed to smack a couple down but they never spoke, just grabbed me, took away my rod before I had it a quarter out. They kicked me around the corner into a big black sedan waiting for me. In the back seat sat Ricardo the Jackal, fangs showing—someone else had his yellow racer, as he figured I'd watch it for him.

"So," says he, happily, "Señor Stickup, you dare pull a job in Tan-town. I theenk by thees time you fool thieves learn to stay away from here."

That was it. Ricardo was running a closed union and anybody who dared butt in was given the whole factory.

Ricardo and his mob in the sedan had seen me do the holdup, and had slipped around in front of me. Revenge is sweet, especially to a Spaniard, and Ricardo took pleasure in poking and pinching me, making sport of me.

"Let's see what you got," he said, and took McIntosh's papers out of my pocket, also my own roll of cash.

"A G-man!" Ricardo gasped, reading the paper McIntosh had passed me in such a hurry.

"I am not," I gulped, thinking he meant me.

"I know you're not, fool," the Jackal replied. "I saw you steal from that leetle fellow. He ees the G-man." He frowned. "We weel have to go easy, boys, till the heat's off."

(Continued on page 120)

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(Continued from page 119)

I figured I was baked. They had worked so fast I had had no time to get going. A short ride and I would be trying to spell out my murderer's name, the way that heist man from Chi had, or maybe I would be floating down the river. It had come out as I had expected, and I knew McIntosh would make them give me a cheap funeral.

"Drive along the river road, Jose," ordered Ricardo, "but drive slow. I weesh to tell thees fool Yank a few things."

They were armed to the tonsils and I hadn't a squiff. Jose, the driver, was pushing the starter when a coupé whirled up, blocking the way. The fellows got their rods out, then Jose cried: "It's Señorita Poca!"

Sure enough, it was the dame. She hopped out and boiled over on the black sedan.

"So—I thought you would try eet, dog," she yelled angrily, slapping Ricardo in the snoot. "Let heem out, you shall not keel heem."

"Says you," answered Ricardo. "He's an out-of-town steeck-upper and must die the death."

They ran off into Spanish, spitting back and forth so fast their words got doublecrossed. Finally Teresa—or Poca the Little One, as they called her—scared the others into arguing on her side, though Ricardo the Jackal insisted I must look up at daisy roots.

"Remember, Ricardo," Jose said, "we are but a few, and when the boss gets mad he gets mad."

"Verree well, we'll see," snarled the Jackal. "Hees order ees to open up for inspection every thief we catch."

"Then we go to my father now," screamed Poca, eyes flaming torches.

SO we all drive merrily to Poca's jernt. Her old man came down into the big salon where they were holding me. Ricardo cried excitedly:

"Señor Boss, thees man, we see heem do steeckup tonight in Tantom. The beeg fool held up a G-man, of all things, putting us in danger. The G-steamheat ees on, so we mus' keel thees hombre."

Barca growled, nodding.

"Why for you bring heem to bother me? F'row heem in the rivaire pronto."

"No, no," screamed Poca—they never talked, they yelled or screamed. "I—I like heem, I weel not see heem murdered. For me you mus' spare my Dan."

They bargained back and forth as though I was a choice filet mignon on sale. Finally Old Man Barca says:

"Enough ees sufficient. He must not be hurted, Ricardo. Poca, my leetle one, shall have her way."

"You hear that? Don't let anything happen to Dan," shouted Poca triumphantly at the boiling-over Jackal.

"Gee, Poca, thanks," I whispered to her, and she flashed her white biters at me so I shied.

I now decided I could count on receiving my bills the first of the month as usual. I had never put much stock in that old yarn about how Pochahontas, the Indian Princess, had saved Captain John Smith from a too-short haircut at the hands of her father's braves, but it sure worked in my case.

I have caught up with escaped convicts, and Public Enemy A-1; once I was trapped in a pasture by an angry bull; I have faced McIntosh when he was short-changed. But I never saw anyone as sore as Ricardo the Jackal. His face seemed to swell with rage.

Things were pretty clear to me: Ricardo was the chief triggerman but he was only the jackal to Poca's pop, Señor Barca, and they were running Tantom to suit themselves, allowing no rivals—cutthroat competition you could call it. I figured we could snaffle all the evidence we needed to slap the whole mob in the doghouse, and I sure intended to recommend Alcatraz for Señor Ricardo.

I took out a cigar, bit off the end with a sigh of relief. I started for the nearest exit without bothering to get my hat. "Well, *adios*," I said. "Thanks again, Miss Poca, and to you, Señor Barca. I sure won't forget your little favor—"

"One moment, señor," cried Barca.
(Continued on page 123)

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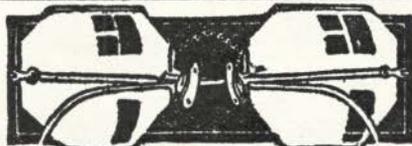
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Here are some excerpts from readers' letters recently received:

My membership card is the envy of my classmates in law college, many of whom have begun reading

G-MEN and are joining the club.—Eustaquio S. Bass, Tondo, Manila.

The federals in action sure do swell work. Boy, oh boy, what a magazine!—J. Aurele Tremblay, Timmins, Ont., Can.

G-MEN is entertaining and instructive.—Edward W. Schanz, St. Louis, Mo.

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I am interested in the study of criminology and have taken several courses. Your magazine presents some interesting facts about crime.—R. D. Brady, Lancaster, Pa.

G-MEN is to my way of thinking, quite the best of the magazines now on the newsstands. The illustrated story of Eddie Bentz was fine.—H. O. Schwartzlose, San Francisco, Cal.

Among other especially interesting letters recently received were those sent in by the following:

Lealie R. Philpott, Alberta, Can.; Benjamin Golub, Peoria, Ill.; Cadet 1st Lieut. Sal. Gallo, New York.; Dudley M. McCrimmin, Los Angeles, Cal.; Tony Martin, Grand Rapids, Mich.; William Harper, Perthshire, Scotland; John D. Collins, Duluth, Minn.; Harry R. Marshall, Evansville, Ind.; and Robert Lorimer, Sydney, Australia.

Thanks to everybody! And if YOU haven't joined the club, do so now!

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POCA HAUNTUS

(Continued from page 121)

"We have not yet made the plan."

Poca was blushing.

"What plan?" I inquired.

"Why, for your wedding," said Barca. "It might as well take place without delay."

I nearly choked to death on my own smoke. When I finished coughing, I stuttered, "But—uh, señor, I—uh—"

Whoa! I had thought Ricardo was sore but Barca went two shades redder.

"You—you—" he began. Then he growled, "Are you already married?"

Ricardo looked hopeful, hand on his gun.

"No, no," I replied. "I am not a marrying man, señor—at least not up to now," I corrected hastily as the ring of guns closed in on me.

"Perhaps *el señor* does not understand our way," Barca explained, smooth as silk. "My leetle daughter has told all the world she likes you. To us this means that you are engaged, nothing less. You would not weesh to shame her—or would you?" His eyes bored me.

Hep to myself after the shock, I says, "Oh, that's swell, señor. Too much honor. I need to get ready, though, so I'll be back."

Poca came and took my paw. Barca was whispering to his men, and a couple slipped from the room. Ricardo's scowl was the Ace of Spades.

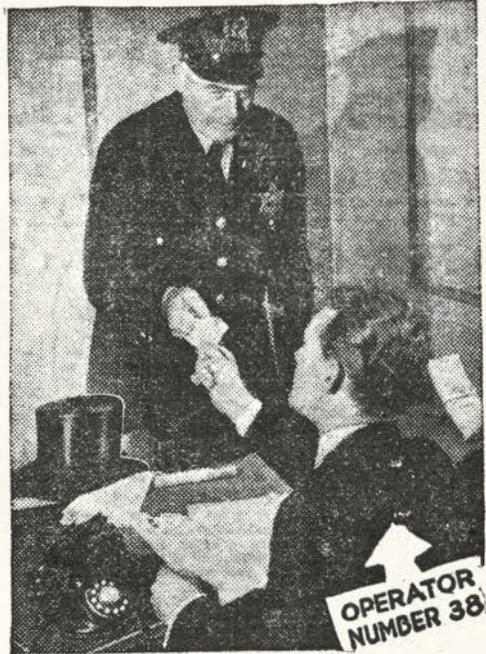
I SURE cursed McIntosh's heart and soul for letting myself get in such a fix. I could not go through with it—and I sure couldn't refuse. I made a couple of starts trying to excuse myself a few minutes so I could call out the National Guard and the Fire Department, but it was no use. I had made a slip when they surprised me and they were taking no chances. Señor Barca was very kind but firm.

"You wait upstairs, Dan," he ordered, "until we talk eet over." He waved a flipper and I was escorted up

(Continued on page 124)

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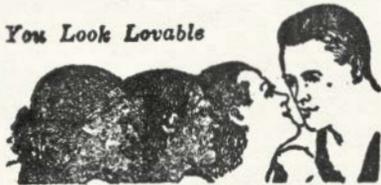
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(Continued from page 113)

the wide steps to a rear room. They shoved me in and I heard the key turn. I hopped to the window. It had steel bars on it and my teeth were dull. I sat on the edge of a chair and tried to think my way out but all I felt was panic.

Maybe, I thought finally, I could pretend to go to the slaughter—I meant the altar—and duck at the last minute. That made me feel a trifle less horrible and I listened to the steady tramp-tramp of the guard outside.

After an hour the key grated and four men hopped in. They were all dressed up like broken arms. Jose was in the lead, grinning from mastoid to mastoid. He wore a tux and under one arm a shiny new sub-machine gun, the latest make.

"Hey, Dan," he yelled. "I am best man!"

"I admit that," I replied, one eye on the chopper. "What happens now?" I thought maybe they meant to give it to me.

"Everybody waits for you," Jose told me, slapping me so hard on the spine that I choked on my tongue. "Señor Don Barca say you mus' act quiet or—" He grinned and patted the tommy. "We do not want to scare the parson. But we know you weel be verree happee."

I gulped. A machine-gun wedding!

Oh, yeah, I was so happy I couldn't keep from jumping. We went downstairs. There were no rods in sight now but it was plain I was covered from all angles as well as from above and below. Poca was smiling happily, all dolled up. The wine was flowing. Everybody was having a swell time, except me. I did not see Ricardo the Jackal, and decided he was sore and had submerged.

They stood me up with Poca, her old man on the other side. I had been in many desperate situations but I gave up hope then. There must have been forty gorillas in the room, the exits all guarded. Several guys sat with topcoats on their arms—ye old

(Continued on page 126)

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were at once grabbed from both sides. I heard them yelp and surrender.

I turned off and made for a side way out. Opening a small pantry window, I peeked. I saw the shadowy figures of men surrounding the mansion, and scraps going on here and there. Then I squeezed out and dropped to a flower bed below. A searchlight swept my way. I crouched.

A bullet whirled close past me.

"There he ees!" Ricardo the Jackal bawled. He came dashing at me, firing as he came. I grabbed a sharp rock that lined the flowerbed and hurled it at his ugly map. It struck right about Kansas and doubled him up. Before he could recover I leaped on him and beat his face in.

I had been aching for a crack at him and I sure took it. I had him about cold when they ran up and slugged me and I dizzied out.

When I returned, floodlights lit the scene. The firing had ceased and uniformed cops were herding up the gun-

men and taking them to the pie wagons. Inspector McIntosh, a sour look on his mush, bent over me, throwing some water in my face.

"What's all this I hear about ye philandering with a Spanish gang chief's daughter?" he growled. "Ye nearly got yerself into a pretty pickle."

"Nearly!" I gasped.

Then I saw Ricardo the Jackal glaring at me. "There he ees, Señor Gee," he growled, pointing a long pinky at me. "That's the man who held you up. I told you he was here."

"Ricardo came to me and told me he could point out the mon who held me up," McIntosh informed me solemnly. "I knew he meant you, Daniel, but of course said nothing about your being my supposed asseesant."

"What?" cried Ricardo.

"You made an error, Jackal," I yelled. "You thought you'd get re-
(Concluded on page 128)

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(Concluded from page 127)

venge on Barca and me because of Poca but you've cooked your own turk as well. This man's chief murderer of Tantown," I added, fingering the Jackal, who burst into redhot words.

They had to lay him out to quiet him. McIntosh had cleverly led him on. Having no pals to help him, Ricardo in his fury had put in a squeal, thinking to save his own hide by turning informer, and get even with Barca and me.

"When he told me you were going to marry this Barca's daughter," McIntosh explained, "I brought the whole police force to save ye from yereself. Let it be a lesson to ye."

I was so glad to be saved I didn't care who it was from, so I kept my lips buttoned.

We cleaned up Tantown that time. The Spanish bunch got the limit, Ricardo among them.

Later that day, at Police Headquarters, they brought in Poca. She was crying and kept looking at me.

"What will we do with this young woman?" wondered McIntosh.

"Let her go," I said, rising, "but give me a running start!"

LIST OF CORRECT SOLVERS

(See the BLACK CHAMBER, page 110)

CRYPTOGRAMS: 21, 22, 23 & 24

Norine Barth, Pierron, Illinois; Dandel Boyer, 207 E. Philadelphia St., York, Pennsylvania; Mrs. G. W. Hunt, 51 W. Dearborn Street, St. Paul, Minnesota; Robert P. Biggs, 67 Chamberlain Street, Memphis, Tennessee; Sumner E. Ralston, 9 Dudley Street, Reading, Massachusetts; Harry R. Bell, 615 East Rich Street, Columbus, Ohio.

P. S. Mac Arthur, 11302 Ada Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio; John Hannan, Newburgh, N. Y.; Joseph H. Ross, So. Berwick, Maine; Sewell Green, Brandon, Vermont; Martin J. Moore, 335 Rutland Road, Brooklyn, N. Y.; Richard M. Smith, P. O. Box 612, Tallahassee, Florida; Isabelle Mae Murdock, 6233 Newell Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

Bill Clark, 13 North 8th Street, Spearfish, South Dakota; J. Watts, 7 Pleasant Street, Houlton, Maine; Henry E. Langan, 642 Greenwood Ave., Post Office Box 571, Maple Shade, N. J.

CRYPTOGRAMS: 21 & 22

Al. Trott, Jr., Lawrence, Massachusetts.

CRYPTOGRAMS: 19 & 20

R. B. McEwen, 11 Ocean Street, New Bedford, Massachusetts; Joseph Eule, 18 Stratford Place, Newark, N. J.; Mrs. G. W. Hunt, 51 W. Dearborn, St. Paul, Minnesota.

Joseph H. Ross, So. Berwick, Maine; Mrs. Robert P. Wagner, 1226 Highland Street, Columbus, Ohio; E. Robert Haag, 1337 McHenry Street, Louisville, Kentucky; Norine Barth, Pierron, Illinois; Jesse Clark, 827 W. Galena Street, Milwaukee, Wisconsin; L. Chapin, 717 Congress Street S, Aberdeen, South Dakota.

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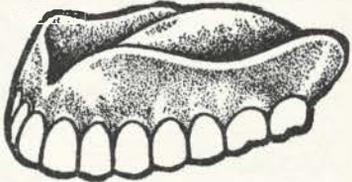


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