

The **PHANTOM** **detective**

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FEATURING
THE PHANTOM
IN
THE DOOMED
MILLIONS

A MYSTERY NOVEL
THAT PIERCES
THE IRON CURTAIN
By ROBERT WALLACE



A THRILLING
PUBLICATION



LOOSE FALSE TEETH?

The makers of **POLIDENT** offer you
Double Your Money Back unless this

Amazing New CREAM
Holds Plates Tighter, Longer
THAN ANYTHING YOU EVER TRIED

Many tried powders,
found they failed!

Read what they say
about this new way:



"For ten years my teeth wouldn't stay tight for more than two hours a day. I tried powders, but nothing worked till your new cream, Poli-Grip, came along."

Mrs. T. W., Medfield, Mass.

"I like the cool taste of Poli-Grip and the smooth way it holds my teeth. It is easy to apply and holds tight for so long."

Mrs. L. W. N., Ottumwa, Iowa

"I found your new cream, Poli-Grip, very pleasant and mild-tasting and it held my loose plates very tight, longer than anything I've tried."

Mrs. H. D. M., Beadentown, Florida

"I like the wonderful holding strength of your new cream better than anything I've ever used. I like Poli-Grip's refreshing taste, too."

H. B. V., East Canaan, Conn.

"I definitely prefer Poli-Grip to other products I've tried. It holds my plate tighter and feels comfortable longer. Poli-Grip is cooling, soothing, never gritty."

Mrs. K. L., Los Angeles, Calif.

POLI-GRIP

Double Your Money Back Unless it Gives You
MORE COMFORT, MORE SECURITY
THAN YOU EVER HAD BEFORE

Yes, the people who make Polident, the world's largest selling denture cleanser, are standing right behind their new adhesive cream, Poli-Grip, with an ironclad guarantee. You get double your money back, if Poli-Grip doesn't hold your plates tighter, longer than anything you've ever tried.

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2. . . . hold shallow lowers, despite lack of suction.
3. . . . seal the edges of plates so food particles can't get underneath to cause irritation.
4. . . . enable you to eat hard-to-chew foods in comfort, like steak, apples, celery, even corn-on-the-cob.
5. . . . give you full confidence to laugh, talk, sing without fear of embarrassment due to slipping plates.

6. hold plates tight even during strenuous sessions of coughing or sneezing.

Won't life be wonderful with all these torments behind you? Be sure to be among the first to learn the glorious comfort of holding loose false teeth tight and snug with Poli-Grip! Buy a tube at your drugstore as soon as possible.



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GUARANTEED
by the makers of
POLIDENT



Get 'em both with one stone

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The PHANTOM **detective**

Vol. LVII, No. 2

A THRILLING PUBLICATION

Spring, 1952

A FULL-LENGTH NOVEL

A COMPLETE NOVELET

SHORT STORIES



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EVERY STORY IN THIS MAGAZINE IS BRAND NEW

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KITS**

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NOW-Be Fully Trained, Qualified RADIO TELEVISION TECHNICIAN IN JUST 10 MONTHS OR LESS!

**New "Package" Unit Training Plan—Pay
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Train at Home in Spare Hours!**

Now . . . be ready for Radio-Television's big pay opportunities in a few short MONTHS! Frank L. Sprayberry's completely new "Package" training unit plan prepares you in just 10 MONTHS . . . or even less! There is NO monthly payment contract to sign . . . thus NO RISK to you! This is America's finest, most complete, practical training—gets you ready to handle any practical job in the booming Radio-Television industry. In just 10 months you may start your own profitable Radio-Television shop . . . or accept a good paying job. Mr. Sprayberry has trained hundreds of successful Radio-Television technicians—and stands ready to train you in less than one year, even if you have no previous experience!

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The new Sprayberry "package" plan includes many big kits of genuine, professional Radio-Television equipment. While training, you perform over 300 demonstrations, experiments and construction projects. In addition, you build a powerful 6-tube standard and short wave radio set, a multi-range test meter, a signal generator, signal tracer, many other projects. All equipment is yours to keep . . . you have practically everything you need to set up your own service shop. The Sprayberry book-bound lessons and other training materials . . . all are yours to keep.

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I want you to have ALL the facts about my new 10-MONTH Radio-Television Training—without cost! Rush coupon for my three big Radio-Television books: "How to Make Money in Radio-Television," PLUS my new illustrated Television Bulletin PLUS an actual sample Sprayberry Lesson—all FREE. No obligation and no salesman will call. Mail coupon NOW! I will rush all three books at once!

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EXPERIENCED IN RADIO**

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The PHANTOM SPEAKS



LET'S go to an imaginary city named Leland. Perhaps it's a real city—but we're not naming names at the moment. It's a good-sized manufacturing town and a port as well. A shipping center with a large, happy and prosperous population. But—the rackets there have grown with the years, until now Leland is completely in the grip of graft and corruption. . . .

The mob which ruled Leland specialized in vice, crime and murder. For a while, the irate citizenry blamed the administration. So at the first convenient election, they turned the rascals out—and elected a new administration headed by a reform mayor.

While the new administration did all it could to clamp down on the racketeers, it couldn't really cope with the situation. And to his horror, the new mayor began to learn that fresh corruption was cropping up among his own staff!

He found himself tagged as fostering crime—and faced the danger of impeachment.

Frank Havens sent a reporter there. The reporter was promptly murdered. And it looked as if the new mayor was behind the killing!

The mayor tried to gain time. He attempted to suppress the evidence which pointed to himself. But that was only a stopgap. Something had to be done—and quickly.

The Murder Machine

That's when I first learned of the case—after the mayor of Leland made a desperate plea for help to Frank Havens. Frank sent me to the town as his representative—and when I got there I learned that my work was needed.

Moving in to break up the rackets and un-

earth the men responsible, I discovered that the town of Leland was in the grip of a machine—THE MURDER MACHINE which supplies the title of our novel next issue.

The machine was powerful and ruthless—and it soon became apparent that it was sparked by ONE MAN—a man who remained aloof from it all, but pocketed the vast profits.

Who was this man?

Why was he obeyed?

How did he inspire such loyalty that his identity remained a total secret?

Did he have political affiliations?

These are only some of the questions I had to answer in THE MURDER MACHINE—a smashing novel which strikes at the very roots of the underworld!

It was a struggle against time—because if the crime wave continued to grow, the new administration would be swept out of office. That would bring back the old regime and all its hidden evils. The corrupt crew would be stronger than ever.

A Losing Battle

Handicapped because I was considered a stranger and a stooge, working for just another gang of crooked politicians, I found myself in a losing battle. Until—

Turning one dark corner, I saw a ray of light—which I developed into a spotlight that showed up the whole dangerous state of affairs and brought to light the identity of the man heading the entire criminal set-up. He was a man whom nobody suspected.

THE MURDER MACHINE is a novel of danger and dramatic events—a novel of a fight against a group with so much to lose that they stop at nothing, while a confused public doesn't know which way to turn and

(Continued on page 8)



You Can Influence Others With Your Thinking!

TRY IT SOME TIME. Concentrate intently upon another person seated in a room with you, without his noticing it. Observe him gradually become restless and finally turn and look in your direction. Simple—yet it is a positive demonstration that thought generates a mental energy which can be projected from your mind to the consciousness of another. Do you realize how much of your success and happiness in life depend upon your influencing others? Is it not important to you to have others understand your point of view—to be receptive to your proposals?

Demonstrable Facts

How many times have you wished there were some way you could impress another favorably—get across to him or her your ideas? That thoughts can be transmitted, received, and understood by others is now scientifically demonstrable. The tales of miraculous accomplishments of mind by the ancients are now known to be fact—not fable. The method whereby these things can be intentionally, not accidentally, accomplished has been a secret long cherished by the Rosicrucians—one of the schools of ancient wisdom existing throughout the world. To thousands everywhere, for centuries, the Rosicrucians have

privately taught this nearly-lost art of the practical use of mind power.

This Free Book Points Out the Way

The Rosicrucians (not a religious organization) invite you to explore the powers of your mind. Their sensible, simple suggestions have caused intelligent men and women to soar to new heights of accomplishment. They will show you how to use your natural forces and talents to do things you now think are beyond your ability. Use the coupon below and send for a copy of the fascinating sealed free book, "The Mastery of Life," which explains how you may receive this unique wisdom and benefit by its application to your daily affairs.

The ROSICRUCIANS (AMORC)

Scribe D.S.H., The Rosicrucians, AMORC,
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A Psychological Murder Mystery

By JOHN COLE

Featured in April

**THRILLING
 DETECTIVE**

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THE PHANTOM SPEAKS

(Continued from page 6)

tends to become cynical about the whole matter.

It's an epic, not only of the imaginary city of Leland, but of many real cities which have had to struggle against the dominance of crime—an inspiring saga of courage and persistence in the face of heavy odds.

Look forward to **THE MURDER MACHINE**—one of the most exciting and significant cases ever to be novelized in this magazine by Author Robert Wallace! It's in our next issue, along with other splendid reading adventures.

Join Our Club

One of the ways in which you can help to prevent, in your community, the debacle of crime that overran Leland, is to join our club, **FRIENDS OF THE PHANTOM**. By doing so, you express your interest in law-enforcement and your determination to back the forces which are fighting crime. Just send us a letter stating that you would like to belong. Include the following information—your name, address, age and sex. Enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope, so that we can send you your membership card.

There are no dues or fees. If you would like to have a handsome bronzed replica of the Phantom's badge, enclose 15c (for postage and handling) with your application for membership. This is **NOT** required for membership, but purely optional with you.

We must warn you, however, that **FRIENDS OF THE PHANTOM** is merely an organization of readers of this magazine—and membership would give you no special privileges or police powers whatsoever. This must be clearly understood. As a **FRIEND OF THE PHANTOM**, however, you have given expression to your desire to uphold the law and your interest in influencing public opinion in the right direction.

—Thanks for your many letters, readers, in which you praised our last issue's novel, **THE SILENT KILLER**. Glad you liked it, and keep those letters streaming along in. In a coming issue, we'll try to find room for quoting some of the best of them. Kindly address all communications to The Editor, **THE PHANTOM DETECTIVE**, 10 East 40th Street, New York 16. N. Y. Many thanks, everybody!

—THE PHANTOM

\$100⁰⁰ A WEEK in CASH
PAID DIRECT TO YOU

FAMILY HOSPITAL PLAN

SAVE MONEY!

There's a big advantage to buying this policy by mail. This method of selling is less costly for us—and that's another reason why we are able to offer so much protection for so little money.

Policy Pays for a Day, a Week, a Month, a Year—just as long as necessary for you to be hospitalized!

JUST LOOK

The Large Benefit This Low Cost Policy Provides!

The Service Life Family Hospital Plan covers you and your family for about everything—for every accident, and for all common and rare diseases after the policy has been in force 30 days or more. Very serious disease such as cancer, tuberculosis, heart disease, diseases involving female organs, sickness resulting in a surgical operation, hernia, lumbago and sacroiliac conditions originating after the policy is in force six months are all covered. . . . Hospitalization caused by attempted suicide, use of intoxicants or narcotics, insanity, and venereal disease is naturally excluded.

The money is all yours—for any purpose you want to use it. There are no hidden meanings or big words in the policy. We urge you and every family and also individuals to send for this policy on our 10 day free trial offer—and be convinced that no other hospital plan offers you so much for your \$1.00 a month!

TWO SPECIAL FEATURES

MATERNITY

Benefits At Small Extra Cost
 Women who will some day have babies will want to take advantage of a special low cost maternity rider. Pays \$50.00 for childbirth confinement either in the hospital or at home, after policy has been in force 10 months. Double the amount on twins.

POLIO

Benefits At No Extra Cost
 In lieu of other regular benefits policy pays these benefits if polio strikes—For Hospital Bills, up to . . . \$500.00
 For Doctor's Bills while in the hospital, up to \$500.00
 For Orthopedic Appliances, up to . . . \$500.00
TOTAL OF \$1,500.00

3¢ A DAY IS ALL YOU PAY

for this outstanding new Family Protection

Wonderful news! This new policy covers everyone from infancy to age 70! When sickness or accident sends you or a member of your family to the hospital—this policy **PAYS \$100.00 PER WEEK** for a day, a month, even a year . . . or just as long as you stay in the hospital. What a wonderful feeling to know your savings are protected and you won't have to go into debt. The money is paid **DIRECT TO YOU** to spend as you wish. This remarkable new Family Hospital Protection costs only 3¢ a day for each adult 18 to 59 years of age, and for age 60 to 70 only 4½¢ a day. This policy even covers children up to 18 years of age with cash benefits of \$50.00 a week while in the hospital—yet the cost is only 1½¢ a day for each child! Benefits paid while confined to any recognized hospital, except government hospitals, rest homes and clinics, spas or sanitariums. Pick your own doctor. Naturally this wonderful policy is issued only to individuals and families now in good health; otherwise the cost would be sky high. But once protected, you are covered for about every sickness or accident. Persons covered may return as often as necessary to the hospital within the year.

This Is What \$100.00 a Week Can Mean to You When in the Hospital for Sickness or Accident

Money melts away fast when you or a member of your family has to go to the hospital. You have to pay costly hospital board and room . . . doctor's bills and maybe the surgeon's bill too . . . necessary medicines, operating room fees—a thousand and one things you don't count on. What a Godsend this **READY CASH BENEFIT WILL BE TO YOU**. Here's cash to go a long way toward paying heavy hospital expenses—and the money left over can help pay you for time lost from your job or business. Remember—all cash benefits are paid directly to you.

REMEMBER—\$100.00 A WEEK CASH BENEFIT IS ACTUALLY \$14.25 PER DAY!

Examine This Policy Without Cost or Obligation—Read It—Talk It Over—Then Decide

10 DAYS FREE EXAMINATION

You are invited to inspect this new kind of Family Hospital Plan. We will send the actual policy to you for ten days at no cost or obligation. Talk it over with your banker, doctor, lawyer or spiritual adviser. Then make up your mind. This policy backed by the full resources of the nationally known Service Life Insurance Company of Omaha, Nebraska—organized under the laws of Nebraska and with policyholders in every state. **SEND NO MONEY**—just your name and address! No obligation, of course!

FREE INSPECTION . . . MAIL COUPON

The Actual Policy Will Come to You at Once Without Cost or Obligation

The Service Life Insurance Company

Hospital Department S-17, Omaha 2, Nebraska

Please rush the new Family Hospital Protection Plan Policy to me on 10 days Free Inspection. I understand that I am under no obligation.

Name
 Address
 City or Town State

SERVICE LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY

Assets of \$13,188,604.16 as of January 1, 1951
 Hospital Department S-17, Omaha 2, Nebraska



ROD TRAPPED THE POACHER AND THEN...



WHEN ROD BROWN, DEPUTY GAME WARDEN AND WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER, RIGGED HIS FLASH CAMERA ON A STATE PRESERVE DEER TRAIL, HE LITTLE EXPECTED A POACHER TO SET IT OFF.

HAND OVER THAT CAMERA!

LOOK OUT-BEHIND YOU!

HIDING NEARBY, ROD SEES THE FLASH AND COMES TO RESET THE CAMERA, BUT THEN...

UGH!

I'LL TAKE THAT GUN!

ALL SET! SHERIFF'S GOT AN EMPTY CELL FOR THIS BIRD. SAYS WE CAN DEVELOP YOUR FILM, TOO

SWELL! LET'S GO!

LATER AT STATE PARK HEADQUARTERS

WHAT A PICTURE! LET'S CALL IN THE REPORTERS

I'M A FINE-LOOKING SIGHT TO BE INTERVIEWED. WE CAN FIX YOU UP WITH A RAZOR. HAVEN'T SHAVED SINCE FRIDAY

THREE HOURS PASS

TRY THESE THIN GILLETTE BLADES

THANKS

SAY! I SURE GO FOR THOSE BLADES! THEY REALLY DO A QUICK, SLICK JOB!

THIN GILLETTES ARE PLENTY KEEN AND EASY SHAVING!

I'LL BET MY SYNDICATE WILL PAY PLENTY FOR THAT PICTURE!

SOUNDS GOOD TO ME!

HE'S CERTAINLY GOOD-LOOKING

FOR FAST, CLEAN, GOOD-LOOKING SHAVES AT A SAVING, TRY THIN GILLETTES. NO OTHER BLADES IN THE LOW-PRICE FIELD ARE SO KEEN AND SO LONG-LASTING. BECAUSE THEY'RE MADE TO FIT YOUR GILLETTE RAZOR PRECISELY, THIN GILLETTES PROTECT YOU FROM NICKS AND IRRITATION. ASK FOR THIN GILLETTES IN THE CONVENIENT TEN-BLADE PACKAGE

THIN Gillette 10 BLADES 10-25¢

THIN Gillette 10 BLADES 4-10¢

TEN-BLADE PACKAGE HAS COMPARTMENT FOR USED BLADES



LAW AND DISORDER

By HAROLD HELFER

IN MODENA, ITALY, a thief made off with a 50-foot span bridge.

ATLANTA POLICE, receiving a call that a woman had jumped into a lake, rushed to the scene and got there in time to see the wet, shivering woman climbing up on the bank. "Brrrrr," she said. "Changed my mind—too cold."

A HIGH POINT, N. C., a woman began a two-and-a-half-year prison term for living with two husbands in the same house at the same time for more than two years. Husband No. 2 was told Husband No. 1 was her brother.

IN CASTELFRANCO VENETO, Italy, Luciano Revolfatto complained that two women with revolvers held him up and forced him to kiss them before they took his wallet and watch.

SPEAKING OF CHAIN reactions—In Pontiac, Mich., six youths and an 18-year-old mother admitted a string of holdups designed to obtain gasoline money for autos they stole to use in the robberies.

THERE WAS A modern twist to Boston's historical "tea party" recently. A thief in that city broke into a salesman's car and made off with 1,800 tea bags.

CHICAGO POLICE nabbed a 17-year-old on his way to visit his girl friend at a home

for juvenile delinquents and relieved him of three pistols, a bayonet, 22 rounds of ammunition and six switchblade knives!

TWO MEN who forged the name of another on a check made out to the victim were promptly seized in Springville, Ill., when they sought to cash it, for the very simple reason that the victim couldn't write and always signed his checks with an X.

IN PENSACOLA, FLA., a private eye was sentenced to nine months in jail for stealing from a man without any eyes. The private detective pleaded guilty to stealing cigars from a concession stand operated by a blind man.

IN CHICAGO, thieves made off with 5,000 diapers—while in Toledo, O., somebody took off with 4,700 pairs of false teeth.

BEAVERS GOT SO eager that police were called into action at Meredith, N. H. They had to destroy several dams the beavers built, to prevent the flooding of a main highway.

IN HAYWARD, CALIF., a man broke into—of all things—the police station!

IN WASHINGTON, D. C., a hand reached through a window and helped itself to \$81 from the table. The money represented the proceeds from the Helping Hand Club Bazaar.

A Novel by **ROBERT WALLACE**

The DOOMED



MILLIONS

*Feodor Danowski's two briefcases held documents
that were dearer than life itself—documents for
which the Phantom dared to pierce the Iron Curtain!*

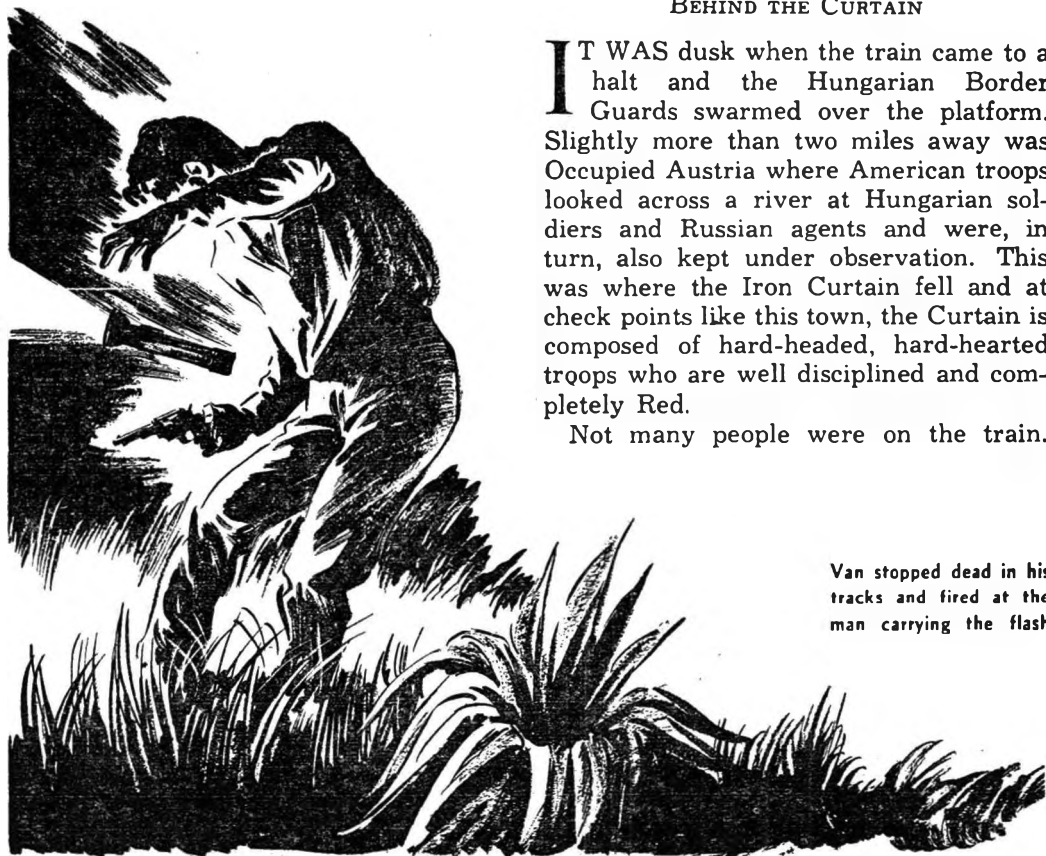
CHAPTER I

BEHIND THE CURTAIN

IT WAS dusk when the train came to a halt and the Hungarian Border Guards swarmed over the platform. Slightly more than two miles away was Occupied Austria where American troops looked across a river at Hungarian soldiers and Russian agents and were, in turn, also kept under observation. This was where the Iron Curtain fell and at check points like this town, the Curtain is composed of hard-headed, hard-hearted troops who are well disciplined and completely Red.

Not many people were on the train.

Van stopped dead in his tracks and fired at the man carrying the flash



Travel in Hungary was permitted mostly to officials. No one would be foolish enough to take a pleasure trip, and as for business, all that was attended to by indoctrinated Communists.

One of the men who got off the train was about fifty-five, a short, stocky individual with a broad face and eyes that peered from behind thick glasses. There was a certain arrogance about him though, which the railway station guards quickly recognized. An officer approached him and saluted.

"Are you Feodor Danowski, Comrade?"

"Yes. You will provide me with a car at once. And a driver."

"Of course, Comrade Danowski. We have been expecting you. The director of the prison has canceled his dinner plans to be on hand to greet you."

"He knows what is good for him," Danowski said sourly. "Well—the car. Do you think I have all night to stay in your stinking town?"

The officer gave orders. Two soldiers came forward briskly. One picked up the suitcase, the other reached for the two briefcases which Danowski held.

The squat Danowski stepped back a pace. "Idiots! Do you think I would be still holding these attaché cases if they were not important? Where is that car? Such inefficiency!"

THE OFFICER tried to calm him, piloted the squat man along the platform and toward an official car. Danowski got into the back seat, clutching both briefcases. He paid no attention to the officers' parting salute. The driver pulled away fast, in a clash of gears and a cloud of dust. He was doing forty-five along a city street, completely heedless of pedestrians and cyclists. Life was cheap here, so long as it was the life of a Hungarian.

About a mile beyond the city Danowski saw the towers of what had once been an ancient fortress. He was used to this architecture. It had been turned into a prison because it had looked like a prison in the first place and for the last few years Danowski had spent most of his

time in such places. Not as a prisoner, but as a strutting, pompous official.

The car stopped at the gates and again there were guards to pass through. They peered into the car with the aid of flashlights, came to stiff attention and one of them shouted a command. The gates opened electrically and the big car swept on through. The gates closed behind them with a clanging sound.

Danowski, holding the briefcases firmly, climbed out and walked into the administration wing. More guards came to attention and he swept past them. One guard opened a door well in advance of Danowski's approach and the squat man marched into the office of the prison director.

The director arose quickly and bowed. Danowski didn't acknowledge the salutation. He pulled a chair over in front of the desk, sat down and placed the briefcases on his lap.

"Well?" he asked.

The director decided against inviting this man to dinner. He didn't like him or trust him and Danowski was high enough in the party to make a lot of trouble if anything went wrong. Besides, he looked like a man who wouldn't permit anything to go wrong. The director picked up a sheaf of papers and began making his report. So many new arrivals, mostly political prisoners. So many public executions, so many of the private kind, which far outnumbered the former. The kind done in a small cellar room by the simple and cheap expedient of firing a bullet into the back of the victim's head.

Danowski said, "Very well—a thousand new prisoners. Good! You will arrange for medical examinations of them and get seven hundred who are fit. They will be transferred to mines in the Urals."

"Yes, Commissar," the prison director said. "Yes, Excellency."

"I want only the fit ones, young if possible. No matter how strong they are, few last more than a year or two."

"It shall be as you wish, Excellency."

"Good—and it had better be if you value your scalp. Now, where is Valantin

staying? He expects a report from me and he is not as tolerant as I. As head of all Soviet prisons he cannot afford to be."

"At the Hotel International, Excellency. It has been a pleasure to have him here. He says this is one of the best conducted prisons in all of the occupied sector. Oh, we do not coddle them here. No, indeed. We—"

"Save your bragging for someone more important than the Secretary for Prisons. I do not care how your prison is run, nor if you are given medals for it. All I want



RICHARD CURTIS VAN LOAN
(The Phantom)

On an all-important mission, he tangles with shrewd secret agents and international criminals

from you are men and women who can work. You have your monthly report ready for me?"

"Yes, Excellency. It is here."

"Good." Danowski stood up and opened one briefcase. Inside it were hundreds of onion skin sheets of paper. He took the report from the prison director and put it in with the rest, closed the briefcase with a snap and pulled the two straps tight. Then he bowed curtly. As he neared the door, the prison director shouted an order. The guard outside had the door open.

Danowski passed on through, down a

corridor which smelled of filth and unwashed bodies. The corridor was lined with narrow doors, each provided with a small barred window. At some of these, anxious faces were pressed against the bars, worried eyes studied everyone who passed by. Danowski didn't turn his head to the right or left.

HE MARCHED out of the prison, across a courtyard to where his car waited, and got in again. He said, "The Hotel International," in a loud voice. The car started slowly while the gates opened, then it picked up speed. Danowski lit a cigarette and took half a dozen puffs on it before he rolled down the window and flipped the butt out. He unbuttoned his severely tailored coat and pulled a gun out of a shoulder holster. Then he leaned forward and put the muzzle of the gun against the driver's neck.

"I have changed my mind," he said. "You will do exactly as I say. Is that clear?"

"Yes, Excellency," the driver said in a startled voice.

"Never mind the Excellency stuff," Danowski grumbled. "They will be swearing at the mention of my name soon. You will pass the Hotel International and not too fast. You will not stop or you will be a dead man."

"Yes—as you command," the driver said.

Danowski kept the gun against the back of the man's neck. The car turned down an important street, slowed somewhat and the gilded façade of the Hotel International was dead ahead. It was dark now and the street lights were on, but not many people were about. It wasn't safe for the average citizen to be on the streets. Military Police patrolled the area. Now and then an armored car could be seen parked near a corner.

Danowski reached into his back pocket, took out a handkerchief and rolled it into a tight ball which fitted the palm of his hand. As they rolled by the hotel, he flung the handkerchief out of the car window. The breeze caught it, the folds were

briefly ironed out and the white cloth drifted lazily toward the gutter. Nobody paid much attention except one person who stood on the steps of the hotel and then moved quickly to a small parked car.

Danowski exhaled slowly, as if in great relief. Then he said, "Driver, do you want to go on living?"

"But yes."

"Then you will turn into the street leading to the bridge."

"As you command, Excellency."

"You will put on all possible speed and you will crash through the wooden barrier."

"To the American side?"

"Where else would the bridge take us? That is where we are going. If you do not do this, I shall kill you and drive the car myself. If you obey me, if you are not too indoctrinated with this stupid prattle of the Russians, you too will be a free man. Otherwise, you may ask to be sent back. But we are going through the barrier."

The driver moistened his lips. "Yes, Excellency. For months I have been seeking a way to get through. I do not wish to return. Trust me. I am glad to go."

"I will believe that when we are safe," Danowski said. "Meanwhile the gun will be at your neck. There are several garrisons on this road, just this side of the barrier. You will not arouse any suspicion, do you understand?"

"Why should I, when I want to get away as much as you, Excellency? But I do not quite understand why an important official like you wishes to run away."

"Escape," Danowski said grimly. "You don't run away from what's on this side of the barrier. There's nowhere to run to. It is an escape, as if we were behind prison bars."

"You are someone connected with prisoners, are you not, Excellency?"

"I am second in charge of all prisoners in satellite countries."

"You are a Pole?"

"Yes. A foolish, rock-headed Pole. I fought the Nazis and I joined the Russians because I thought we fought on the same

side. When I found out differently, it was too late, but it isn't too late now. Speed up! We are still three miles from the Border."

The car hit fifty. A string of lights shone on both sides of the road ahead. Danowski was nervous, shaky. He didn't know whether or not this driver could be trusted and he was tempted to make him stop, destroy the man and drive the car himself. But he'd seen enough of sudden death and destruction. Perhaps the driver was one of those thousands who wanted to escape and only waited for the chance. Danowski patted the two briefcases beside him.

AS HE raised his eyes, he saw headlights behind him. Perhaps a thousand yards behind, but maintaining a steady speed matching that of the car he was in. Danowski nodded in satisfaction. Things were proceeding as planned.

They swept into the area of barracks and guards. The speed of the car attracted attention, but the insignia on the front of it was official and nobody made any attempt to stop it for investigation.

Danowski had known for a long time that he'd been growing old too fast. The constant drive, the ever present peril of these past years had taken their toll. He should have been ready and he wasn't.

The driver suddenly hit the brakes and leaned out of the car window.

"A traitor in the car! With a gun at my head."

Danowski cursed and his finger tightened on the trigger. But what was the use? If he killed the driver, the car would go out of control. If he managed to take the wheel away from him, too much time would elapse and the alerted guards would come down on him in droves. He didn't quite know what to do.

But Danowski should have known. This was Hungary, infested with men who took no chances. The military area extended for a couple of miles and apparently word had been phoned ahead, for now armed soldiers were in the road waving the car down.

Danowski fired a shot past the driver's ear. "The next one will be an inch to the left," he warned. "You are a dead man no matter what happens, and they will not take me alive."

If the soldiers ever had any doubts, they were dispelled by the shot Danowski fired. A machine-gun cut loose somewhere. The back window of the car dissolved in the hail of bullets, but Danowski had been bending over and he wasn't hit.

The car swerved crazily, veered off the road and headed toward a wide expanse of field. Danowski leaned forward to clip the driver with the gun, but as he raised the weapon, the driver fell sideward. There were two neat holes in the back of his collar. He was dead.

Danowski pushed him out of the way, tried to reach the wheel, but it was impossible. The car was going too fast and the field was so bumpy that Danowski was thrown off the seat. The driver also slid partly to the floor and in some manner his leg was pressed against the gas pedal so that the car never slackened its speed.

CHAPTER II

SUDDEN FINISH



DANOWSKI saw big trees looming up ahead. He reached for the car door, then remembered the briefcases. He grabbed them, braced himself and pushed the door open. He waited until the last possible moment before he jumped. The car gave a wild lurch just before he left it, and he was thrown out forcibly.

Danowski landed with one leg curled beneath him. The break was so definite he actually heard the bone snap. He tried to get up, but couldn't. He started dragging himself.

The car had kept on going. It hit one tree a glancing blow, caromed off it and hit another head on. Almost at once the gasoline caught fire. Danowski saw it. He also saw cars and motorcycles coming his way. In a moment the burning car would



STEVE HUSTON

*—who faces deadly peril on a
reportorial sortie behind
the Iron Curtain*

light up the whole area. Danowski, holding the briefcases, crawled as fast as he could in the direction of the brush.

He didn't mind the pain. All along he had half suspected this crazy idea would end in a painful death. But he knew that a little more than a mile away were the people he meant those briefcases for. They had to get them—somehow.

There was another explosion from the direction of the car and flames mounted higher. The lights were closer too. He could hear the roar of the oncoming motors. Danowski felt his strength leaving him fast. No amount of will power could be strong enough to overcome the pain from his leg. As he weakened he slowed, too. In three or four minutes they would swarm over him. He knew what would happen when they caught him. All those prisoners he had inspected, all those execution chambers. They would pick the worst of them for his benefit. They would kill him slowly, with as much pain as possible. They were masters at that.

He was on the verge of passing out. He knew it. There were voices which he

knew couldn't possibly be real. Someone was calling, "Feodor! Feodor! This way!"

He raised himself on one elbow and peered straight ahead. The brush wasn't far away. Someone moved, he saw the head and shoulders of the person who had called his name. Danowski gave a happy little cry, but then a searchlight on one of the military cars began sweeping the area.

Danowski didn't hesitate now. He pulled himself up as much as he could, supported himself on one hand and lifted one of the briefcases. Much as a discus thrower hurls, Danowski threw the briefcase. It sailed high and far because all the strength he possessed went into the throw. Then he threw the second one. There was a crashing in the brush, a shout that the briefcases had been found, and a plea for him to hurry.

A searchlight picked him out. All the headlights turned his way now. Danowski crawled around in a small circle, lay flat and leveled the gun he held. As the first car came to a stop, he sighted carefully and fired. The officer who jumped out screamed and dropped. Danowski aimed at the windshield and fired two more shots.

Then the tommy-guns cut loose. Danowski died in the first burst and there was no bitterness in him. He could have asked for nothing better than the quick death those heavy bullets provided. It was as he had wished it. But just before the bullets struck, he thought that it would be nice if that American Steve Huston, he had come to know, could see to it that his newspaper printed a fitting epitaph for Feodor Danowski, who had tried to do his bit in saving the world from a plunge into the abyss of war again. . . .

Austria was a new experience for Steve Huston. It was nothing like New York City, with its bustling traffic, its high-speed newspaper offices and such amateur gangsters as American cities bred. All the gangsters, gamblers, racketeers and dope peddlers unearthed by television probes were small fry, kindly souls,

and God-fearing men, compared to what Huston had found here.

Infiltrated on the American side were Russian spies and those of their satellites. They were bad enough, but the Russian military were worse. Huston had seen sufficient to know what danger the whole world was in from such people. He was not much of a foreign correspondent, but he had been sent here to do one particular job, one which required a man without fear, and with a practical knowledge of crooks.

When Huston had first received his assignment from his boss, Frank Havens, the owner of a string of United States newspapers from Coast to Coast, he had been inclined to scoff at the danger attached to it. But at this particular moment, there was no derision in his heart.

HE WAS squatting in a rowboat, floating idly on the Communist side of the river in Austria. From the trees bordering the river, the man he wanted to meet, a man named Danowski, might come running soon. In a great hurry, with a prize package, which might conceivably cause Joe Stalin more trouble than a dozen Titos. Neither Huston nor Danowski had much faith in his crashing the bridge barrier, so Danowski probably would take to the river.

Huston had been there ever since dark, about an hour and a half. He had no knowledge of when his man might be expected to appear. In fact, all he knew was that the man would identify himself as Feodor Danowski, and that he was to be transported to the American side secretly.

It was not that his boss, Frank Havens, mistrusted the American Occupation Authorities, but there were so many spies and agents drifting about that it had been thought wise to let only one man handle the details and Steve Huston had been elected.

Huston put a cigarette between his lips, reached for matches, then muttered something. If he had stuck that match, the chances were good that the flame would

have brought down a horde of Commie guards on his neck. Instead, he took a heavy automatic out of his pocket and laid it on his lap.

The radium dial on his watch indicated that it was a few minutes after eight. What was keeping that guy anyway? Huston had kept many a vigil in his day, but none had quite the potential qualities of danger as this. Not even the times he had waited for the Phantom Detective—



MURIEL HAVENS

*Now aware of the Phantom's identity,
she proves to be a valuable
aide in his work*

and how Huston wished the Phantom was at his side now!

Another half hour went by. Huston watched the forest intently. Then he saw car headlights dipping and plunging crazily as they flashed through the tree trunks. There was no road where that car was traveling. Huston knew this for he had studied the topography of the land through high powered glasses for several days. That meant Danowski was probably on his way—but what kind of a crazy route was he taking?

Huston reached for the oars and got them ready. He heard the crash of a car against a tree, saw the flames, then the

brighter ones as gasoline caught fire. The reporter bit his lip till the blood ran into his mouth. Everything hinged on Danowski making his getaway, but right now that didn't seem too bright a possibility.

Danowski's chances lessened moments later, the way Huston figured it, when there came a shot, then a couple more, and finally the rattle of machine-guns. There were more lights showing through the trees.

Huston heard a splashing sound, not too far away, but it was too dark to see anything. He tilted his head slightly. Someone was swimming, crossing the river to the Austrian side. It might be Danowski who hadn't had time to head for the spot where he was supposed to meet Huston. Whoever it was swam well and fast.

Huston heard men plunging through the woods now. It must be Danowski who was trying to swim to safety, but if they trained searchlights on him, he'd be a sitting duck for their guns. Huston dipped one oar deep, pushed the rowboat away from shore and settled back for some fancy rowing.

He had managed to reach a distance of about three hundred feet from shore when the lights began sweeping the river. Huston made as much noise as possible, even to scraping the side of the boat with the oars. It didn't take them long to pick up the sound. All the lights swung in his direction. He bent his head so that he couldn't be easily identified, rowed harder than he ever had in his life and braced himself for the bullets that were bound to be sent his way.

A gun opened up. Huston heard the slugs smash into the water. They would have the range in a second. He leaned over the side of the boat, slipped into the water, and began swimming himself. They were concentrating on him, positive he was the man they were after and while Huston swam under water as much as possible, risking his life every time he came up for a gulp of air, the other swimmer must be making real progress.

When Huston felt land under his feet

he was certain that he bore a charmed life. At least a hundred slugs had tried to find him and had failed. He hauled himself up on shore, shook as much water as possible out of his clothes and started walking fast. Now he had to keep out of the way of American M.P.s whom the shooting must have attracted.

STEVE'S luck held again. Within an hour he approached the side entrance to his hotel. His clothing was soaking wet and if he was observed, it would be a dead giveaway, but he had to take his chances. He was compelled to walk through a part of the lobby and attracted plenty of attention, but he kept going.

When he locked the door of his room he started breathing again. Once his nerves stopped jumping, he went straight to the phone. He spoke in faulty German, but managed to make the switchboard operator understand that he wanted to talk to Frank Huston in New York City. He got a promise that he would be phoned as soon as the call was through.

Huston laid out some dry clothes, stripped and rubbed his body dry with a Turkish towel. He dressed again and had smoked half a dozen cigarettes when the phone rang. His call to New York was ready, and he heard the reassuring voice of Frank Havens.

Huston said, "I've got to talk fast, so please don't ask any questions. Something went wrong. Danowski never showed up, but there was a car crash and a lot of shooting, some of it at me. However, it's possible that Danowski got away. Somebody swam the river while I rowed and made a lot of noise to attract those rats on the other side. They opened up on me, but I guess I live right. I'm okay. So that's how it stands as of this moment. Somebody crossed the river, but I don't know who it was. I don't know if that person had the stuff we were hoping Danowski would bring. I flopped, but maybe it's not a total loss."

"I'd call it good work," Havens said. "You did everything possible."

"Can I come home then?" Huston

begged. "Honest, there's nothing glamorous about the life of a foreign correspondent. I'd rather cover a gang war and be right between the shooting."

"Call me in the morning," Huston said. "Perhaps we'll have some word by then about Danowski. You may be needed in a hurry, so stick close to your room. I'll call around ten."

"Okay," Huston said. "But don't forget about letting me come home."

"I'll arrange it as soon as we have the facts. Stick to it, Steve. You may have performed a service the whole free world will be proud of."

"I'd swap all the glory for a steak," Huston said. "But I'll stick around if you say so, and if Danowski made it, just tell me where I can find him."

Huston hung up, realizing suddenly that he'd been talking to someone in New York and the craving to go back there grew stronger than ever. He smoked more cigarettes, remembered that he had missed dinner, and wondered if Ludwig would be able to find him a decent meal again.

Ludwig was an old man who waited on tables at the Golden Fiddle, a quiet restaurant which once had been internationally famous. Ludwig liked Americans and American cigarettes. Huston, well supplied with them, had given several packs to Ludwig, and in return had been granted special treatment so far as food was concerned.

Huston took his time going through the hotel lobby. He looked for Danowski whom he had never seen, but whom he would readily recognize from pictures he'd been shown of the man. Huston still believed there was a good possibility of Danowski having evaded that shooting affair and that it could have been he who swam across the river.

The lobby was crowded. Huston was jostled time and again, but he saw no one who even remotely resembled Danowski. After a twenty-minute walk Huston walked into the Golden Fiddle. Ludwig spotted him at once. Huston was given a good table and Ludwig made his recom-

mendations. The schnitzel, he maintained, was good—the best that could be had. Huston settled for it. While he waited, he had a glass of wine and sat there sipping it and observing the people around him.

He wondered how many of them were Commie spies. Perhaps a third, he reasoned. This city had become a spy paradise. There were more accents to be heard here than in New York on a walk from the Bronx to the Battery.

CHAPTER III

A MESSAGE OF IMPORTANCE



TWO MEN entered and seemed to be looking for someone. The taller of the pair, better than six feet, and husky, was blond and his eyes slanted slightly. Handsome, well-dressed, he carried himself like an individual of importance. Once his eyes touched Huston, but then moved on in searching appraisal of the place. Finally he and his shorter, seedier-looking companion, took a table not far from Huston's.

Steve paid them little attention. It did not occur to him that they could know who he was, or his mission. Of course all Americans were regarded with more or less suspicion, but ever since a few restless travelers had found their way into the country one well-fed, well-dressed American more or less had ceased to be a novelty.

Ludwig brought Steve's schnitzel and set it before him with a flourish. It looked good in its paprika sauce, and smelled good. Huston tackled it with relish. Ludwig stood at a respectful distance watching him and nodding in as much satisfaction as though he himself were eating it.

Finishing it, Huston ordered a pastry and tea. He didn't like tea particularly, but the coffee here was atrocious and Ludwig could do nothing about that. While he waited, Huston reached into his pocket for a pack of cigarettes. As he found them his fingers also encountered a small folded bit of paper. He took

it out, realizing he'd never seen it before, and unfolded it. It was a typed note, brief and pointed.

Papers will be delivered in Nassau in one week. Go there to make contact.

Maget

The surprise and consternation on Huston's face must, he knew, be noticeable to others. He folded the paper and slid it beneath a plate. He settled back, lit a cigarette and took a long look around. Nobody was eyeing him, nobody got up to make a phone call.

Ludwig placed the pastry before the reporter, bending low to speak with lips that didn't seem to move.

"My friend," he said, "you are being observed. The tall man to your left is a Russian spy named Zarnow. A dangerous man."

Huston felt excitement surge through him. He said, "Thank you, Ludwig. The schnitzel was excellent and the pastry looks good also."

He began eating, thinking as he ate. So that tall man was a spy whose name was Zarnow. Not so good. Because if Zarnow had any training at all, he would know that Huston had received some sort of message. That note mustn't fall into Zarnow's hands under any circumstances. It seemed apparent to Steve that Danowski must somehow have escaped and was still in possession of the documents, but undoubtedly believed it too dangerous to try to pass them on here. He was going on to Nassau in the Bahamas where he could meet Huston openly. It wouldn't be a bad idea if this man Zarnow didn't realize something was up.

Huston drank half his tea, taking his time. He was half tempted to get up and head for the door just to see what would happen, but couldn't take the chance. Frank Havens had to know about that note if anything should happen to him.

Huston eased the scrap of paper out from under the plate, palmed it, and with the same hand raised his teacup and finished the beverage. He drank the tea to the dregs and when he set the cup down

again, he had slipped the note into it.

Ludwig came to clear the table. Huston put a cigarette between his lips, turned his head slightly and spoke to Ludwig in a whisper which wouldn't carry two feet.

"In the teacup—a note. Very important. When you take the dishes to the kitchen, keep on going. Go at once to the cable office in the American sector. Cable every word in the note to Frank Havens, care of the New York *Clarion*."

"I understand," Ludwig murmured, grinning as if he were being complimented on the meal.

"Also tell Havens about Zarnow."

"Thank you, sir," Ludwig bowed. "Soon it will be like the old days—I hope. When we have a menu that one can be proud of. You will come back tomorrow, perhaps?"

"If you think there's a chance of getting something good," Huston replied.

"We shall see. Perhaps. One never knows these days." Ludwig picked up the tip. "Thank you, sir. It has been a pleasure to serve you."

LUDWIG didn't go at once to the kitchen. He stopped by another table which he had served and piled more dishes on his tray, calmly emptying an ash tray into the cup where Huston had dropped the note. Then he made his leisurely way to the kitchen. Huston sat there a few more minutes until another waiter brought dessert to the table which Ludwig had cleared. Ludwig, he hoped, was on his way to the cable office.

Huston got up then, walked casually out of the place and once on the street headed for an American M.P. booth, half a dozen blocks away. If he could reach that—

He turned a corner. Two men who had been leaning against a building, straightened up and walked in the same direction about thirty paces ahead of Huston. He glanced over his shoulder. Two more men were behind him and across the street another pair were pacing him. Huston felt hemmed in, trapped. What, he wondered, would the Phantom do under such cir-

cumstances? Huston had worked with the Phantom often enough to have picked up many of his tricks, but never in a situation this desperate. With a gun he might have been able to shoot his way out, but Huston was unarmed.

The men surrounding him were closing in on him now. The two across the street were coming over, the two behind him were walking faster, and the two ahead were slowing up. Otherwise the block was deserted, with no one within hailing distance.

Huston came to a dead stop. It was no use trying to go on. If there was going to be any rough stuff, he wanted to get in the first lick. Then all six men were surrounding him, but none of them said a word. They simply used their elbows and shoulders to get him started and he was jostled all the way to the corner. There, the tall, sleek-looking Zarnow was waiting in a dark doorway.

Zarnow said, "Good evening, Mr. Huston. Please step in here with me."

Huston entered the doorway and the six men blocked any hope of his getting out. Zarnow was smiling politely.

"You will be good enough to hand me that note," he said. "The one you took from your pocket in the restaurant."

"Wait a minute," Huston said. "What are you—cloak and dagger boys?"

"You might call us that. Be assured that we get what we go after."

"Well then, start going after it," Huston said. "Because I don't know what note you're talking about."

"You will permit me to search you?"

Huston shrugged. "I don't see why I should, but if it will avoid trouble, go ahead."

Zarnow's smile faded, but he searched Huston anyway. When he was satisfied that none of the papers in Huston's pocket were of any interest to him he helped himself to one of Huston's American cigarettes, took a long puff, and put the pack into his own pocket.

"What did you do with that note, Mr. Huston?" he demanded. "And do not think we are fools. We know you ar-

ranged to meet Danowski and bring him across the river by boat. Our searchlights picked you out before you managed to swim away. You were described to me and I have had you under observation since you arrived here."

"Commy, eh?" Huston asked drily.

"Russian," Zarnow said. "I am proud to admit it."

"Well you flubbed this one, my friend."

"Flubbed? That means we erred. Yes, of course. How did we err, Mr. Huston?"

"Danowski got away, didn't he?"

Zarnow's smile came back, broad and taunting. "So you think so. Then you have received word somehow. Otherwise you would not be so sure."

"Well," Huston said, "it's been a nice talk. Good night."

Zarnow shoved him against the door. "Danowski is dead," he growled menacingly. "He was riddled with bullets, but the documents he had been carrying were not on him, nor were they destroyed in the car. You have them or you know where they are!"

"And you're nuts," Huston said. "Let go of me."

"You telephoned a man named Frank Havens in New York that someone swam the river while you attracted the attention of our men. Do you deny that?"

Huston said, "You get around."

"Nothing goes on here which we do not know about," Zarnow said complacently. "But I am growing tired of fencing with words. Are you prepared to tell me what I wish to know?"

HUSTON sighed. "All right. What's the use, anyway?"

"Come, come!" Zarnow said harshly.

"Truth is—Russian scientists did not invent the phonograph. Edison did."

Zarnow scowled. "Very clever. You will have noted that I speak excellent English. I speak a dozen other languages just as well, but I spent years in your country and also know your idiom. And I know



Van grabbed at the fellow's ankle and wrenched it hard

your kind. The word for you is wise cracker."

"That's been passe for years," Huston said blithely. "You need to be reeducated."

"And you, my friend, also need an education. One that will make you answer when I ask a question. So you will accompany my men without attracting any attention. If you do not, you will be shot at once. We are not finished yet, Mr. Huston, and before we are, you will know that we do not like your brand of humor. Begin walking."

Huston said, "I don't see how I can argue my way out of this one or call the cop on the corner. Okay, I'll go along, just to see how you punks operate, and—"

Huston swung suddenly, timing the punch to land as Zarnow moved out of the doorway behind him. The blow caught Zarnow in the pit of the stomach and doubled him up. Huston had time to deliver a rabbit punch to the back of Zarnow's neck before the sky fell on him in the form of six bulky men, well-experienced in how to handle a fighting mad prisoner.

CHAPTER IV

ASSIGNMENT TO DANGER



RICHARD CURTIS VAN LOAN put on his hat, left his apartment atop a New York skyscraper, and took an elevator to the lobby. It was noon, so he headed downtown to keep a lunch appointment with his lifelong friend, Frank Havens, famous newspaper publisher.

To the casual observer, it would have been difficult to believe that this tall, slim aristocrat was the anonymous Nemesis of crime who for some years now had been fighting criminals under the pseudonym of the Phantom Detective. Until recently, only Frank Havens had known this, for Havens had been responsible for the wealthy and highly social Van Loan's spectacular career. But now Havens'

pretty daughter, Muriel, also knew Van's secret. But he felt sure that it would be safe in her keeping, that she would help, rather than hinder him in his everlasting fight against crime.

As he stepped out of the apartment house entrance, he was thinking of Muriel so intently that when he had turned off Park Avenue and into Fifth, it did not surprise him when he saw her half a block away.

His face lighted up in a smile. He could never mistake Muriel's lithe walk, for he was more fond of the trim, attractive girl than he would have admitted to himself not long before.

He hurried to intercept her, but when he came face to face with her she looked straight at him without the faintest sign of recognition, then looked away and kept walking. Instantly Van Loan realized something was wrong. He passed on, but quickly crossed the avenue and turned in the direction she was moving.

He saw her pause, apparently idly, to study a few shop windows. If she noticed him, she didn't show it. Finally she crossed the street and passed him again, but this time neither of them gave any sign of recognition. She walked into a nearby store, and after a minute or two Van followed her.

She was at the tie counter, examining four-in-hands. She ordered two, signed the charge slip, then strolled to the back of the store. In another aisle, Van kept pace with her. Before the elevator block she seemed impatient, and finally pushed open the stairway door and disappeared.

Van Loan took the next elevator to the second floor, found the same stairway and entered it. Muriel was waiting for him halfway down.

"Van," she said hurriedly, "I was so afraid you'd stop me!"

"What is this?" he asked. "Some kind of a game?"

"A deadly game, Van. We can't stay here long. I may be followed. Dad knows I may, and he even suspects his phone has been tapped, both at the office and at home."

Van's smile died away. "All right, Muriel. Tell it."

"Three weeks ago Dad sent Steve Huston to Vienna.

"Yes, I knew that."

"But you didn't know why. It was a secret that didn't even belong to Dad. Steve hadn't the faintest idea, but he was really working for the State Department. He was to meet a man who was escaping from Red-ruled Hungary."

"Has anything happened to Steve?" Van asked anxiously.

"We're afraid so," Muriel said soberly. "Steve phoned Dad last night and told him the man he was to have got in touch with didn't show up. Steve was waiting in a boat on the Russian side of the river to ferry him across. The man's name was Danowski. He never showed up, but there was a lot of shooting and Steve said somebody swam the river. Then this morning Dad received a cable from a man named Ludwig. We can't imagine who he is, but the cable said that Steve wanted Dad to know about a note he'd received. Dad made me commit it to memory. It said, 'Papers will be delivered in one week in Nassau. Go there to make contact.' It was signed 'Maget'."

"Who is Maget?"

"Nobody knows, Van. Somebody named Maget sent word to Dad about the plan of Danowski's to escape, but who Maget can be is a mystery. He can't figure out why Maget worked through him and not some Government agency."

"What papers does the note refer to?"

"I don't know. Dad said it was too dangerous for me to know. But there was more to the cable, and that's what worries us most. This Ludwig said Steve was being watched by a Communist spy named Zarnow—a dangerous and clever man."

"What does your father want me to do about this?"

MURIEL grasped his arm tightly. "Oh, Van, I'm so glad I know you're the Phantom! Now I can help you. But right now you're to meet an official of the State Department who will explain the whole

thing to you."

"But can't you give me any more details, Muriel?"

"They're being mighty cagey about this, Van. Dad didn't even dare call you, and the State Department man is just as careful. That's why I've been hanging around your doorstep; waiting for you. They said for me to tell you to take a train to Washington and be there by dinner time. Go to the dining room of the Hotel White. That's a small place, but you'll know where to find it. Just walk in and sit down. The rest will be taken care of."

"How will whoever wants to see me know me, Muriel? I'm to work as the Phantom, in disguise, I suppose?"

She shook her head. "This will probably come as a surprise. But Dad must have his reasons. You are to go as Richard Curtis Van Loan, and don't ask me why."

"All right. Your father always knows what he is doing. I presume I'll be sent to Nassau."

"I haven't the faintest idea. Van, I've never seen Dad so close-mouthed. He usually tells me everything he possible can. The only secret he ever kept was that you are the Phantom. But this time he just talks in riddles. All I was told was to wait for you and fix it for us to meet somewhere where nobody could possibly overhear us."

"You were clever about it," Van said. He looked at his watch. "I'd better be going. I don't want to move so fast that I arcuse any suspicions. I may be watched, too." He laughed a little. "There goes my date with your dad."

Muriel didn't laugh. "Be careful, Van."

"You just take some of your own advice," Van said. "You're Frank Havens' daughter, remember, so your danger may be greater than mine. I wouldn't want anything to happen to you."

She stood on tiptoe to kiss him, then fled up the stairs. Van went on down, grinning.

He kept going until he reached the basement when he nodded casually to some workmen busy carrying merchandise to a loading platform, and when he

reached the street, he took precautions to determine whether or not he was being followed. Certain he was not, he took a taxi to Penn Station, had a forty-minute wait for a train, then settled down in a Pullman for the trip and the chance to try and make some sense out of the meager information Muriel had been prepared to give him.

Only one part of anything she had said seemed important so far. Steve Huston was in trouble. That was nothing new for the red-headed fireball of a reporter, but this sounded more serious than usual. Huston was in a foreign country, within shouting distance of the Iron Curtain and apparently he had somehow become involved with Russian spies. Even the Phantom had his doubts about getting behind the Iron Curtain and operating there.

He arrived in Washington too early for the Hotel White dining room to be open, so spent an hour and a half in a movie theatre. But promptly at six-thirty he walked into the small dining room of the hotel which though old-fashioned, apparently catered to a nice trade.

Like every restaurant in this city, the dining room was crowded, and Van was lucky to get a small table in a corner. He didn't know what to expect, so he ordered sherry and sipped it while waiting to be served and paid no attention to anyone around him.

As he was finally having his dessert he saw a gray-haired man walking briskly toward him. The man came up and extended his hand. Van arose and took it.

The man said, "Dick Van Loan! I thought I recognized you when I came in."

"Nice to see you again," Van said. "Sit down. Have a drink—or how about dinner?"

The gray-haired man accepted the invitation. He said, "To tell you the truth, I've been waiting for a table for twenty minutes. It was just plain luck that I happened to spot you."

"I see." Van grinned. "It's appetite which brings you more than an old friendship."

"Put it down to both," the man said. He lowered his voice a trifle. "Noticed anyone?"

"No, and I've kept my eyes open."

"Good. I had myself followed here by a couple of OSS men. They didn't see anyone on my trail either. We can't be too careful in this case, Van Loan."

"Apparently not, from all the precautions which have been taken so far. Can we speak here?"

"I think so. We've got to take a chance anyhow. First of all, I'm surprised that the well-known sportsman and millionaire I'm having dinner with also happens to be the Phantom Detective. I almost refused to believe it at first."

VAN smiled a little wryly.

"So you were told that. Mr. Havens must have regarded this job as of extreme importance."

"You have no idea—Van, shall I call you? My name is Jim Davis. I'm with State right now in an official capacity. Here's the story—or wait. Before I go into that, I must be certain you'll help us."

"If it's a Government matter, you have my word."

"It's an international matter, Van. And one other thing—you'll have to work as Dick Van Loan."

"I don't care what identity I must have. I realize this must be of supreme importance and from here on, I'm taking orders."

"Good. Now about a man named Feodor Danowski, a Pole. Back in Warsaw he went through the Nazi invasion. His family was murdered. He got away somehow and joined the Underground. Gradually he began to work for the Russians, believing they were his allies. At the time they undoubtedly were. The whole world seems to have been deceived there. At any rate, he became interested in Communism and took it up. He was an able man, an organizer, and a stern, efficient individual. The Russians lifted him up some notches and then made a bad mistake."

"Is Danowski the man Steve Huston

was supposed to find in Hungary?"

"Yes. The Communists made Danowski second in command in charge of their prisons. Have you any idea how many men and women are prisoners in Russia?"

"Millions, I suppose."

"Not counting those they seized from conquered nations or their own people whom they didn't trust—taking only a proved figure of prisoners captured by

completed in working for the Communists. He thought up a rather novel scheme."

"I wonder if I'm beginning to realize what Danowski was up to," Van said thoughtfully.

"Perhaps, but let me tell it anyway. Danowski's job took him from one prison to another. All over Russia. During his travels he learned a great deal. Gradually he accumulated a list of names. Men and women who had vanished, war prisoners who had never been accounted for. He knew the identities of those secretly executed, those impressed to do laboratory work, those who were used as slaves. There were, we understand, thousands of names on his list."

"Is that what he was trying to smuggle out and get into Steve Huston's hands?"

"Yes. Do you see how those names could be of the greatest importance?"

"Well, I suppose there are those who would be interested in knowing what really happened to relatives, friends—"

"Look, Van, suppose these names were broadcast over Radio Free Europe. Over the Voice of America. Names and details, facts and figures. Absolute proof! Why, those friends and relatives would become an underground army of the greatest importance if they didn't rise up in open revolt. Even the people of Russia would be aghast at what their rulers have done. Now do you understand?"

Van nodded. "I understand thoroughly. Where do I fit in?"

"Danowski is dead. That much we know. He was shot while trying to get to the river to keep his appointment with Steve Huston. But someone got two briefcases filled with lists typed on onion skin paper. Big, fat lists. Whoever got them notified Huston to make contact in Nassau."

"And have you heard anything about Huston?"

"Only that he disappeared shortly after he left a certain Vienna restaurant."

"And this man Zarnow, to whom the cable refers?"

"He is one of the ablest enemy agents



FRANK HAVENS

*Famous publisher of the Clarion,
the Phantom's contact*

them in war and never released—they have three million men under forced labor. In the other categories there must be an equal number of prisoners."

"Those figures might impress a few of our own people who are lukewarm about all this cold war business," Van Loan said grimly.

"We've printed the figures, Van. We're a funny people. Somebody has to shoot at us before we wake up. Thank God we wake up fast and we roar good and loud. But I'm digressing. Danowski suddenly realized the monstrousness of this Communist thing. He had a change of heart and determined to get out, but not until he could undo some of the wrongs he ac-

who ever operated against us. The man has a dozen identities and fits each one perfectly. He maintains several addresses in vital parts of the world. Nassau could very well be one of them. He lives at these places and is known there and accepted as a man who travels a great deal on business, but is highly successful and completely a gentleman."

DICK VAN LOAN said softly, "When I meet him, he may be a dead gentleman if anything has happened to Steve Huston."

"We're afraid Zarnow had Huston smuggled behind the Iron Curtain. If so, I'm sorry for him. They'll make him talk. They'll force him to tell what was in that note. They have their ways and they never fail. Believe me—that much I'm certain of."

"I realize that," Van Loan said, and repeated, "What about me?"

"Well, you're to be the contact man for Maget—whoever he is."

"I see. As a close friend of Frank Havens, I'll be a logical person to show up. Yes, it might work. I'm a pretty good golfer and some championship matches are being held in Nassau so I'd have a reason for going there."

"Not a bad idea. You're going to be in a ticklish position, Van. You want this mysterious Maget to get in touch with you, and at the same time you must steer clear of Zarnow or his agents. Trouble is, none of us know any of these people, so they'll have to do the approaching."

"You believe Zarnow will be in Nassau?"

"Van, this is one of the biggest breaks we ever got and one of the worst the Communists could possibly experience. They are going all out to get possession of these names or see that they are destroyed. Steve Huston is in their hands. He'll talk, so they'll find out about Maget and Nassau and you can bet on it that Zarnow will take personal charge. He can't afford to risk some subordinate's failure. With their drugs and serums any man can be made to talk."

"I agree with you, Mr. Davis," Van Loan said somberly. "The cable Havens received stipulated that contact would be made one week from the time of writing the note. Perhaps that means Maget needs a week to reach Nassau, but I'm going there at once."

"I think that would be wise," Davis said.

"But I wonder"—Van frowned—"why Maget picked Nassau. It's not next door to Austria or Hungary. Why not Paris or Lisbon? Even New York?"

Davis smiled. "You're thinking of spy centers, Van. Where men like Zarnow and Maget would be expected to work. But perhaps you're not aware of the fact that Nassau has become a spy paradise. It's four and a half hours by air from New York, fifty minutes from Miami. And a wonderful spot—even for spies."

"I know," Van Loan nodded. "I've been there many times, but something tells me this won't be a vacation trip."

CHAPTER V

INTRIGUE



HATE the next night, Richard Curtis Van Loan checked in at one of the smartest hotels in Nassau. He was accompanied by a great deal of baggage and a lot of golf clubs and bags. He was known at the hotel, so was given one of the best suites.

Van went directly to bed, tired after his trip and well aware that from tomorrow on he'd better not be sleepy.

In the morning he donned tropical clothing, had breakfast in the hotel dining room and went out for a walk around the grounds. This was the height of the season and the hibiscus and bougainvillea splashed color in every direction. The sky was bright blue, the sea turquoise, and the outer islands, visible from the hotel, looked like green dots against the horizon. Everything seemed clean and fresh. The air was sun-drenched and crystal clear, the salt sea filled his nostrils with its welcome tang.

Everything was colorful, from the pastel-shaded houses with their rose-hued roofs and palms, to the natives with braided straw hats, and tourists who tried to improve on nature with even brighter colors. Van selected a rocking chair on the hotel veranda, scanned the morning papers, then alternately seemed to be dozing and interested in the tourists.

Some important matches were taking place on the links at this moment and would continue for several days, but Van Loan wasn't going to see any of them. He meant to act like a man who came with a great deal of golfing equipment, but who did no golfing at all. Perhaps Maget, whoever he might be, would notice this and realize that it wasn't pleasure which had brought Van Loan to Nassau. Zarnow might assume the same thing. Van Loan hoped both of them would take the bait.

It was true, he told himself, that Maget had stipulated there would be a week before contact would be made—five days now—but Van went into his act at once, taking no chances.

He was adept at making friends and liked people, so before the morning was over he had met several tourists. One man interested him mildly—Cedric Westcott, lanky and tanned, who sat down beside Van and started a conversation. Westcott was a Britisher who operated an expensive café in Nassau during the season of four months or so. Then he traveled for a while and when the season opened in the Laurentian Mountains in Canada, he went there and opened another café he owned. He was friendly, smooth and polished, without a trace of British accent. He wore thirty-dollar British shoes, carefully tailored whites and a panama which must have cost a tidy sum.

Everybody seemed to know him and Van decided the man might become a valuable acquaintance.

Westcott said, "Unless I'm mistaken, you're something of a golfer yourself, Van Loan. Is that why you came to Nassau?"

"Originally, yes. I meant to do some golfing and to watch the matches scheduled for the next couple of weeks, but

remember that I came out of a cold climate and this subtropical air has made me lazy. Let's say I've gone native."

Westcott chuckled. "Come and see me in Canada next winter. I'll promise you laziness won't effect you there. Not unless you want to freeze to death. How about being my guest tonight for dinner?"

"I'd be delighted," Van Loan said.

Westcott took off shortly afterward and Van seemed to be dozing in the shady corner he'd selected. But nothing and no one passed by without a careful appraisal from him. He saw a girl walk into the hotel and she attracted his attention because she didn't seem to act like a tourist. She was an attractive half-pint package. He doubted she was more than five feet two or three, but she was sturdily built, with good legs, a deep tan and soft brown hair. When she emerged she was accompanied by a bellhop who pointed out Richard Curtis Van Loan. Van became even more interested when the girl came directly over to him.

"Are you Mr. Van Loan?" she asked. He sat up quickly. "Why, yes."

SHE pulled a chair over and sat on the edge of it, speaking in a voice that sounded breathless. "My name is Ann Lansing. I work here in a branch office of Mr. Havens' newspapers."

"Well, I'm glad you looked me up," Van said, and meant it. "Did Frank ask you to drop in?"

She smiled and he noticed that she had sparkling eyes the color of the sea. She said, "Well no, but I have an arrangement with the hotel and they notify me when important guests arrive. I send the names to the papers representing whatever part of the United States they come from. Society stuff, you know."

"So this is just a courtesy call then."

"Not exactly. I know you're a good friend of my boss and I don't suppose it would do my career any harm if I sort of showed you around."

"I don't suppose it would, and I'll be glad of your company. Do you always sit on the edge of a chair that way, as if

you're going to take off in a hurry?"

She flushed and pulled herself further back into the chair until her feet no longer touched the floor. Van Loan laughed and she laughed with him. He began to like her very much.

"Suppose you begin by telling me about some of the people who go in and out. You must know everyone."

"I do—mostly. The man you were talking to when I arrived was Cedric Westcott. He's one of our more respectable citizens. He just arrived back here last night. Maybe you met him on the plane. He was in New York for a few days."

"No—we just happened to strike up an acquaintanceship. Which reminds me, I'm to be his guest tonight at his café. Would you care to come with me?"

"I'd love it, Mr. Van Loan.—Oh, there's an interesting man. The enormous one with the white suit that could stand a pressing."

Van picked the man out quickly. He was big—more than six feet tall and built like a wrestler who had gone to seed. He had all the bulk and probably the muscle, but had turned flabby.

"What makes him so interesting?" he asked.

"That's Otto Bruger—he's a German. He came here just before the war started and opened up a gambling place. They say he was a Nazi spy."

"Interesting," Van said. "What else?"

"They also say he acted as paymaster for a spy ring in South America and that when the Nazis went bust, Bruger had a lot of American dollars for his spy ring and he kept all the money."

"He's nobody I'd like to meet on a dark night," Van said. "What kind of place does he run? A gyp joint?"

"Oh, no. He'd never get away with that. The Governor General doesn't permit tourists or natives to be bilked by anyone. It's a nice place, a little on the shady side perhaps, but run honestly. Bruger thinks he's an important figure in this community. Personally, I wish he'd wade out into the ocean and forget to turn around."

Van chuckled. "I take it *Herr* Bruger has been making a pest of himself."

"He ought to pick on somebody his size," Ann said pouting. "I can't stand him."

"Who else is interesting?" Van asked.

"Well—there's Harry Nagel. The one with the yachting cap. He's a real gentleman."

Van studied Harry Nagel and saw a man of about fifty, thick-set, not too tall, but immaculately dressed and evidently a man of importance judging by the way the hotel help bustled around him.

"He's a distiller, specializes in rum and sells most of it in Europe," Ann explained. "He travels a lot and lives on one of the outer islands. It's like a personal kingdom and he's the king."

"He struts like a king, too," Van observed drily.

"Yes. Nagel likes to be important, but he's done a lot of good in the islands.—Well, I'm probably boring you and I do have a job. You won't forget you asked me to dinner tonight at Westcott's place?"

"I'm not liable to," Van said. "I'll be looking forward to it."

She slid off the chair, smiled gaily and pranced off. Van put her down as just a nice kid, who was determined to get somewhere and by merit alone. He liked the way she walked, like a professional dancer always in trim.

HE REMAINED on the veranda another hour, finally stretched lazily and went inside. He bought more newspapers and went to his suite. Almost instantly he smelled cigarette smoke. The rooms had been made up, but the hotel help wouldn't likely be smoking on the job. He went directly to his bedroom and opened a dresser drawer. Nothing appeared to have been disturbed, but he could almost sense that someone had gone through his possessions.

He was positive of it when he examined one of his suitcases. A latch on it had a habit of sticking and he recalled that after he had unpacked, he had difficulty in snapping it shut. Now that latch was

open and he knew he had closed it.

Van drifted casually back to the living room and double-locked the door. Then he went over the room inch by inch looking for a microphone, paying especial attention to the telephone. He discovered nothing and made his way back to the bedroom. There he took out two golfing bags from the closet, removed the sticks and reached down into the depths of one bag.

From a cleverly hidden compartment at the bottom he drew out an automatic, a box of cartridges and a thin metal box containing materials he used in disguising himself. Those objects, at least, hadn't been discovered. He put the disguise kit back, removed his coat and strapped on the shoulder holster. He made certain the ammunition clip was full, pumped a bullet into the firing chamber and set the safety.

Then he slid the gun into its holster, slipped it in and out a few times and finally put his coat back on. The gun made no bulge at all and the straps couldn't be seen unless the coat flew open. He felt much better now. Somebody wasn't wasting any time, and it was best that he travel around healed for trouble.

During the hot afternoon he again monopolized the same rocker, moving it to a shadier side of the veranda, and sat there wondering who would try to get in touch with him first—Zarnow or Maget. He was deeply worried about Steve Huston, too. Steve could very well become another Robert Vogeler case—but only if he was lucky. Perhaps Steve knew too much and would be one of those who simply disappeared.

Thinking of Huston brought Van's mind around to what might have happened in Austria. According to the little he knew about the affair, Steve Huston had never met Feodor Danowski face to face. Danowski hadn't dared leave Red-controlled territory and Huston, in his own right, wouldn't have risked trying to penetrate the Iron Curtain. Therefore, Steve must have worked through an intermediary. Was that person the one who swam the

river while Steve drew the fire of the Commies? Was that intermediary known as Maget? It was possible.

Van knew there was little he could do to help Steve now, but once he had possession of Danowski's documents he meant to take some sort of action. Diplomacy was much too slow for Van's liking. If necessary, he would even go to Austria. He had for a long time wanted a crack at Communists within their own stronghold. What worried him most was whether or not Steve would last that long.

Yet he had to be patient. First things came first and getting that list of names was far more important than saving Steve Huston's life. Van tried to classify Steve as expendable, but it didn't work. If anything happened to him, there was going to be a private war between the Phantom and the Reds—and not of the cold variety.

Van stopped thinking along such lines. He was afraid his thoughts might be mirrored on his face, and he was supposed to be one of the idle rich without a care in the world and not much worried about international affairs except, possibly, as they were related to sports in which he was interested.

This was the part of his work he hated. The sitting around waiting for something to happen. Unlike most adventures he had experienced, he was handicapped in that he hadn't the faintest idea of who he was trying to help and who was his enemy. Zarnow and Maget remained just as mysterious as when he had first heard about them in that Washington restaurant.

Somewhere around the middle of the afternoon Van became aware of the huge Otto Bruger, sitting at a table under a lawn umbrella just beyond the edge of the veranda. Bruger was sipping a long, cool drink and seemed to be watching Van Loan rather intently.

Van had an idea things weren't going to simmer long. Zarnow, if he could have reached Nassau by now—which was possible—would do his best to get rid of anyone whom Maget might wish to see, and that meant action.

Van Loan was eager for it to start.

CHAPTER VI

TYPICAL SPY STUFF



AT SEVEN-THIRTY Van met Ann Lansing in the hotel lobby and his eyes lighted in admiration and surprise. She wore a strapless gown of white, formal length, with golden slippers peeking out from below the hem. She had done something intriguing to her hair, and she knew how to use makeup. "I'll say this much," he told her. "You don't look like a reporter."

"This is my working outfit, Mr. Van Loan. You forget that I handle society news in Mr. Havens' newspapers."

She gave him directions about how to reach Cedric Westcott's place, and Van found the place on a par with any of the East Side bistros in New York. It had all the fancy trimmings, the soft lights, smooth band and courteous waiters.

Westcott drifted around to their table about nine-thirty and had a bottle of champagne sent over. Van allowed the waiter to pour his and he sipped at it now and then, consuming not quite half of the glass before the evening was over. Alcohol and the kind of work he did simply never mixed.

Ann drank only two glasses and spent most of her time eyeing everyone who came and went. Van Loan asked her to

dance, found her an excellent partner and began to enjoy himself. When they finished their coffee Ann crushed out her cigarette rather thoughtfully.

"Mr. Van Loan," she said, "would you mind if I asked you a personal question?"

"Go right ahead," he invited.

"Why did you come to Nassau? Really, I mean. I found out the hotel didn't expect you until a short time before you arrived. You're noted as a golfer and we have some of the best greens in the world here. There are also some interesting matches going on and yet you never leave the hotel."

"Perhaps I came for a rest," he said.

She shook her head. "A rest from what? You don't work. You have no responsibilities except to look after a lot of money. Tell me the truth, Van. There's something up and you're part of it."

"I'm afraid you're making some wrong guesses, Ann," he said. Already they had reached the camaraderie of "Ann" and "Van." "I just like to take life easy."

"I don't believe you," she said flatly.

He shrugged. "I'm sorry, but that's how it is. Why are you interested anyway? I mean, to go so far as to check up on me."

"I'm a reporter. Isn't that enough?"

"I suppose so, but I can't help you, Ann. I'm here strictly on a vacation."

"My error," she said. "I'm sorry I brought the matter up. Let's go sit on the terrace for a while."

THE ADVENTURES OF

IT SMELLS GRANDIT PACKS RIGHT

He led her out to the wide and spacious terrace. There was no moon, but they could see the stars reflected in the bay. The heavy odor of night blooming jasmine sweetened the air and trade winds were warm without the oppressiveness of the heat of day.

They sat side by side at the terrace railing overlooking a garden. Ann gave a long, wistful sigh. "This is one of the many reasons I like Nassau. Nights like this—you never find them anywhere else. It's romantic as the dickens and here I am with a man who is in love with my boss' daughter. Some girls never get a break."

Van laughed out loud. "Say, how did you know that?"

"I get around, Van. It's all right. I'm just glad to be with you. Is she attractive?"

"Muriel? Yes—very. On a par with you, I'd say."

She made a great to-do about arranging her hair. "Such compliments, my dear. Just the two of us all alone out here in the most romantic atmosphere in the world and I'm compared to the girl back home. Really, Van—"

Someone ran lightly below the terrace railing and something white came flying through the air, cleared the railing and landed at their feet. Van was up instantly, set to vault the railing, but changed his mind. It was better not to show Ann how interested he was in any

mysterious person who might be prowling.

When he turned around, Ann was holding the white object. It seemed to be a small stone, wrapped in a handkerchief and around the stone itself was a slip of paper. Ann was holding it toward the light from inside the building and trying to read what was on it. Van took the paper from her hand. "I'm sorry," he said. "This might be for me."

"Why, you—you big heel!" she exclaimed angrily. "It could be meant for me. couldn't it?"

He flicked on a pocket lighter, held the paper so that Ann couldn't see it, and read the few words typed on it:

Boat ready for trip to outer island at midnight.

Ann made a pass at it and Van quickly stuffed the note into his pocket. "It's for me," he said. "I swear it."

"Of all things! How many women do you have around the world, Van?"

"Women?" he asked blankly.

"Yes, women." She waved the handkerchief in which the stone and the note had been wrapped. "This happens to be a woman's handkerchief and well perfumed too. Smell it! That's expensive stuff."

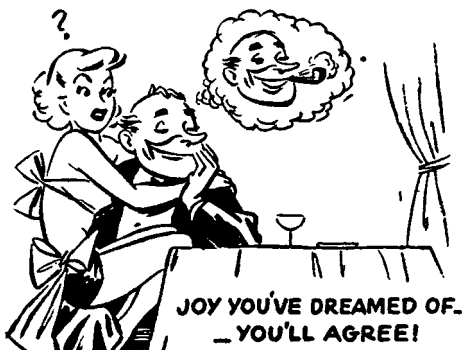
"May I have it?" Van held out his hand.

She looked at him with blazing eyes. "And I wasn't going to take advantage of a romantic night because he had a

[Turn page]

UNCLE WALTER

IT SMOKES SWEET



IT CAN'T BITE!

SIR WALTER RALEIGH'S BLEND OF CHOICE KENTUCKY BURLEYS IS EXTRA-AGED TO GUARD AGAINST TONGUE BITE. STAYS LIT TO THE LAST PUFF. AND NEVER LEAVES A SOGGY HEEL IN YOUR PIPE.



*It costs
no more
to get
the best!*

girl in New York. I'm a born sap, that's what I am. Here—take the handkerchief and I hope you treat the owner of it better than you've treated me."

She wheeled and walked rapidly away from him. Van called to her, but she kept on going. He sat down again, slowly, sorely puzzled. He sniffed of the handkerchief. It was perfumed all right. He didn't blame Ann much—but what did the combination of a perfumed handkerchief and a note from Maget mean? Was Maget a woman? There was no evidence to suggest that was not the case.

Van read the note again. A boat at midnight sailing for one of the outer islands. The set-up was typically spy stuff and he didn't like it. The set-up was also potentially dangerous. Yet he knew he was going. Maget must have flown here and taken immediate action. But there was so much at stake and so much danger that a chance like this seemed foolish. However, Van became certain that whoever had tossed that note wasn't a woman.

He snapped on his lighter and burned the note, grinding the ashes into the cement floor of the terrace. If this was on the level, he didn't want anybody to see that note.

He returned to the café, but apparently Ann had gone off in a huff, so he walked back to the hotel, wary now, and alert. The first thing he did after locking his door, was to get into the shoulder rig. It had been impossible to wear it on his date with Ann, but from here on he meant to travel armed.

He got into some darker clothes, changed to crepe soled and heeled shoes and tested the gun again. He had headed for the door when the clamor of his phone bell brought him to a standstill. He debated whether or not to answer it, then walked briskly to the phone.

A man's voice spoke. It was accented, but slow, the voice of a native. The man said, "Do not go. If you value your life, do not go!"

That was all. The phone clicked in his ear. He hung up slowly, more puzzled than ever. How could anyone else even

know about that note or that it asked him to make this boat trip? Ann had held it for a second or two, but he was positive she couldn't have read it. There hadn't been enough light. But somebody knew and was trying to warn him. Or was the call meant to steer him away from a meeting with Maget? He felt badly confused. This business of not knowing friend or enemy was exasperating.

He left his suite quickly, walked out of the hotel and made his way to the waterfront. A few carriages were slowly moving through Rawson Square, but the post office and other public buildings were dark. By day, this section swarmed with peddlers and boatmen, but now the slip was deserted.

The brightly colored bumboats, used to taxi passengers to and from the outer islands and the sea gardens, were lined up waiting for daylight and the inevitable hubbub which would come with the dawn.

Van Loan slowed his steps. Someone was to meet him. He dawdled around for ten minutes, wondering if the whole thing was going to be a flop, then a man in white trousers, a gaudy polo shirt and a braided native hat hurried out of the darkness. "Your name, please," he said. It was a native all right.

"Van Loan."

"Ah—you will come with me, please. This way. Not far."

He moved quickly along the slip and somehow managed to pick a certain boat out of all those lined up, each looking exactly like the other. Van Loan got aboard. One thing about going into danger via a boat—there was no easy way back.

VAN sat down on a seat built like a bench. The boatman poled the clumsy craft out into the harbor before he sat down and manned the oars.

In a short time the shoreline became a sparkling row of lights. Van tried to figure out in what direction he was being taken, but could not because of the darkness.

Van said, "You—where are we going?"

The native didn't reply except to dip his oars faster. They were making good

time and seemed headed north. Then, almost before Van realized it, he felt the bottom of the boat scrape on shore. The boatman leaped out, pushed the boat up as far as he could get it. He waded ashore and reached out to help Van get off the boat without getting wet.

"All right," Van said. "Now that I'm here, what happens next?"

"House—that way." The boatman pointed toward the center of what seemed to be an island. There was a path bordered by hibiscus, leading to the interior.

Van said, "Will you wait for me?"

The man merely nodded and reached for a cigarette. Van walked rapidly to the path, went up it a hundred feet or so, then quickly turned back. He was in time to see the boatman push the craft out to deeper water and leap aboard.

Van raised his arm and opened his mouth to yell, but thought better of it. Apparently he wasn't supposed to know he'd been cast ashore with no known means of getting back to the mainland. He decided to let them think he was completely deceived, though he would have given a great deal to know who "they" were. He no longer took much stock in the fact that Maget had negotiated this midnight deal.

The darkness here was supreme. Van kept bumping into the hibiscus bushes whenever the path made a turn and he seemed to be climbing gradually. Finally he topped a small rise and looked down into a small valley. Nestled in the middle of it was a huge, sprawling house, completely darkened. There didn't seem to be another building anywhere about, so he continued moving toward this one.

But this was no longer Richard Curtis Van Loan plodding through the darkness. It was the Phantom, silent, almost invisible, and ready for anything. He drew the automatic out of its holster, pushed the safety to the off position and began tactics familiar to him. He kept brushing against the flowered bushes, but every few steps he would come to a dead stop while he listened.

He kept this up until he was within

hailing distance of the house which looked bigger than ever now. Soon he would have to leave the path and cross a wide open area which looked like a garden.

He stopped again and swore at a nightingale which was making the night musical. Somewhere not far away, another nightingale took up the wild notes, then suddenly there was a flapping of wings and no more sounds from those birds. They had been frightened away and not by him, for Van hadn't moved a step.

He strode boldly out into the cleared space, took a dozen slow steps, and then broke into a swift run. If anybody was waiting to get him in the sights of a gun, that man would have to act fast now or lose his target.

Van's hunch was correct. The bullet zinged past him as he loped along, and the crash of the gun followed it. Van immediately went into a dive, heading for some kind of carefully trimmed bush. He wriggled around behind it and waited.

He couldn't see the edge of the growth through which the path ran and he doubted anyone lurking there could see him. When he was standing, in profile against the light painted house, he was a good target, but only someone with cat's eyes could spot him now. He was hoping that the gunman might believe his shot had been effective and the dive Van had taken was the act of a wounded man.

No matter whether the gunman believed this or not, Van was not going to move. Not until daylight if necessary.

CHAPTER VII

ISLAND OF SUDDEN DEATH



MINUTES crept by. Then Van heard the pad of feet against the grass. A figure materialized out of the gloom. Van raised himself to one knee. The man would be armed but Van would have to be a fast and accurate shot. The man came closer, apparently studying the grounds for any sign of his victim. Van rose to a crouch.

Suddenly he sprang from behind the bush, gun level and ready. The killer gave a wild yelp of alarm and was too startled to move at first. He turned and started running, but Van was much fleetier. He overtook the man quickly, saw him twist around to bring up a gun, and went into a tackle.

He brought the man down with a thud and swarmed all over him. He hammered a solid left hand punch to the jaw, quieted the attacker and wrenched the gun out of his hand. He stuffed this into his coat pocket then started finding out who he had captured.

Still wary, as he always was when on the prowl, Van heard rather than saw others approaching. This had been a trap. The man he had knocked down was a simple sacrifice to draw him out of hiding if he wasn't wounded. Van smashed home a right fist this time and the fingers were curled around his automatic lending more solidity to the blow. The man he hit grew limp and quiet.

Van leaped to his feet. A gun flamed to the right of him. He fired back, knowing the gunman must have moved as he pulled the trigger, but hoping return fire would keep them back for a few seconds. Then he started running. Another gun threw lead his way, dangerously close this time. He realized he was again silhouetted against the outline of the big house so veered to the right, straight in the direction from which the first shot had come and hoping he could spot at least one of these killers.

He dived behind a bush and lay prone, just waiting. There wasn't a sound. The island had become a silent subtropical paradise once more, but sudden death waited out there in the darkness. He wondered why the shooting hadn't attracted someone from the big house, but so far as he could see, no lights had been turned on yet.

Van hated this kind of stalemate and after a few moments he was on the move again, slithering along the grass, keeping as close contact with it as possible. Somewhere, and not far away, men were wait-

ing to kill him. They had clearly shown this was their aim. Nobody wanted to question him, seize him. It was a simple matter of shooting him down on sight, but men of that kind could expect little or no mercy from the victim they tried to trap.

Van rested a moment, moved again, and this time someone turned on a flashlight with a powerful beam. The ray began sweeping the bushes. Van scurried for a thick one, waited until the light went on by, then headed straight toward the man with the flash.

As the ray started to sweep back, he ran faster. Another moment of this would bring him into the light. That was when he stopped dead in his tracks and fired from the hip.

The man with the flash gave a wild scream. The light cut a swathe over the grass, tilted upward and tried to illuminate the sky before it fell out of his hand, hit the ground and lay there, still burning, the light filtered by the blades of fairly tall weeds.

Two shots came from near the entrance to the path. Then two more. Van didn't hear any bullet whiz over his head or close by him, but he dropped flat and waited, ready to open up if another flash showed.

He stayed there five minutes, moved experimentally, and drew no fire. Then he made his way carefully toward the spot where the flash still burned. Close beside it lay a man spread out on his stomach. His head was turned sideward and both hands were under him, as if he'd been trying to get up when he died.

VAN picked up the flash and sent its beam toward the path. Again he drew no fire so he felt fairly safe in using the light to examine the man. The first thing he saw was a bullet-hole through the fellow's shoulder, then three others, all squarely in the back. And Van had fired only one shot at this man! His own companions must have executed him on the theory that a wounded man could be too much of a handicap.

Van ran to the path, followed it swiftly

and reached the top of the knoll. He could see the water from here, and a boat was rapidly vanishing into the darkness. Only starlight revealed it now, but that would soon fail and the boat would disappear in the night.

Van had a feeling that he was alone on this island with a dead man.

He returned to where the body lay, turned it over this time and saw a dead native about twenty-five years old. The first and second fingers of his left hand had been amputated at some time or another. There was a knife in a crotch scabbard and another knife of the swivel type in his pocket. Otherwise, there was nothing much. A little money, cigarettes and matches, a key ring with three keys on it, but no papers or wallet. Nothing by which the man could be identified on the spot.

Van left him there and trudged in the direction of the big house, wondering what he would find. All this shooting should have brought every occupant outside or at least to the windows. He reached a barred door looking into a large patio, discovered a bell beside it and pushed the button. He could hear the bell ring, but no one came in answer to it.

Promptly Van rounded a corner of the house, picked up a whitewashed stone from the border of a flower garden and used it to smash a window. He knocked out the slivers of glass, reached in to locate the latch and open it. Then he slid the window up and climbed through.

He was in what looked to be a library. There was a large desk, designed in mahogany and tooled leather, some rare books, comfortable leather chairs and on the desk were a number of envelopes, all opened and all addressed to Harry Nagel, the rum distiller. So this was his island. His empire, as Ann Lansing had called it. Van wondered what Nagel would have to say to this—provided, of course, he could be asked any direct questions. At the moment that seemed unlikely. Until Van was in possession of Feodor Danowski's roll of prisoners, everything had to wait.

Van left the house by the front door after ascertaining that nobody was at home, not even servants. From the front porch he saw a small dock built out over a bayou and a white launch glistened like silver in the darkness.

He went straight to the boat, found it to be a small but speedy craft, and it wasn't locked. Van had driven this type of sport craft many times and in a few moments he had the motor purring smoothly. He cast off, steered the boat out into the bayou and headed for the sea between the island and Nassau.

While the craft skimmed the water, Van had a few moments in which to think. What bothered him most was how anybody knew he had received a note signed by Maget. Of equal importance was the question of whether or not Maget had written it, or was even in this part of the world.

There was a chance that Ann Lansing had seen enough of it to know what it meant, but would the name of Maget possess any definite meaning for her? Not unless she was somehow involved in the spy ring, and without concrete evidence, Van refused to believe that. Communists are never gay, light-hearted people. The very trend of their schooled thinking is against that, even with those who might be assigned to espionage work.

Van made up his mind that Ann had not seen the contents of the note and had nothing to do with all of this.

Then there was the question of who had warned him. Who was there to take an interest in whether he lived or died? And certainly that note from Maget had been the start of a murder trap. Those men had been shooting to kill, back there on the island, and had considered their work sufficiently important so that they were entirely willing to murder one of their own men when he presented the hazard of becoming a prisoner.

Van gave up, decided he should be content with the fact that he had come out of it alive, but from here on he wasn't acting upon any notes signed by Marget or anyone else.

HE BEACHED the boat about half a mile from the city, got ashore without getting wet and walked in the direction of his hotel. When he reached it, he slipped through a side entrance, to the back of the lobby where he saw a newspaper lying on a chair. He appropriated this, found a seat beside a floor lamp and proceeded to read the paper as calmly as though he had been there all evening.

It was almost two o'clock in the morning before he folded the newspaper, strolled past the desk with a nod for the sleepy clerk and stepped outside as if for a breath of air. Finally he went to the elevators, rode to his floor and walked slowly toward his rooms. When he unlocked the door, one hand held his gun ready. He snapped on the lights, satisfied himself the suite was empty, then proceeded to get ready for bed.

But that woman's handkerchief intrigued him. The perfume was no ordinary odor, probably was foreign. But why a woman's handkerchief? Again he began to develop the idea that Maget might be a woman and then he felt more sure of it than ever.

If the note had been a forgery, written by someone who expected to use it as a lure, then that schemer must have known that Maget was a woman and was under the impression that Van Loan also knew this. A little pleased with that theory Van crawled into bed and put out the light to think things out.

In slightly more than a minute he was fast asleep.

At nine-thirty in the morning he had finished breakfast and was again seated in the rocking chair on the veranda, as calmly as if nothing unusual had happened. He scanned the morning paper, flown down from New York, eyed the tourists openly and jumped to his feet with badly concealed eagerness when he saw Ann Lansing coming toward the hotel.

She joined him and seemed serious. "About last night," she said. "Be a good fellow and forget it, Van. I was a little silly."

"I rather liked the idea of your being jealous," he told her.

"I was, doggone it, but the cold light of morning made me realize how foolish I'd been. I guess it must have been the night, Van. I promise not to butt in on your steady romance again."

"All right," he said. "We'll pretend it never happened. What's fresh in the field of news?"

She gave him a sidelong glance before she pulled comfortably back into the chair and kicked her feet in the air.

"Something has happened, and I'm wondering how you knew about it because nothing has leaked out yet."

"But I don't know what you're talking about, Ann. I was merely asking a stock question. What has happened—if it isn't hush-hush stuff?"

"Oh, no. Just a murder. Harry Nagel spent the night here and all his servants also had the night off. When his grounds keeper reached the island this morning, he found that someone had broken into the house. He called the police and they went over in a launch."

"Did you say—murder?"

"Yes. The police went over the island and discovered a dead man about a quarter of a mile from the house. He'd been shot four times."

"I take it someone really meant to kill him."

"Sure it was murder. The police theorize that he was part of the gang that broke into the house. They must have had a fight, this man was killed, and the others got out of there fast. Not a thing was disturbed in the house."

"Nagel was fortunate."

"He thinks so too, but the police don't like it. We don't have many murders down here."

Van yawned. "How anyone could work up enough ambition to kill a man in this climate is beyond me, Ann. Do they know who the dead man was?"

"Oh, yes—that was easy. One of the native boys who has a long police record. He also had a reputation for hiring himself out as a professional killer."

"Indeed. Then the police theory is probably correct. Some of his pals done him in. Let's talk about something pleasanter. I'd—well, will you look at that!"

CHAPTER VIII

CASH PROPOSITION



VEN before Van spoke, Ann was already leaning forward. A taxi from the airport had pulled up and from it stepped a woman who would have attracted attention even in a Wac army camp.

She was tall, blonde, willowy, with a smooth and fair complexion indicating she hadn't been in the tropics more than a couple of hours. She wore a white tailored suit, a large white hat and white gloves up to her elbows. She walked casually, with long easy strides and Van Loan thought that if she had a dog on a leash and sported a long cigarette holder, she would have been a cartoonist's dream of a brand new movie queen awing her public.

"Who in the world is that?" he asked.

"I don't know," Ann said, "but I'm darned soon going to find out. Look at her suit, Van. Notice the cut. That's Paris—direct. Let's see—it's ten-fifteen. Yes, that's about right. A plane gets in at ten from Europe and I'll give you odds she was on it."

"Go find out," Van said. "Maybe I can date her tonight and really make you jealous."

Ann slid off the chair. "If you go for that type, Mr. Van Loan. Every man to his own taste, but I'm a woman and I'd take arsenic to that one. Call it feminine intuition."

What Van was wondering was whether or not this could be Maget!

When Ann returned ten minutes later, she had made a few notes and from these she gave Van everything she had learned.

"Her name is Yvette Tafler. She came from Paris and she is going to stay indefinitely. She brought enough luggage

with her to stay a year. It's being unloaded out in back right now."

"Yvette Tafler," Van frowned. "That's an odd name. Yvette is distinctly French, but Tafler could be either German or Austrian."

"A bull's eye," Ann applauded. "She is half French and half Austrian. How do I know? She told me and you know, it seemed at the time, that she wanted to. I wonder why?"

"Let's stroll out in back for a look at her baggage," Van said. "I'd like to see how much a woman brings for an indefinite stay."

"Okay, let's go," Ann said.

They walked through the lobby, out the side door and around to the delivery entrance. About eight bags were lined up—and two briefcases which didn't match the rest of the luggage. They were old, battered and dirty-looking.

Two briefcases filled with onion skin documents listing the names of prisoners. That's what Jim Davis had said back in Washington. Van Loan was more interested in Yvette Tafler than ever. He was wondering if he might find an opportunity to get at those briefcases, but about that time a bellboy tucked them under his arm, picked up two of the suitcases and disappeared into the hotel.

"Well?" Ann asked. "Are you satisfied?"

"I guess so. How about dinner tonight?"

"I'll have to think it over. Or am I in competition with your lady friend?"

"Yvette? Wait until I meet her, will you?"

"I mean the mysterious woman who throws rocks at you, enclosed in a note and a perfumed handkerchief. The one who has another odd name—Maget."

"Oh, that." He grinned. "It's part of last night and we agreed to forget it."

"You're a dog," she said. "Come on, I'll buy you an early lunch."

They were on their coffee when Ann dropped her bantering talk and became serious.

"Van, what's going on? Really, I mean?"

He frowned. "But I don't know—"

"Oh, fiddlesticks. There's a murder on Nagel's island and nobody is fooled for one second about the victim being a burglar. What kind of burglars break into a house and steal nothing? They couldn't have been frightened away, because there's no one else on the island."

"Don't you think," he said, "you should leave those matters for the police?"

"And have you forgotten that I'm a reporter, even if most of my job does consist in sending back flashes about Mr. and Mrs. Somebody-or-other being registered at such-and-such a hotel and having a fine time."

"Still, I don't see—"

"Van, the dead man was more than just a two-bit local crook. He worked for Otto Bruger, as one of his gamblers, and he made good money. Far too much to turn to robbing a house."

"What am I supposed to do about it?" he asked.

"Why are you here? Isn't it true that Mr. Havens sent you?"

Van grinned. "Sure. I'm supposed to keep tabs on a society reporter who likes to kick up mysteries where there aren't any."

FOR a moment he thought she was going to get up and stalk out of the dining room. But she finally gave a sigh and finished her coffee and cigarette.

"I'm sorry, Van. I was riding a hunch, that's all. I often do that and none of them ever pan out. I guess I'll always be a society reporter. Now I've got to run. Several tourists have promised me pictures. You know the kind—standing on the beach all dressed up in those impossible clothes they wouldn't wear at home for a thousand dollars."

"I know," he said. "They're meant to make the stay-at-homes seethe with jealousy. Well, run along. I'll pick you up tonight."

She gave him a smile and went bustling off. Van stayed at the table because he'd seen something that Ann had missed. Directly behind her sat Yvette Tafler,

Parisian dressed in yellow shorts with a cream colored skirt over them and a sweater which matched the skirt. Van gave her a friendly nod. She smiled back and he went over to her table.

"May I sit down?" he asked.

"But of course," she said in excellent English with just a trace of an Austrian accent. "You are Mr. Van Loan?"

"Well"—he feigned surprise—"how did you know that?"

"You once played polo in Vienna, an exhibition match. I was there and, as I recall it, your team lost."

Van laughed. "We were playing a British team. An exhibition game for our Occupation Troops. But what are you doing here in Nassau?"

"I have come—" She hesitated, then fashioned a smile. "I merely wanted some sunshine. There is not much of that in Vienna any more, or if there is, no one notices it."

"I hope then," he said, "that your stay here will be pleasant."

"It would be without any question if you were to show me about, Mr. Van Loan."

"I? Why, of course, I'd be delighted."

"Excellent. You are the only person I know. Shall we do the island this afternoon? Perhaps dinner and dancing to-night?"

"A pleasure," Van said. "I'll wait for you on the veranda."

"I will not be too long. Oh, yes—are you not a good friend of some great American newspaper man?"

"Yes—Frank Havens."

She nodded. "I was merely testing my memory. I'm sure we shall have a wonderful time."

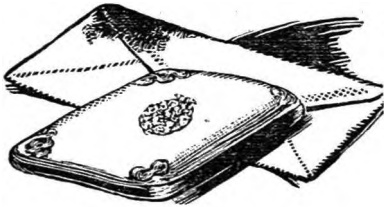
Van walked with her to the elevators and then went out to his accustomed chair on the veranda. He sat there, estimating the chances of Yvette being on the level. She *could* be Maget. She had flown in from Europe, had two bulging briefcases with her, though he wondered why she had entrusted them to the bell-hops if they were so important.

The name Maget had a French flavor,

and she was half French. Perhaps she was looking to make a contact. But if this were true, Yvette would be pretty careful before she brought up the subject. Van had an idea she had been testing him when she had asked about Havens.

He didn't see Otto Bruger approach, didn't notice him at all until his heavy voice said, "Good afternoon."

Van greeted him. At least he was drawing the people who might be in-



X-Ray Ink

SINCE special x-ray ink has been developed for marking ultra-secret government documents, no lawbreaker finds it more difficult than the foreign undercover agent who tries to steal prize plans, blueprints, records and maps. This printed information is labeled with the mysterious fluid. It's perfectly invisible to every eye except that of an industrial x-ray unit, when viewed through a fluoroscope. But the rays can discern the clever markings, even when there's one and a half inches of other matter placed on top of the papers. Consequently, a suspicious-looking briefcase, notebook—or man, for that matter—can be examined in a jiffy and the plans recovered.

—Bess Ritter

involved in this bizarre matter. Bruger pulled over a chair and sat down. He lit an expensive-looking cigar, savored the smoke for a moment then spoke casually. "I have been wondering, my friend, if we should not get to know one another better. You have not been to my place yet."

"I don't gamble," Van said.

"Of course. But it is interesting to watch those who do. Besides, I might be of some help to you."

"Help? Exactly how, Mr. Bruger?"

"Perhaps we have duplicate interests. In my line I know a lot of people. Information reaches me and often I can make

use of it."

"All right," Van said, "what are you driving at?"

"Here in Nassau is something which Frank Havens wants. You are one of his best friends and you have not deceived me for a moment about coming here to play golf."

"I haven't done much of it, have I?"

"You have not even gone to see the tournaments. You sit here all day long, waiting for someone."

VAN showed none of the interest he felt. "Maybe I'm just lazy."

"Maybe—but it is also possible that someone is to meet you. It is also possible I can find out who this person is and arrange a convenient meeting."

"For how much?" Van asked bluntly.

Bruger made a flourish with his cigar. "You are a practical man. I, too, am practical. I never take sides, except the one which profits me the most. There are certain documents you seek. Oh, do not bother to hedge. I know the truth."

"Then let me tell you something, Herr Bruger. You know about these things because one of your men, along with some others, tried to kill me last night. He himself was killed, and by the men he traveled with, so that he would not be captured and made to talk. However, it seems he did his talking some time before that—to you."

"Very good." Bruger bowed slightly. "Better than I expected of you, Mr. Van Loan. Now that we understand one another, do you think we might make a deal?"

"We might, if you have anything to offer."

"Perhaps the identity—well, we should not talk about those dangerous matters now. Let it go that I know what you are after. Someone else is after the same thing. Whichever one of you pays me the most gets my help, and the kind I can offer is invaluable. Good afternoon, Mr. Van Loan. We shall talk again soon."

"Watch out that you don't overstep yourself, Bruger. You might be fooling

with something dangerous."

Bruger made a deprecatory gesture. "My whole life has been dangerous. And profitable."

He stuck the cigar between his teeth and ambled off, looking like a shaggy bear—and just about as trustworthy, Van decided. He leaned back and mentally studied this new set-up. Undoubtedly Bruger's man, the dead one, had been his spy in Zarnow's ranks. Perhaps that was why they were so eager to kill him. At any rate, Bruger knew a great deal. The man might be useful if Van could find no other way of locating either Zarnow or Maget.

He was determined to find both of them. Maget for the papers Danowski had compiled. Zarnow because he possessed a hostage named Steve Huston, and Van Loan was quite aware of the fact that he, too, might gather himself a hostage in the shape of Zarnow.

That was, if Steve Huston wasn't already dead. Van's lips compressed tightly when he thought of that possibility.

CHAPTER IX

ATTACK IN THE NIGHT



VAN HIRED a carriage for the afternoon and went sightseeing with Yvette. It was a pleasant trip. But with all the leeway he gave her, she gave no hint of knowing anything about Danowski's papers. She was just having a lot of fun. If *she* was Maget, and cagey, he couldn't blame her. The odd thing was that she seemed to steer clear of any reference to Europe or political ideologies or anything serious, but concentrated on enjoying herself. She was like someone who hadn't known peace and security in a long time.

They reached Westcott's place at dinner time, danced a little until Yvette pleaded fatigue from all the sightseeing. Then they ordered dinner. They were on their coffee when Westcott came over to the table. Van introduced him.

Westcott said, "I admire your taste, Van. Miss Tafter is charming. I hope the food has been satisfactory."

"Delightful," Van told him.

Yvette was more enthusiastic. "I had almost forgotten that such food existed, Mr. Westcott, or such music and gaiety."

"This island is a good place to forget troubles," Westcott said. "Oh, Van, would you mind if I brought Nagel over? He's been wanting to meet you."

"Who is Nagel?" Yvette asked with just a trace of worry in her voice as he left.

Van said, "Oh, just some rum baron." But he was remembering what Westcott had said. "Nagel can be most disagreeable if he's crossed and he was insistent that I introduce him. Personally, I think he's a stinker."

Westcott returned in a moment with Nagel. The thick-set man bowed awkwardly for Yvette's benefit and Van knew instantly that Nagel was far more interested in her than he was in Richard Curtis Van Loan. Van asked him to sit down.

Nagel promptly accepted the invitation and called a waiter in a loud, authoritative voice. The waiter was busy at another table and Nagel muttered something under his breath.

He said, "These days servants are impossible. They come when they feel like it. I must have fifty on my island estate, and I have yet to find just one who is trustworthy."

The waiter came over and Nagel ordered champagne, giving detailed orders as to how it was to be cooled. The waiter merely walked away to fill the order. In his attitude it was clear that he disliked Nagel. Van was beginning to have a fellow feeling. Here was a man with exaggerated ideas of his own importance, one used to having his commands obeyed promptly, or he wanted to know the reason why. Probably Nagel was what a Soviet Commissar must be like. The idea rather startled Van because he hadn't even considered that Nagel might be Zarnow.

Yvette's conversation with the man was animated. She seemed highly interested in him. "You must provide very well for your family, Mr. Nagel," she suggested, "with whole islands as they say you have."

"Family?" Nagel barked. "Haven't any—don't want any. Relatives are a nuisance. They ask too much of a man and confine him too much."

"You are accustomed to a great deal of traveling then?" she suggested.

"I guess I've traveled a million miles in my day. Somebody has to sell my rum and in many European countries people must be educated to the use of it rather than to the eternal drinking of their wines and cognacs. I have been to Vienna many times."

"To Prague, perhaps?" Yvette asked. "Or Warsaw?"

"There, too, until they wouldn't let me in any more. Still, I sell them a little. I still have my contacts."

"It must be fascinating," Yvette said admiringly, "this line of work you are in, Mr. Nagel. You see so many places, meet so many different people!"

"I have friends all over the world," Nagel boasted.

YVETTE skillfully continued to prod Nagel and soon Van realized that her questioning followed a definite pattern. She was trying to find out if Nagel could possibly be a spy. She was deft about it and if Nagel sensed what she was after, he gave no indication of it. Van thought Maget would act just about as Yvette was acting. Maget would be interested in finding out Zarnow's identity. Maget's own life might depend upon it.

Finally Nagel left them. Yvette watched him stalk out of the place, smiled at Van and said, "There is a man I could not stand for long."

"He likes himself too much," Van said. "But I thought you were decidedly interested in him."

"One must make conversation," Yvette said easily. "Besides, he might be valuable some day, and the way to make

friends is to lead others into talking about themselves. Especially such a man as Mr. Nagel."

Van poured more champagne for her and added a few drops to his own glass. As he put the bottle back into its ice bucket, he gave a start. Ann Lansing, on the arm of a tall, good-looking man in a British Overseas Airlines uniform, came into the room. Almost at once she saw Van. He braced himself to get up quickly, but her eyes passed over him coldly and she seemed to take a tighter grip on her escort's arm. Van suddenly remembered that he'd had a date with Ann for dinner and had forgotten it completely. She was, apparently, in no mood to accept an apology, so Van let it go and studied her companion.

He was a pilot, clean-cut, smiling and friendly. The kind of man, Van decided, he'd like to know, but at the moment he didn't relish the idea of having Ann blow off any steam, and he realized she was quite capable of it. Van merely smiled and nodded, but she ignored him.

Van said, "Yvette, let's get out of here. There's a moon tonight and I'd like to have you see the waterfront by moonlight. It's worth seeing."

She nodded. "If you will excuse me for a moment, I'll be delighted."

She walked off to the powder room and more than one dinner was interrupted while eyes followed her. Ann Lansing's did, too, and Van grinned when she flashed him a look of anger. She had calmed down, even though he couldn't tell her the reason his being with Yvette was of such prime importance that he had to break a date with Ann.

Fifteen minutes later, Van and Yvette were walking slowly along the waterfront while he explained the purpose of the clumsy bumboats lined up.

"Natives used to use them exclusively to peddle fruit and vegetables to ships which passed by. But now they are just as important as water taxis to take passengers and tourists to the outer islands and on short cruises. They're colorful, but not too comfortable."

"I should like to have a ride in one of them," Yvette said. "Perhaps tomorrow?" "Of course," he said.

She looked at him archly. "Why are you here in Nassau?"

The directness of the question startled him. "For the same reason you are—to rest and have some fun."

"Is that all?"

"Is any other reason necessary?"

She opened her purse and fumbled inside it. "Excuse me, but suddenly I wondered if I had brought my hotel key with me. It does not seem to be—"

"Wait a minute," Van said. "I'll light a match."

He held the small flame over the bag while she fumbled around inside it. A scent of familiar perfume reached his nostrils. The same perfume which had been on the Maget handkerchief. Yvette gave an exclamation of annoyance.

"There it is—at the bottom of my bag! Thank you."

They started walking again and Van was thoughtfully quiet. If Yvette was Maget, she might be waiting for the approach of Frank Havens' contact man, so Van was tempted to broach the subject of Danowski's briefcases. Everything pointed to Yvette as being Maget. Just in from Europe, somewhat frightened, wearing the same perfume, asking too many pointed questions.

BUT if she had arrived in Nassau after the mysterious note from Maget had been thrown onto the terrace, how could she be responsible for that? Besides, Maget had said that contact wouldn't be made for a week, and that period of time wasn't even half over.

They ambled along, unconscious of the fact that they had left the lighted waterfront area and had entered a narrow, dark street which was completely deserted. Van, occupied with his thoughts, wasn't as alert as usual and the attack that came was fast and unexpected.

Two men suddenly appeared from an areaway between two small buildings and rushed at Van and Yvette. Both held

knives. One flung himself at Van, his knife upraised. It slashed downward. Van avoided the blade by a quick weaving movement, but even so the tip of the knife slashed through the side of his coat.

Yvette screamed and tried to battle off the other man. Van grappled with his own attacker. He had to get rid of him fast. He brought up an elbow in direct and violent contact with the man's chin. The blow sent the fellow reeling backward, and the knife clattered to the cobblestone pavement.

Van lunged at the man who held Yvette against a wall and had his knife poised. Van struck him a terrific blow on the back of the neck, followed it up with half a dozen blows to the face, and got his man turned around. He grabbed his antagonist's wrist, twisted hard and shook the knife from the man's fingers.

Now things were on a more even basis. Van wound up a haymaker, missed with it and suddenly found the man he thought out of the fray swarming all over him. Van expected to feel the sting of the knife, but apparently the killer had either been unable to find his weapon or thought he could handle Van without it.

Van bent double, reached up and secured a handful of greasy, black hair. He tugged hard. The man came up and over his shoulders, fell with a thud and a whooshing sound as the wind was knocked out of him. Van wheeled to face an attack from the other man — and barely in time. The man was armed with a rock he had picked up in the gutter.

It grazed Van's temple, but that was the only time the killer had a chance to use it. Van's right fist smacked against the killer's stomach, doubling him up in agony. Van grabbed him, threw him violently against the wall and looked around for the other man. That man was in the act of picking up one of the knives. Van charged him. The man saw him coming, straightened, and began running. Van went after him until he heard Yvette call after him. The second killer was running away, too. Apparent-

ly both had had enough.

Van ran to Yvette's side quickly. "Are you all right?" he asked.

She was trembling under the protection of his arm. "Yes. Yes, I think so. You were so fast—so quick. But those men meant to kill me."

"You?" he asked bluntly. "Maybe they were after me, and my wallet."

"No. No, I do not think so. Take me back to the hotel at once. And—if I should call you, will you come to me quickly?"

"Of course, Yvette."

"I think now we shall remove the masks and stop this silly pretending. You are here to meet someone. Is that not so?"

"Perhaps."

"It could be me you are seeking. I know I take a desperate chance trusting you this way for I am not even certain you are really Richard Curtis Van Loan, the friend of Frank Havens. Yet I must take the chance."

"Trust me," he said. "You aren't taking any chance at all."

"So? That is good. I felt all along you must really be the man I am to meet. Now, back to the hotel. Give me a little while to calm down, then I shall send for you. The sooner our business is concluded, the better."

"Can you tell me," he asked quietly, "a certain name which will prove—"

"Maget," she replied promptly.

"All right, Yvette. That does it. Yes, I'm the man you're supposed to meet."

HER relief was obviously genuine. "I feel as though the weight of the world has just been taken off my shoulders"

"How did you know I'd be representing Frank Havens?" Van asked.

"Steve Huston told me."

Van frowned slightly. That seemed odd, because Steve Huston had no idea that Richard Curtis Van Loan was the Phantom and regarded Van Loan as just a good-natured, fun seeking man without responsibilities, and certainly not the type to represent Havens in a vital deal

like this. Still, it was possible.

"Did Huston tell you my name?" he asked.

"But no," she replied promptly. "Only that Mr. Havens would send someone he could trust and that I should be on the lookout for a man who was friendly with Mr. Havens and had only just arrived in Nassau. You alone answered that description."

"I see. All right, Yvette. When do I get the contents of those two briefcases?"

"Soon—perhaps tonight."

"But aren't they in your suite now?"

She smiled just a little. "You saw the briefcases which were sent up, did you not? Of course. But they contain nothing of importance. I hoped, if someone was already here and prepared to steal them, they might be deceived."

"And the real ones?"

"Well hidden, and they will stay hidden until I am ready to go for them. Trust me. It will not be long."

"I'll stick close to my room until I hear from you," Van said. "The sooner, the better. I have an idea plenty of people here are after them."

CHAPTER X

AT BRUGER'S



YVETTE went directly to her suite when she and Van reached the hotel. Van lingered around the lobby for a few moments, half wondering if Ann would show up and wishing she would. Finally he went to his own rooms, locked the door securely and sat down near the window overlooking the street, to try and think this out.

The whole thing had been almost too easy. The first phase of it, at any rate. Maget had appeared ahead of schedule, but every fact indicated that Yvette must be the contact Huston had met in Austria. Each factor, small and large, checked perfectly. Almost too perfectly, he thought.

And that attack of just a little while ago—it had been almost too obvious. There had been two men. One of them had kept him so busy that the other had had sufficient opportunity to knife two or three women. True, Yvette had put up a battle, but it seemed to Van that the killer could have used the knife if he had wanted to.

Perhaps, he reasoned, they wanted her alive, but if that was the case, why hadn't they sent more than two men so that Yvette could have been spirited away? One more thing made Van highly suspicious. No one except Yvette and himself knew where they were going for a walk. They hadn't even decided on the direction until only a moment or two before they actually strolled off toward the waterfront. And yet those two killers had been waiting for them!

Perhaps he had been trailed, though Van doubted it. He had made it a point to keep his eyes and ears open. Yvette suddenly became a controversial figure in his mind. She had gone to the powder room right after they had decided on the waterfront. She could have told someone. If she had, then Yvette was working hand in glove with Zarnow or his agents, and presented a terrific potential danger for Van Loan.

On the other hand, Van knew he couldn't afford to take any chances. If Yvette called him, he would go where she wished him to. The all important matter in this international intrigue was the possession of those onion skin papers. To get them he would accept any risk.

Around midnight his phone rang and he practically leaped for it. His feelings were a mixture of disappointment and interest when he heard Otto Bruger on the wire, and the gambler wanted to come up at once. Van told him to come along, hung up and quickly went to an overstuffed chair, took his gun out of its holster and tucked the weapon down beside the cushion where he could get at it quickly and easily.

He let Bruger in and the broad-faced, heavy-set man ambled over to the chair

Van indicated, and sat down. He didn't bother to remove his panama, just pushed it to the back of his head so he could mop the sweat off his brow. Bruger had a knack of looking disheveled under any conditions.

"You have had time to think over my proposition," he said. "Now it is necessary to talk money."

"Just how much do you know?" Van asked, and wondered what kept him from punching this man on the nose.

"There are documents," Bruger said with a sly smile.

"What sort?"

"The kind which would be highly dangerous to—shall we say—your enemies."

"Aren't they your enemies, too?" Van demanded.

"You forget," Bruger said, "that although my country lost the war, there is some question as to who won it. I do not care who gets these papers, for I have no liking for either side. I am just in an advantageous position. Is that not so?"

"That all depends upon where you sit, Bruger. Do you know where the papers are?"

BRUGER studied his pudgy hands. "I can find him."

"Do you know who Zarnow is?"

"Perhaps. That is another matter for another day."

"And another price?"

"Of course."

"Just how did you happen to gather this information, Bruger?"

"There are many ways. It pays a man to keep his wits about him. Also I have contacts abroad and I know what is going on. That is why I took pains to plant a man or two where he could do me the most good."

Van said, "Of course you realize that if Zarnow wins this round, your own country will be among the losers."

"My country?" Bruger said scoffingly. "My country is dead. What remains of it is not my Germany. Come, come—I am tired of this bantering. I work for a price. How much do you offer?"

Van got up slowly, disdaining the gun which had remained almost under his fingertips. What he had to do now he was going to enjoy. He had no use for Bruger's information. The man had nothing to sell, though he didn't realize that.

Van suddenly reached down, grabbed Bruger by the lapels of his coat and hauled him out of the chair. He twisted the gambler around, grasped his collar and the seat of his pants and half-carried, half-pushed him across the room to the door. He got it open, shoved Bruger out into the hallway and slammed the door in his face. Bruger shouted something about Van being sorry, but Van just smiled in complete satisfaction and locked the door again.

He was on his way back to the chair when the phone rang. He answered it very fast.

Yvette said, "Van Loan, there is grave danger for both of us. We must work quickly. Meet me in fifteen minutes at Otto Bruger's gambling place. It is closed, but the door will not be locked. I'll be waiting inside. Whatever you do, don't fail me."

"Bruger's place?" Van said. "But I—"

"There is no time for questions. This is important, and I shall depend on you."

The phone clicked. Van hurried to the chair, removed the gun and slipped it into his holster. Then, because he always liked an ace in the hole, he took time to open the closet, carry out the golf bag and get from its hidden compartment a second automatic, a box of slugs and his small makeup kit. These he distributed in his pockets so there wouldn't be any telltale bulges.

Finally he hurried out and headed for the elevators. He wasn't sure what he was getting into, but he couldn't afford to risk not doing what Yvette demanded. There was always the chance she might be on the level.

Outside the hotel, Van didn't even look for a carriage. It was best for him to be on foot in case he was being followed. If he was, he wanted to know it.

He walked fast, with long, loping strides that covered the ground rapidly. Before he reached the outskirts of town, he was positive that nobody was on his trail.

It was half an hour before he approached the vicinity of Bruger's place and recognized it quickly enough, having seen the two-story, sprawling building during one of his sightseeing trips. The place was dark and apparently deserted. He stood behind a palm tree for a few moments, considering the situation, and realizing that if this was a trap, it would be a good one. Still, the lure of those documents was strong—worth taking any risk for. He moved out and in the direction of the front door.

As Yvette had told him, the door was not locked and he stepped into a cheaply furnished foyer where there was a check room, some telephones and a few old-fashioned chairs. He crossed this and entered what seemed to be a large dining room complete with tables, chairs and a greasy smell. Van returned to the foyer and found an ordinary door which opened easily, and he was in the game room.

BRUGER'S offered every conceivable device for making a man part with his money the easy way. There were roulette tables, bird cages, card tables, slot machines and even a battery of phones over which racing results were obtained.

The room was cluttered, untidy, and the bar at the far end was littered with dirty glasses. Apparently the place would not be cleaned until the next morning. A weak electric light bulb burned at one side of the bar, throwing more shadows than light, but it served to keep him from bumping into tables and chairs as he made his way forward.

If Yvette was here, there were no signs of her—or of anyone else, for that matter. Van was wondering whether or not he had been the victim of a hoax. Perhaps a scheme to get him out of the way temporarily while steps were taken to gather in Yvette and her precious briefcases.

He moved past the end of the bar and glanced behind it. There was a figure huddled on the floor, and at the same moment he saw it, he became aware of Yvette's haunting perfume. He moved quickly toward the figure on the floor. Yvette lay in a crumpled heap, apparently lifeless.

As Van went toward her, suddenly a booming voice broke the quiet of the deserted gambling room. A deep bellow of a voice. Van turned quickly. A man was standing at the end of the bar. Where he had materialized from, Van had no idea, but there he stood. Six feet four or five of him and at least two hundred and eighty pounds of bulk. An enormous man with long arms, a large head and a thick neck. He was flexing his muscles, like a wrestler impressing his opponent before a bout.

Van scurried to the other end of the bar, not in fear or desperation, but he had something to do. All along he had believed that if a trap was sprung, it would be the kind he might not get out of easily. He had to step over Yvette's form, but had no time to see whether or not she was alive. She didn't move and her head was turned so that after he passed by, he could see only the back of it.

Van reached for a bottle under the bar and hurled it. The big man gave a wild yell of rage and ducked, but the bottle hadn't been aimed at him. Van was trying to put out the only light in the place—and he missed. So did the second bottle, but the third scored a bull's-eye and the light bulb crashed, plunging the place into darkness. But not for long. Someone at the other end of the room turned on a flashlight and started sweeping the bar area with it.

Van, crouched behind the bar, took the makeup kit and the spare gun from his pockets. He had already picked out a hiding place for them. A cupboard back of the bar which was filled with dusty bottles of some kind of liquor. He reached as far back as he could, pushed some of the bottles aside and deposited his kit

and gun well behind them. He threw the box of bullets into the cupboard also, closed the door gently so it wouldn't click shut, then darted from behind the bar in an attempt to make a run for it.

He didn't expect he'd succeed and he wasn't surprised when he found the huge man standing there, waiting for him. The flashlight held them both in its brilliance.

The big man was scowling. He had a face that probably hadn't smiled unless it was at the times when he battered someone into a lifeless pulp. If Van had ever seen a killer, this man was one.

Apparently he intended to handle Van alone, but that wasn't surprising. He looked as if he could handle a dozen ordinary men. Van also got the impression that there was a certain amount of prestige behind this intended assault. This was one of Zarnow's men and if he, alone, could successfully take one of those Zarnow numbered as an enemy, the word would be passed around that Americans were smart and dangerous only by reputation, and not in fact.

Van said, "Okay, you big ox, come and get me!"

CHAPTER XI

GAMBLING HOUSE



WETHER or not the giant understood Van's challenge was a question, but he comprehended the tone of Van's voice. With a roar he went into a charge. At the same instant Van unexpectedly lunged for him so that they met halfway. A raised knee and an outthrust elbow hit Van simultaneously. He bounced back under the twin blows, but steadied himself quickly and moved in again.

He lashed out with a short, chopping right fist that landed flush on the big man's nose and bloodied it. The giant roared his rage, which was exactly what Van wanted him to do. An angry opponent is easier to battle than a cool-headed one, and Van needed every ad-

vantage in the book if he expected to take this man.

A thick arm wound around him in a bear hug. The man's other arm followed and the squeeze started. It was a killing hold, but murder was obviously what this giant had in mind. Van jerked his head up quick and hard. It cracked against the big man's chin and the squeeze loosened. Van broke out of it, delivering a couple of powerful stomach punches as he moved.

The big man came in once more, apparently oblivious to the pain. Van pasted him on the nose again, and this hurt. As the big man's face contorted in agony, Van hit his nose a third time. Then something happened. Van never did know what it was, but he was aware of a crashing blow just above the heart. He must have run head-on into a looning fist. At any rate all the breath left his lungs and intense pain shot upward through his left side. He staggered back and the giant charged in again, intent on the kill.

Van ducked, dived for the man's legs and tripped him. As the brute crashed to the floor, he kicked out with his free leg. The heel of his shoe hit Van squarely on the jaw and broke his hold. Van was positive, at that moment, that his jaw was broken, but there was nothing else to do but keep up the fight. There would be no surrender in this one. It was kill or be killed. This was no ordinary battle he was fighting. It was a small part of a cold war gone hot in this remote place. It was a fight between ideologies, not men, though his brutal antagonist probably didn't understand that.

Van was in pain. It started at the base of his chin, shot upward around his eyes and into his skull. He lay there, looking as if all the fight was out of him, and sensed what was coming next. The big man scrambled to his feet with an exclamation of joy, drew back one foot, prepared to finish the job he had started. That was when Van reached out with both hands, grabbed the fellow's ankle

and, in the act of tripping the man, wrenched the ankle as hard as he could.

The giant howled in pain and surprise as he landed on his back with a thud that shook every bottle in the place. Before he could get up, Van swarmed over him. It was almost fantastic, this battle fought only by the ray of a flashlight which never left the battlers.

Van was lifted bodily and hurled to one side. He scrambled to his feet, well aware of the enormous strength in that giant of a man. But he was waiting and ready when the big man came in again with one of his now familiar charges.

This time Van sidestepped neatly and let the big man go on under the built-up speed of his own rush. When he crashed against the bar, Van went into action.

Before the giant could get set, Van seized his right wrist, nulled it around and up in a hammer lock. He put all the strength he possessed behind the wrestling trick and managed to lift the big man's arm high.

Half-crouched, Van suddenly brought his shoulder up and under the big man's armpit. It was a trick he knew well, but had never used before. However, this seemed to be the time to put it to the test. Van was fighting for his life and knew it.

He half-lifted the big man with the fierce upthrust. He heard a cracking sound followed by a wild scream of pain and knew that the big man's arm was out of joint.

IT WASN'T a permanently crippling technique, but it cut his attacker down to normal size. Van let go of the wrist, grabbed both the man's arms and spun him around. Now there remained only the matter of chopping him down and he started to work with considerable relish. It was the Phantom's first physical encounter with the forces that had turned the world into an uneasy armed camp and, while the odds had been distinctly against him, he was now master of the situation.

The big man tried to use his left arm,

but he was too clumsy and in too much pain. As Van plastered him with punches he became aware that the flashlight ray seemed stronger. Whoever was holding it was moving in closer. Van wound up a haymaker, poised his fist as if painstakingly gauging the blow, then suddenly spun around, still in the half-crouch. He leaped in the direction of the man with the flash.

Van had covered only half the distance when there was a rush of feet. Fists and feet battered at him from all directions. Someone got a handful of his hair and pulled his head back while another man used the side of his hand against Van's throat. There was a terrific blow alongside his head. His flailing arms weren't finding any targets though he was certain that at least four men were pounding him into unconsciousness.

Then came a blinding crash as a fist hit him full in the face. Van's senses did a flin-flop and his knees buckled. He felt the floor against his cheek, dimly saw several pair of feet near his head. Then they moved back and the enormous feet of the giant came into view. One of them drew back. Van did his best to roll with the kick, but he had no idea whether or not he succeeded. There was no way to avoid being kicked. All he could do was try to soften the blow. When it landed, Van skidded along the floor a yard or two before he came to a stop.

He thought he heard a yell of triumph, but it only lasted for the brief second before unconsciousness robbed him of all pain, and the knowledge that he was beaten. . . .

The first of which Van was consciously aware was a spinning sensation that went on and on. Somebody was flashing a bright light in his eyes. He should be dead, but would there be such sensations in a dead man? He opened his eyes, but closed them again—quickly. The light was blinding.

As consciousness became clearer he was aware that he was lying in a bed, covered up, and wearing pajamas. How could this have happened? The last he knew

before he had blacked out was that a band of killers had him down and were moving in for the finish. He *couldn't* be alive!

He tried to open his eyes again, a little at a time now, so that they were mere slits at first. There was something familiar about his surroundings. That chair, for instance—he'd sat in it. It was a comfortable chair, though it seemed strange that he should know this.

Someone — a complete stranger — was looking down at him with a worried expression. Van opened his eyes all the way and was startled to find that he was in the bedroom of his own hotel suite. He still didn't recognize the man who was looking down at him, but when this man moved away a more familiar face came into view. Nagel, the distillery owner, was smiling and nodding.

"Ah!" he said. "You are waking up."

Van wanted to tell him he was all right, to ask what had happened, but he couldn't move his mouth. The jaws were held rigid and felt uncomfortable. He worried an arm out from under the covers and managed to touch his face with his hand. He seemed to be covered with bandages.

The worried face of the other man replaced Nagel's, but it wasn't quite so worried now. He said, "Mr. Van Loan, you responded to treatment much faster than the average patient. How do you feel? Or wait—you cannot talk, you know. Your jaw is broken. Two serious fractures."

VAN nodded slowly, wondering why the effort didn't create any pain. He struggled to sit up, but the man promptly and gently pushed him back.

"I'm Doctor Grenfell," he said. "My offices are just around the corner from your hotel. I was summoned, and did what I could. Does your head hurt?"

Van indicated that it did not. The doctor actually smiled this time. "Very good. You are going to be all right, though it will take some time. I shall have to operate on your jaws, Mr. Van Loan. But you have nothing to fear. The

surgery is simple and you will have the best of care. I have brought a male nurse here to look after you. One of the best." He looked around and raised his voice slightly. "Humbert—come here."

A bulky, powerful-looking man came into view. He had a wide, simple face and small, piggish eyes, thick lips, and a receding chin. In bulk he faintly reminded Van of the giant who had tried to kill him.

Humbert had a Cockney accent, not pronounced enough to make him difficult to understand, but it was there. "We'll 'ave you in shape to go 'ome in no time at all, sir. No time at all."

Van nodded and wished he could speak. There was no pain, but his jaws were held together as if by a vise. Gradually he became aware of the pressure of the bandage and although it seemed to cause a certain amount of pain, it was more like a dull ache.

Nagel came back into view. He pulled up a chair and sat down. Van wondered if the gleam in Nagel's eyes was sardonic.

Nagel said, "You've had a rough time of it, Van Loan. Very rough. I happened to find you, you know. Quite early this morning. Around two-thirty, I'd say. Couldn't sleep so I'd been taking a walk. Happened to pass by Bruger's gambling house and heard a commotion. So I popped in, and four or five men promptly popped out the back door. I found you on the floor."

Convenient, Van thought, and more than slightly coincidental.

Nagel went on, "You were lucky, too. I surprised them before they could lift your wallet or watch. I wonder why you were in that section of town at such an hour of the morning. We consider our island a safe place in which to live, but like everywhere else, a man can't go out courting danger without meeting it, sooner or later."

Especially, Van thought, when that danger was manufactured, deliberate, and lying in wait.

Nagel said, "Your friends have been

making inquiries. Matter of fact, some of them are in the living room right now. Ann Lansing seems much worried. Would you like to see her?"

Van nodded, cursing his inability to speak. Nagel got up, talked to the doctor in whispers for a few seconds, then disappeared. In a moment Ann Lansing was standing beside the bed and with her was the British Overseas Airlines pilot who had been her escort earlier.

Ann said, "Oh, Van, what a terrible thing to happen! And after the way I practically hooted at you in Westcott's restaurant. Still, you did play me a dirty trick."

Van tried to talk with his eyes, and finally Ann understood. She touched her uniformed companion on the arm. "This is Bill Riley, an old friend of mine. When you stood me up, Bill just happened to phone— No, doggone it, that's a lie. I dated him even though I knew you were going to meet me. I tried to call you, but got no answer. So you see I'm not quite as thoughtless as you, Van. You never even called me."

Van's eyes twinkled and he gave a nod of greeting to Bill Riley. The pilot started to grin. "Don't pay any attention to Ann, Mr. Van Loan. She's just a born screwball, but a nice one. If she made a date with you for last night, she was double dating because we'd had a date arranged for more than a week. Don't fall for this act she's putting on."

Ann said, "I know you can't speak, Van. The doctor says he has to wire your jaws or something. I suppose you'll have to go home now, and that's a dirty shame."

COULD all of this mischief have been done for the purpose of sending him home? It was one way to get rid of Frank Havens' contact man. Yet he doubted it—killing was so much easier. But why, then, hadn't they killed him? Nagel might have shown up just when they were set to carry out their plans, but a man could be killed in a fraction of a second.

He thought of Yvette, pulled an arm out from beneath the blankets and indicated by writing in the air that he wanted a pencil and some paper. Bill Riley provided a dog-eared notebook and a pencil.

Van took them and wrote:

Have you seen Yvette?

Ann shook her head from side to side and looked puzzled.

Van wrote:

She may be dead. Find out if she returned last night.

"I will," Ann promised. "The first thing I'll do, and I'll let you know."

Then Van wrote:

Destroy what I've written and keep quiet about Yvette.

Ann ripped the page out of the notebook, tore it into strips and put them in her purse.

"Don't worry, Van. Is there anything else I can do?"

He wanted to say, "Not now," but all he could do was shake his head.

Ann said, "I'll be back later. And remember, I'm your friend. It'll put me in soft with my boss, too, so don't forget to tell him."

Van chuckled beneath the bandages and thought that Ann was an excellent tonic for any sick man—even his kind who didn't feel sick at all, just bruised and sore.

Dr. Grenfell stopped beside the bed a moment later. "I'm going now, Mr. Van Loan. But I'll be back later today. Humbert will take good care of you. You may see anyone you like—and don't worry. I'll fix you up like new."

THE SHAPE OF THE SCHEME



HUMBERT fussed over Van for a while, straightening the sheet and the light blanket, raising him up while he fluffed the pillows, then sat down in a chair in the corner. Half an hour later Cedric

Westcott came in.

Westcott said, "I'm sorry to hear about this, Van Loan. Have you any idea who was responsible?"

Van shook his head.

"We've been bothered by similar incidents lately—something new for the islands, but I suppose such things happen everywhere. I wanted to send over some lunch, but they tell me you won't be eating for a while. Just taking fluids through a glass sipper. A rough break, I'd call it."

But not quite rough enough, Van was thinking. His wits had cleared, he could feel the strength in his muscles and he felt alert and ready for anything, even if half his head was covered by bandages.

After Westcott left Van dozed for a time. Humbert never left the room and every few moments he came over to the bed and stood there, looking down. Around three in the afternoon Van had another visitor. Bruger, looking as sloppy as ever, came in and sat down beside the bed. He was smiling broadly.

"Well," he asked, "have you had enough, Van Loan?"

Van felt like slugging him, but all he could do was lie there in silence.

Bruger said, "You should have taken up my proposition. I have been offered"—he looked over his shoulder at Humbert who was reading a magazine, and lowered his voice to a whisper—"fifty thousand dollars. That is right—fifty thousand beautiful American dollars. By the other side. They want to know who Maget is."

Bruger leaned back, lit one of his cigars and deliberately blew the smoke into

3

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Van's face. "It is too bad you cannot speak, my friend, because I should like to know if you would pay fifty thousand to know who Maget is, and another fifty thousand if I identified Zarnow. You can see I know everything. I am no fool."

If Van had ever had any doubts about that, they were dispelled now. Bruger was clever, shrewd, and absolutely without the slightest sense of fair play. Whoever paid the most would get what he knew. Van signaled for pencil and paper. Bruger provided them so promptly and eagerly that Van began to wonder if Bruger had had an offer from Zarnow or his men.

Van wrote:

Can't do business now. Will meet your terms later if you will wait.

Bruger crumpled the paper and put it into his pocket. "I will wait, but not too long. They are going to operate tomorrow, the doctor tells me. A day or two and you should be able to speak. I will give you three days which is being fair. All you have to hope for is that the other side does not raise the price."

He got up with a smirk of satisfaction, rotated the panama hat around one finger for a few seconds, then walked away. Van settled back to think.

Where was Yvette? Had she been part of the scheme to trap him? Or had she really made the appointment in all honesty, gone there with the briefcases, been robbed of them and murdered? It was highly possible. There was one way of knowing. Nagel had said when he surprised the killers they had fled. If Nagel was telling the truth, the killers wouldn't have been able to take a corpse with them in their flight. Not without Nagel seeing. Therefore, if Yvette couldn't be found, it was fairly safe to assume she'd merely got up from the floor and scooted off with the rest of the bunch. Van hoped that Ann Lansing wouldn't take too long.

Around four-thirty Ann came back, alone this time. She gave a good exhibition of a girl calling on a sick friend until Humbert strolled idly into the next room.

Then she bent and whispered into Van's ear.

"Yvette hasn't checked out. Her things are still in her room, but she hasn't been seen since last night. Something must have happened to her, Van. What in the world is this all about?"

HE SHOOK his head, glad enough that he couldn't talk because Ann had a way of being insistent, and he wouldn't have been able to make any explanations.

"Are you sore about Bill Riley?" she asked in an ordinary voice. Humbert was wandering back into the room.

Van indicated that he was not.

"Bill's just an old pal. He flies here from London and Paris on a regular schedule. Nice boy—but you're nice, too. Doggone it, this is a terrible way for you to be. I have an idea you know so much, if you could only speak."

He smiled with his eyes and felt like tearing the bandages away from his chin and head. Ann finally patted his hand and left. Van waited until he heard the outer door close, then he slapped the bedcovers until Humbert came over. Van indicated by sign language that he wanted a drink of water.

"Right you are," Humbert said. "'Bout time you got a pill, too. One shake and you'll 'ave both."

He came out of the bathroom with a glass of water and a glass sipper. Van held the glass while Humbert inserted the sipper between his lips. Van took a long drink. Humbert withdrew the sipper, showed Van a small pill and worried it into his mouth. With his tongue Van promptly jammed the pill hard against a back tooth. He sipped more water, pretended to swallow with an effort, and Humbert seemed satisfied.

"That'll make you sleep. Leave it to good old Doc Grenfell. He don't believe any of his patients ought to suffer any pain. Couple of days and you'll be right as rain. Lay back now and close your eyes, mister."

Van turned on his side, sighed beneath the bandages and pretended to compose

himself for sleep. After a moment or two he managed to eject the pill into his hand. He crushed it into powder.

He started applying pressure to his jaws then. That didn't seem to hurt. He got one hand up to his chin and pushed against the bandages. There was a little pain, but that could be because of the kick he had taken. Certainly there were no broken bones, or the pain would have been excruciating.

There was something wrong, he told himself. Very wrong—and all part of some carefully thought-out plan. He had to find out what it was and take counter measures. If his jaws were not broken, then Dr. Grenfell was part of the scheme and so, probably, was that male nurse.

Van decided not to act as if he were suspicious, and to allow them to go ahead—up to a certain point. He was sure that everything fitted into a pattern, though he didn't know what it was or what lay behind it. They could have killed him, but they hadn't gone through with it, even after he had beaten their giant who was supposed to build up the glory of the Soviet. Evidently they wanted him to live, but wanted him incapable of making any moves.

They were giving out a story about broken jaws and the need of an operation in the morning. Why? Van finally got a slight glimmer of the truth before long.

He became ravenously hungry right after dark, but kept up his pretense of being in a deep, drugged sleep. Someone stood over him, a hand picked up his wrist and felt the pulse. Van stirred restlessly and sighed in his mock sleep.

Dr. Grenfell's voice spoke. "The pulse is strong. He will be coming out of it in an hour or two. It is now eight-thirty. At ten give him the three white pills I'll leave on the night table. All three, do you understand?"

"Right you are, Doc," Humbert said.

"They will take care of him. And make certain he swallows them. Somehow I do not trust this man. After midnight, when things are quiet, two men will come

for him."

"An' take care of 'im too, eh, Doc? Don't worry, he'll be ready."

GRENFELL warned, "If he is not, you will hardly live long enough to feel sorry for yourself. You know the rest of the plan. Everything will go well if you do your part."

"I'll do it all right," Humbert promised. "This blinkin' Hamerican won't give me no trouble. 'e knows what's good fer 'im, 'e won't. Doc, 'ow about me gettin' a little sleep? Is it safe to snooze off fer a few minutes?"

"It is not," Grenfell snapped. "I told you I do not trust this man. Keep your eyes open."

"Okay, Guv'nor, okay. But I ain't 'ad no sleep in goin' on two days now."

"You can sleep after we finish this part of the job," Grenfell said tartly. "Stay in the room every moment and see to it that he has no more visitors tonight."

Van heard Dr. Grenfell depart. Humbert pulled a heavy, overstuffed chair into the middle of the room, sat down and yawned. Van turned over, slitted his eyes, and watched Humbert. There was one thing Van knew—if he couldn't trick Humbert some way, he was getting out of here anyhow, even though he wanted to know what Grenfell's plans were.

Half an hour went by. Van snored lightly and Humbert grew more and more sleepy-eyed. Finally the male nurse's head dropped and his chin rested against his chest. He shook himself awake, muttered something and picked up a newspaper. Reading apparently only made him sleepier. Around nine-thirty he was more than dozing. He had fallen fast asleep.

Van gave him ten minutes while he watched and listened to the steady, hard breathing. Then he threw the covers back, swung his legs off the bed and stood up. He didn't even feel weak. In his bare feet he made no sound as he moved across the carpeted room to the table on which lay three white pills.

Van moved on into the bathroom, opened the medicine cabinet as quietly

as possible and took down a bottle of aspirin. He removed the screw top, dribbled three of the pills into the palm of his hand and carried them back to the table. He picked up the three narcotic pills, put the aspirin in their place and threw the narcotics out of the window. Then he got back into bed, pulled the covers up and began tossing around.

Humbert awoke with a start and jumped to his feet. He looked at his wrist-watch, then went to get a glass of water and the sipper. Van was awake when Humbert handed him the glass.

"More pills, mister." Humbert grinned. "Three of 'em this time. Won't do you no 'arm at all, they won't. 'Ere you are, now. Let's see you swallow 'em proper."

Van sipped water and allowed Humbert to insert a pill which he promptly swallowed. He repeated it twice, and Humbert appeared to be satisfied. Van settled back and within fifteen minutes apparently was in a drugged sleep.

What was going to happen after midnight, when the hotel was quiet, he couldn't guess. But whatever the schemers were up to, he was going to be ready for them.

Just before midnight he heard Humbert go to answer the door in the living room, then heard men's voices in there a moment or so before Humbert and two other men came into the bedroom. Humbert yanked the covers off Van and poked him experimentally in the ribs. Van never uttered a sound, his expression didn't change at all.

"Out like a blinkin' light," Humbert muttered. "You won't 'ave no trouble with 'is nibs, boys. Roll 'im in a blanket and 'e'll carry easier. Wish I was goin' with you, but this time I can't."

They spread a blanket on the floor, lifted Van off the bed and rolled him into it, not caring much whether or not he smothered to death. Then they picked up their burden and carried it out to a service elevator which was waiting at the floor.

Downstairs, one of the men hurried off somewhere and when he returned, re-

ported that everything was clear. They had a native cart outside and Van was dumped into the back of it and covered up with sacks of something that felt like potatoes. The men got onto the cart and it started rolling roughly away.

Van had expected something like this, which was why he had decided to let them carry out their plans just as far as possible—until there was actual danger of his life. Perhaps, if things went right, he would soon meet Zarnow and that was something Van looked forward to with the greatest of pleasure.

The cart rumbled through the quiet streets, heading toward the waterfront, and Van realized that he was again going to be taken for a ride aboard one of the bumboats.

It was waiting and ready, and they quickly transferred him to it, dumping him into the bottom of the boat as if he were one of the burlap sacks which had covered him during the trip.

CHAPTER XIII

THE PHANTOM IN ACTION



NE of the men poled the boat away from the wharf, then plied the oars steadily for about fifteen minutes. Van had an idea they were heading toward Nagel's island again. That intrigued him.

Perhaps Nagel was the answer to all of this—the sinister international spy known as Zarnow.

Then, unexpectedly, the oars stopped slapping water and the momentum of the craft ceased. It began drifting. One of the men stood erect for a moment.

This man said, "Okay. Right here is where the tide will carry him out."

"I still think we ought to put a slug through his head," the other man said.

"For what? He's full of drugs and sleeping like a baby. He'll just go down and stay down. The tide'll wash him out to sea and he'll never be found."

"Just the same, a slug—"

"Don't be a fool. A shot out here would draw attention and we don't want that. Or a knife either, so don't go reaching for your belt. A knife means blood and when we return this stinking boat, we don't want any clues left on it. Grab his feet and stop talking."

Van had been on the verge of tossing the blanket to one side, rising up and giving battle to the pair, but a fresh thought had entered his mind while they discussed his murder. To him had come what was, perhaps, the one feasible way in which he could find Zarnow before Zarnow found Maget. Once they all thought Richard Curtis Van Loan was dead, they might drop their guard. And if they did, someone was going to be ready for swift action.

They rolled him out of the blanket, picked him up by the shoulders and the legs, swung him twice and let him go flying into the sea. Van took a long breath before he hit the water, let himself go down and stayed under as long as possible. When he came up, he was well behind the bumboat.

The two men were standing in it, looking in the opposite direction. Van dived again, swam under water until he had to come up for more air. He had put some distance between himself and his abductors. The craft was already on the way back to the main island.

Rolling over on his back, Van floated and rested a few moments. The sea was calm and warm, the thin pajamas encumbered him no more than a bathing suit, and before long he was swimming leisurely back to shore. When his feet encountered land, he stood up and waded onto one of the beautiful beaches just outside of town. Otto Bruger's gambling house was almost due east of this spot and not far away. Van headed in that direction after a short rest on the sand.

When he reached the gambling house there were still a few lights on. He stretched out on the grass beneath a thick bush, glad that his nocturnal operations were on a sub-tropical island where a man in pajamas wouldn't shiver to death.

After a while, two cars pulled away from Bruger's, leaving the place in total darkness. Van made his way to the front door, but unlike the night before, it was now locked. He went around to the back, but found no way to get in. Finally he located a rock, broke a section of kitchen window and reached in to open the latch. He crawled through the window, carefully picked up all of the broken glass and dropped it to the ground just outside. Then he found a broom with a fairly heavy handle and propped this up against the window as if someone had carelessly thrown it there and broken the glass.

Van hurried to the bar then, went behind it and all but kept his fingers crossed while he searched for the gun and the makeup kit he'd hidden in one of the cupboards. Everything was there, including the box of slugs. Now he had to find some clothes, and that didn't take long.

There were lockers just off the kitchen and he had little difficulty opening them for they were cheap, wooden affairs. He found shoes in one, a coat and trousers in another. His pajamas were dry now so he left them on, slipped into the shoes and trousers and hunted for a shirt. This search was fruitless, so he compromised by pulling up the coat collar and lapels to hide his lack of a shirt.

THE gun and bullets fitted snugly into his pockets. He carried the makeup kit into Bruger's private office. A bathroom adjoined it. He turned on the light after closing the door, looked at himself in the mirror and laughed. His head was still bandaged and only his nose and eyes could have showed before he had pulled the bandage down below his mouth while swimming. Quickly he ripped away a piece of adhesive and removed the gauze.

He felt much better after that, especially when he tested his jaws and found them only stiff and sore. There were no indications of a bone break at all.

Van dried his face thoroughly with a towel, which he carefully refolded and put back on its rack. Then he opened

the makeup kit, took out a small jar of cream and rubbed some of it into his face, neck, hands and forearms. The cream stained his skin a nut brown, like the skin of a man who had spent most of his life in the tropics.

He used a solution to color his hair jet black and when it had dried, with one



Arsenic and Old Blood

WHICH is easier to find when it's a question of murder—the victim's spattered blood, or whether death was caused by poisoning?

Many armchair detectives are of the opinion that the former is far simpler than the latter, but it's often really the reverse. For, should the victim's blood fall on clothing, floor coverings, wall paper or the like, it can be practically invisible. This is due to the fact that the blood absorbs the dye so completely that the stains take on the same shade as the paper or fabric.

On the other hand, poisoning—if caused by arsenic—is so determinable that crime laboratory technicians can detect it months and even years later. As a matter of fact, even if the body were actually cremated, satisfactory traces might be found in the ashes.

—William Carter

of Bruger's combs he parted it differently. After applying another solution to his eyebrows they were quickly bleached to a straw color as if the sun were responsible.

Nothing else was necessary. Van Loan's disguises were always simple and he lived the role he portrayed more than he looked it. Right now he wanted to resemble some American who had been on the beach for years.

But something else happened when Richard Curtis Van Loan studied his re-

flection in the mirror. Van Loan had disappeared and in his place stood the Phantom Detective, grim and eager to get into action.

There were several things the Phantom had to attend to as quickly as possible. Of prime importance was the job of identifying Maget and obtaining from him—or her—the documents which were so vital. He also had to locate Zarnow, and what would happen then depended strictly on Zarnow. Then—and of tremendous importance to him personally—he had to devise some means of getting Steve Huston out of the hands of his captors. That would be difficult, with Steve thousands of miles away. But if he could work it, he meant to—even at the risk of losing the precious documents over which murder had been committed.

There likewise was the mystery of Yvette to solve. If she was innocent, she deserved his help. If she was part of the spy mob she rated trouble, and he would see that she got it. Dr. Grenfell and Humbert were fair game for him, too, and he certainly would like to locate that giant whose shoulder he had dislocated.

That gave him an idea. He cleaned up the bathroom, leaving no trace of his presence there, then went out to the bar where he looked up Dr. Grenfell's address in a phone book. He made a mental note of it before returning to Bruger's private office where he searched the desk and a filing cabinet. In them, he discovered nothing which would link Bruger to this particular gang of spies. He did find about two hundred dollars in loose bills and took these. If Bruger was not a Red spy, he would get it back.

Bruger, he realized, could be an opportunist, pure and simple. A man looking for a chance to make some easy money. Or—he could be Zarnow, working as a greedy individual in order to make Van Loan reveal that he was the man Frank Havens had sent to meet Maget.

Yvette knew this was true, of course. Van Loan might have fallen into a trap into which she had led him, but at this moment the Phantom wasn't certain. For

the moment, he gave Yvette the benefit of the doubt. Time enough for her later on. The Phantom had other things which must be done.

He was not tired because of the long rest he'd had in bed under the orders of the scheming Dr. Grenfell, so the Phantom walked briskly back to the city and managed to find a small, cheap hotel where he checked in, paying a week's rent with some of the money he had borrowed from Bruger. He was shown to a small, fairly clean room, and waited there until the shops opened in the cheaper sections of town.

HE WENT on a buying expedition then, purchasing clothing and shoes in a second-hand store. He looked fairly presentable when he walked out, but more important than that, his clothes were those of a native, and he had every appearance of being one.

There was a definite change in his approach to the situation also. As Richard Curtis Van Loan, he was always on the defensive, waiting until something happened before he took action. Now it was different. The Phantom rarely waited, but saw to it that things happened, continually harrying his enemies, giving them little rest. From now on, that was how he intended to handle the situation here.

By early afternoon he had tested his simple disguise sufficiently to know that it was effective. Once he passed Nagel on the street, looked squarely at him and drew Nagel's attention, but the wealthy and mysterious rum distillery owner showed no signs of recognition.

The Phantom headed purposefully for Dr. Grenfell's office. He had a score to settle with the doctor and the medico also might be a means of finding the trail to Zarnow. Grenfell undoubtedly worked for or with the Red spy.

Grenfell's office, he found, was in a good professional building, with a private entrance on the ground floor. The Phantom took up a post across the street and watched the office for half an hour while he puzzled out just how to handle Gren-

fell. About the time he had decided to scare the doctor into running for help and trusting to luck that it would be to Zarnow, something happened to change the Phantom's mind.

He saw a huge, ungainly man trudging down the street. He was so huge that recognition was instantaneous. The giant who had tried his best to kill him! And even if his size hadn't given away the man's identity, the fact that he had one arm in a sling was enough. That was the arm Van Loan had dislocated.

Apparently Grenfell treated the men who worked for Zarnow because the giant walked straight into the office. Twenty minutes later he emerged, ambled toward one of the colorful parks and sat down. The Phantom kept him in sight every moment. Perhaps this giant might lead him to someone interesting.

Finally the big man got up and started walking again. He didn't go far. Only to one of the cheaper, centrally located hotels set rather far back from the resort areas. When he entered the elevator, the Phantom stepped in beside him. The huge man glanced at him, but gave no sign that he had ever seen this sun-tanned, native-looking man before.

The giant got off at the fourth floor and so did the Phantom, but when the big man walked to the left, the Phantom turned to the right until the big man disappeared around a corner. The Phantom went back quietly, in time to see him enter one of the last rooms down the corridor.

Without hesitation the Phantom walked up to the door, rapped on it and when the giant wanted to know who it was, the Phantom muttered something unintelligible. A key turned, the door was opened a crack and the Phantom hit it with one shoulder, sending the big man reeling back and groaning while he clawed at the injured shoulder which the door had struck.

The Phantom kicked the door shut and advanced on the man. He said, "You understand English, so don't try to act as dumb as you look. I want Zarnow. Where

can I find him?"

The big man growled something and swung a punch with his sound hand. It whizzed over the Phantom's head and he came out of a crouch with both fists swinging. His blows drove the big man back until he tumbled onto an old divan. The Phantom poised one fist just over the big man's injured shoulder.

IN A rasping voice he said, "Zarnow. Or you'll need a better doctor than Grenfell to fix you up."

"I do not know. I do not know. I swear it! Zarnow—nobody knows who he is."

"You work for somebody," the Phantom said. "You're too stupid to handle anything without being told what to do. Who pays you?"

"Igorsky. He will kill me for this, but it is Igorsky. Do not touch my shoulder. It is driving me crazy already!"

"Where can I find this Igorsky?"

"He lives nowhere. He roams about and when he wants me, he phones. That is all I can tell you."

"Last night you tried to kill a man. In the bar at Bruger's place. There was a girl lying behind the bar. Do you remember?"

"I was not there. I could have tried to kill no one. I have but one arm. You are making a big mistake!"

"You had two arms before the fight started," the Phantom said. "You won't have any if you don't begin remembering. The girl—she was there?"

The giant kept his good hand hovering over the injured shoulder as if he could protect it that way. His face was ashen and, like some big men who capitalize on their size, he was yellow.

"Yes—yes, there was a girl."

"What happened to her? And be sure you remember that much and you tell it without lies."

"She—she got up and ran off. I swear I know nothing else. They make me do their dirty work. I am a good man. I do not like this sort of thing."

The Phantom laughed harshly. "You'd better begin disliking it even more, be-

cause the next time we meet you'll have reason to remember the incident. You will stay in your room now, even if this Igorsky phones you. I'll know if he does."

CHAPTER XIV

MURDER IN THE GAME



BACKING out of the room, the Phantom closed the door on the subdued giant, and made his way to the street. He sat down on a bench half a block away, a point from which he could watch the hotel entrance. He had a strong idea that the big man wouldn't wait long before he looked up this Igorsky—if such a man existed.

Twenty minutes crawled by. Perhaps the man had phoned to warn Igorsky, but the Phantom doubted this. He had left him with the impression that should he phone, his late visitor would be told about it.

A carriage, coming down the street at a fairly fast clip, attracted the Phantom's attention for a moment, then demanded it. In the seat were two people he knew only too well. Nagel, the rum king, was one of them and the other was Yvette Tafler, looking much too lovely to be a corpse. Nagel was fawning over her and she seemed to be egging him on.

As they passed by, the Phantom saw that they were holding hands. His eyes were grim, his mouth a straight line. Yvette could be driving with Zarnow. Or Yvette could be priming a man to become either a disciple of Zarnow or an unwitting stooge. Either way, the two would bear watching, but that would have to come later because the giant was coming out of his hotel with a worried and, at the same time, a furtive expression on his face.

He was going somewhere and didn't want to be followed. The Phantom arose and prepared to do just that.

The big man was as easy to trail as a parade. His size prevented him from fast

movement and he always stood out, even in a crowd. More, he was not mentally equipped to cope with a shadow as skilled as the Phantom. So it was only about twenty minutes later, after a round-about route which finally brought the giant back to a point not more than half a mile from his hotel, that the Phantom saw him enter an apartment house.

The Phantom allowed three or four minutes to go by, then entered himself. The judicious use of a bill bought him the information that the giant often came here and always to see a man known as Igor Igorsky. The giant had lied, saying he was unable to contact Igorsky and had to wait to hear from him. The Phantom was not surprised. These Soviet agents were trained to believe that a lie is as good as the truth, and that there was nothing dishonorable about it.

Money also bought the Phantom certain information about Igorsky. Elevator operators often are a garrulous lot even under ordinary circumstances, and plied with a suitable amount of cash, some bubble over the facts.

Igorsky, it seemed, had been living here for more than three years and occupied one of the best suites. He wasn't well liked because of his miserliness and arrogance, but he had never done anything out of line.

The elevator operator said, "Far as we know, he's one of them white Russians. Thinks the Czar oughta be back and the Kremlin turned into his palace. Maybe he's right. I don't know much about them things."

"Does Igorsky live alone?" the Phantom asked.

"He's too tight to support a wife or a girl friend. Anyway, the only dame who'd go with him would have to be blind. He ain't so much to look at, and he's got the same kind of a disposition."

The Phantom rode up to Igorsky's floor. He had no special reason for not showing his hand. If Zarnow discovered that the Phantom Detective was working against him, it made little difference. As the Phantom stepped out of the elevator, he

saw a door down the corridor open and the big killer came out. The Phantom quickly darted around a corner and stayed out of sight until after the fellow was on his way down. Then he walked briskly to Igorsky's door and pressed the buzzer.

The man who opened the door and stood there blocking any attempt on the part of the Phantom to enter, was a short man, thin, with a pinkish complexion, a Van Dyke beard, red-rimmed eyes that peered out of thick glasses, and an antagonistic manner.

"Good afternoon, Comrade," the Phantom said.

Igorsky's eyes glistened with suspicion. "What do you want? Who are you?"

THE Phantom moved as if to step into the apartment. Igorsky quickly put a hand against the caller's chest to hold him back. The Phantom smiled, gave Igorsky a hard shove and moved on in. He closed the door and looked around the place. It was lavishly furnished and had expensive decorations, deep, comfortable furniture and a thick-piled rug.

The Phantom said, "I understand in Russia each individual is allotted a certain living area—just about enough to turn around in. You must be happy here."

"I shall call the management—"

"Sit down," the Phantom said tartly. "We're beyond the stage of bluffing. The man who just left you is no White Russian. He's red as a ripe pepper and so are you. Now, shall we talk business or do you want me to reveal the fact that you're a Commy?"

"Before I agree to say one word, I want to know who you are," Igorsky said.

"All right. I'm the Phantom Detective."

Igorsky sat down slowly. "So! You are said to be a clever man. Yes, I will talk to you. What is it you wish to know?"

"The whereabouts of a man named Richard Curtis Van Loan."

Igorsky gave a start of amazement. "Unfortunately," he lied, "I have never heard of him."

"We'll pass it then. Now don't tell me you never heard of Zarnow."

Igorsky said, "Yes. Yes, I have heard of him. Who sent you here? To Nassau, I mean? Are you now working as an American spy?"

"That all depends upon how you classify a spy," the Phantom said. "Let it go that I'm here, I know what it's all about, and I'm not inclined to employ gentle methods with plain, ordinary rats like you and your kind."

Igorsky flushed. "I have heard much about you, of course. Enough to realize that it is of no use for me to bluff. Yes, I am an accredited agent for my country. Just as you are for yours—and we are both on neutral soil. You can't get away with any more than we can."

"I'd like to make a little bet on that," the Phantom said. "We were talking about Zarnow."

"You understand he is an important man. Perhaps the cleverest man in this business. Certainly cleverer than you, Phantom. But Zarnow is in Russia. Or Europe, at least. He is not here."

"You're a liar," the Phantom said cheerfully. "But we'll let that go, too. I looked you up and came here for one specific reason. Somewhere in Hungary, your people have a friend of mine held a prisoner. His name is Steve Huston."

Igorsky shrugged. "I know nothing about him."

"Perhaps you will—if you ask a few questions of your friends. I simply want you and the rest of your breed to know one small fact. If anything has happened to Steve Huston, something will happen to you and to Zarnow and the rest of you here. Something drastic. You might pass the word around. I know you hold all the cards so far as Huston is concerned, but I am willing to dicker if it comes to that. However, should he be dead, or should he be killed after this moment, I'm more than certain that your Intelligence Division in Moscow is going to wonder what happened to several of its important agents. Is that quite clear, Igorsky?"

"Yes, clear enough, though I cannot help you."

The Phantom suddenly bent over Igorsky, seized him by the lapels and hoisted him to his feet. He pulled the man closer and spoke in a harsh voice.

"But you do understand that I'll hold you accountable. Also Zarnow and the others. You infer that I am not in the United States now, but remember this—neither are you, and if it comes to a showdown, the British authorities are going to favor me."

The Phantom flung him back into the chair. He dusted his hands as if he'd touched something objectionable, turned and walked casually out of the suite. He rang for the elevator, moved at a faster clip down the hall and entered the fire stairway. The elevator came to the floor, the door opened and stayed that way a moment. Then the operator shrugged, closed it and dropped the car. The Phantom went back to Igorsky's apartment and listened outside it.

IGORSKY was talking, in Russian. A brief conversation of which the Phantom understood nothing. Then Igorsky hung up and the Phantom hurried away. He had accomplished something, at any rate. He had let Igorsky know that Steve Huston's welfare was precious to him. Something might come of that, or it might at least prolong Huston's life. If he was still alive.

A floor below, the Phantom rang for the elevator and the garrulous operator came up with it. More money exchanged hands.

The Phantom said, "Igorsky just made a phone call. I noticed this building is serviced by a switchboard, and Igorsky's call may be recorded. Can you find out what number he called?"

"I can try, mister. If it means trouble for that guy, it'll be a pleasure. Hang around the lobby for a few minutes. I'll see what I can do."

Within five minutes the elevator operator told him that Igorsky had put through a call to Harry Nagel's island

estate. There was no question about it, because Nagel had had the phone company run a cable to his island and calls there were not made by number, but by the use of Nagel's name.

"Thanks," the Phantom said. "Just keep all of this quiet. You'll know what it's all about soon, and you'll be proud you had a hand in it."

The Phantom had something to eat in a restaurant near the center of town and by the time he finished, it was growing dark. Around nine o'clock he strolled into Otto Bruger's gambling place. Bruger was talking to his bartender and the Phantom ambled up to the bar, stood alongside Bruger, and the gambler glanced at him in the bar mirror. There was no recognition in his manner and he seemed to be disinterested. The Phantom ordered a drink, but hardly more than touched it, nursing it along, merely using it as a prop to kill time.

Finally he went to one of the roulette tables and lost twenty dollars in almost as many seconds. Bruger, had he known it, was winning his own money back. Soon after ten o'clock the Phantom was interested to see Harry Nagel and Yvette enter the place. Bruger had disappeared. Yvette appeared to like gambling and Nagel supplied plenty of money. It was apparent that Nagel was known here, because the help studiously avoided him.

The Phantom tested his disguise on Yvette, even to jostling her at one of the tables and apologizing. She merely glanced at him and paid no further attention. And no wonder, the Phantom thought. She would hardly be looking for anyone who resembled Richard Curtis Van Loan, now deceased and his body washed out to sea.

He drifted around, keeping his eyes open, and suddenly headed for a phone booth. Igorsky was coming in and the inquisitive eyes back of those thick lenses were also worried-looking. If he knew Yvette or Nagel, he gave no indication of it. Igorsky passed the gambling tables and moved to a door which led to Bruger's private office.

Igorsky didn't come back. In a short while the Phantom was also aware that Yvette and Nagel also had vanished. But after a time they were back at the tables and he had no idea where they had been.

By degrees the Phantom made his way to the door through which Igorsky had gone. He passed through it, reached Bruger's office and stood outside the door for a moment or two. He heard no sound and when he knocked, there was no answer.

The Phantom tried the knob, found the door unlocked and the office dark. He stepped inside, left the door ajar and fumbled around for the light switch. When he snapped it on, he saw nothing out of the way until he circled the desk. Then he quickly knelt and turned Bruger over. There was a knife wound directly beneath the heart, and Bruger was dead.

The Phantom straightened quickly, but before he could reach the door, it slammed shut and a key was turned on the outside. He ran to the door, shook it hard. He was locked in! He also saw that there were no windows in the room. The place was ventilated through some air-conditioning system.

CHAPTER XV

DOUBLED IN DEATH



OR a moment the Phantom didn't grasp the purpose of this play. Then he spotted the murder knife under the desk, and he knew what it was. The real killers were going to let him take the blame for this kill! Of course they must have realized the frame-up would be unsuccessful in the long run, but it might serve to get rid of the Phantom for a short time, at least.

Bruger must have overplayed his hand in bargaining with both sides, but if he really knew something about the identity of Maget, why had Zarnow's men killed him? They were masters in the art of spiriting a man away and making him

talk. The only reason why they would have murdered him was because they either knew who Maget was and didn't need Bruger's information, or they were on the verge of finding Maget and wanted Bruger out of the way before he could spoil their plans.

Igorsky might have done the actual killing. Or Nagel, or even Yvette. The one thing the Phantom was certain of was that he didn't intend to carry the brunt of the blame. He picked up the telephone and first called the American consul's office. After that, he put in a call to the Nassau Police.

Before long, the Phantom was explaining to a Lieutenant Martinez the facts which had led up to this killing. Martinez was a dapper, likeable little man with smooth manners.

He said, in perfect English, "So you are the Phantom who is the so famous American detective. Ah, but one must make sure of that. Is there any way you can prove it?"

"I could, if I had my special badge along, but it happens to be concealed in my hotel room. However, I've called the the American consulate, and they are sending someone over."

"Good," Martinez approved. "We shall wait. With the death of Bruger there is not much of a loss, but murder is murder, and we cannot soften that charge because the victim is an unsavory character."

It was some time—more than two hours—before the Phantom was cleared, and then he explained in detail to Martinez. "I came here to meet a mysterious person called Maget. I was to be a contact man."

"As the Phantom?" Martinez asked in surprise. "But who knows who you are, my friend?"

"It will come out anyway," the Phantom said. "I'm checked in as Richard Curtis Van Loan and I really am Van Loan. Also, Van Loan is supposed to be dead."

"Ah—so," Martinez said. "It is fortunate that you have proved your identity and that the State Department in Wash-

ington has vouched for you."

"Oh?" the Phantom queried. "Why is that?"

"Because Richard Curtis Van Loan is at this moment in his hotel room recovering from a jaw operation."

"Are you sure of this, Lieutenant?"

"He was there at seven o'clock because I saw him. Or what little you could see with all those bandages. I wanted to interview him about the attack which caused his injuries. They would not permit me to do so."

"That's it!" the Phantom cried. "That's why they tried to drug me, carry me out to sea and drown me. They had a double to take the place of Richard Curtis Van Loan, someone who would fool Maget. Lieutenant, am I free to leave?"

"Of course. If I can be of any assistance—"

"Perhaps you can be, later, but right now this is a one-man job. Thanks very much. I'll keep in touch."

The Phantom streaked out of the building, grabbed a carriage and had himself driven as rapidly as possible to town. He was seething with excitement now. The scheme had taken form. He knew what Zarnow was up to and only hoped he was in time to balk the spy. No wonder they had murdered Bruger. He wasn't of the slightest use any more, and certainly they wouldn't have paid him for information they were about to get for themselves.

When The Phantom entered his hotel he almost bumped into Ann Lansing and Bill Riley, her escort. They were chatting excitedly and looked much pleased about something. Both passed the Phantom on their way out without the slightest sign of recognition.

THEY were hardly out of the place when Dr. Grenfell came rushing in and bribed the elevator operator to take him directly up. Apparently he also bribed the boy to wait at the floor where Van Loan's suite was located, for the car didn't come down in answer to the Phantom's ring or those of several other

guests. None of the other elevators were in operation at this late hour, so there was nothing to do but wait, or climb the stairs.

The Phantom was about to do just that when he saw the indicator arrow begin moving. The car came down. The only passenger was Dr. Grenfell, in even more of a rush than before. The Phantom was tempted to intercept the man, but instead went up to the suite which was his own as Van Loan, and pressed the buzzer.

Humbert opened the door and promptly tried to close it again, but the Phantom gave him little chance. He shouldered his way into the place and when Humbert made a pass at him, the Phantom slugged the Cockney, making the single punch suffice to put the man out of the way for a time.

As Humbert crumpled to the floor, the Phantom hurried into the bedroom. A man about the same build as Van Loan, with the same color hair and eyes, was getting out of bed. His face was covered with bandages and he held a gun in one hand.

The Phantom made a flying leap from near the door, acting so fast that the Van Loan double had no chance to get his gun into position. The Phantom flattened the man, wrenched the gun out of his hand, and held him down while he proceeded to remove the bandages.

The double looked like Van Loan only so long as the bandages covered most of his face. The Phantom held him pinned down.

"Talk," he said. "Dr. Grenfell was just here. What did you tell him?"

"I do not know what you mean," the double said in a heavily accented voice. "You have made a mistake."

"I'm Zarnow," the Phantom said. "Does that mean anything to you?"

"Zarnow? I did not know. I am sorry, Excellency. There was no way for me to know."

"Where did Grenfell go?"

"To find this young newspaper woman. This American reporter."

The Phantom raised the gun, slashed down with it and Van Loan's double passed out without a sound. The Phantom stuck the gun into his pocket, raced out to the living room and cleared Humbert's sprawled-out form with a leap. He hurried to the elevator, held his finger on the button until the car came to the floor, then told the operator to drop it, express.

Ann Lansing's hotel was close by and he called her room from a lobby phone. There was no answer and the desk clerk said he was certain she hadn't come in. Perhaps, he suggested, she was at her office. She had been spending a great deal of time there these last couple of days.

On the street, the Phantom broke into a run. He could make it faster on foot for some of the carriages which served as transportation here were slow. His hopes vanished when he saw the office dark. It was in a small, one-story building in which were Frank Havens' local offices, and there were no other tenants.

Somewhat to his surprise the Phantom discovered that the front door was not tightly shut. He opened it and stepped into an office equipped with two desks, two typewriters and several filing cabinets. As noiselessly as possible, he crossed the office to a door which seemed to lead into a back room. It opened into a short hallway and he crept down this. He could hear muffled singing in a low voice, and slightly off key. It was Ann's voice. He felt considerably relieved. She would hardly be singing if she was in any danger.

When he reached the doorway to a larger back room, he saw a long workbench at the far end of it. Set up on this was an apparatus for microfilming, and Ann was busily engaged in taking shots of one page of onion skin paper after another.

ON THE bench, at her elbow, lay a big automatic, but the Phantom saw this with only a passing glance. What interested him was the shadowy form of a man

who was creeping across the room directly behind Ann. He held a knife in his hand and raised it as he neared her.

The Phantom's gun came out of holster quickly. The killer was almost close enough to strike when, as he came within range of the fluorescent lights above the table, they threw his shadow on the wall. Ann saw the movement and started to reach for the gun as she whirled about. The killer moved in fast, but he wasn't as fast as a bullet.

The Phantom fired one shot, aiming it at the killer's right shoulder. As the bullet tore through flesh and bone, the killer screamed in pain and lurched against the workbench. With his good hand he frantically reached for the onion skin papers.

The Phantom closed in fast, grabbed the man, and spun him away from the bench. Then he aimed his gun.

"Stay just as you are, Dr. Grenfell," he said in a cold voice. "I don't know why I didn't put that slug through your head. You're not only a doublecrossing-spy, but you're the type of man who'd knife a woman in the back."

Grenfell was clawing at his shoulder and making growling sounds in his throat. Suddenly in sheer desperation, he lunged at the Phantom's gun. It went up, crashed down again and Grenfell's skull was under it. The doctor tumbled to the floor.

The Phantom turned around, gun at a slant, with a broad smile on his face. The smile faded. Ann held that automatic of hers pointed straight at the Phantom and she looked as if she would use it any second.

"Hold on, Ann!" he said. "I'm your friend."

"I never saw you before in my life. Stay back—keep away from me or I'll shoot. I swear I will!"

"I'm the Phantom. Frank Havens sent me here."

"Maybe you are. Nobody knows who the Phantom is. But also maybe Mr. Havens didn't send you at all."

"You're going to know who the Phantom is, Ann."

"I'll say I am—if you are the Phantom. Because I've got a gun to back me up."

"You *were* able to read that note, the phony one from Maget, that night on the terrace. I suppose you were standing exactly right to get some of the light from inside Westcott's place."

"How do you know that?" she demanded.

"I was there, Ann. I was with you."

"Now I know you're lying. The only person with me was Richard Curtis Van Loan and, believe me— Wait a minute! It could be, at that. Tell me something. Where were you going early last evening? Around seven o'clock?"

"On a date with you which I broke because Yvette came along."

"Uh-huh. And did you see me later that night?"

"I did. You came into Westcott's place with Bill Riley and you quite properly made me think a blizzard had come into the room with you."

"And so you're both Van Loan and the Phantom?"

"Yes, double identities are trifles in this business, Ann."

"What do you mean by that?"

"You have two identities. You're Ann Lansing and—Maget."

The gun wavered slightly. "So—you've guessed that too."

"I guessed it pretty well that night we were on the terrace and the note was thrown at me. Two things gave you away. One of your own doing, the other was Zarnow's fault."

ANN answered him coldly.

"Perhaps you'd explain that."

"Why not? I believed Maget was a man. There was no particular reason why I should have, but I assumed it. Then Zarnow had that phony message sent because he wanted to lure me into a trap. Zarnow knew Maget was a woman, believed I also knew it and therefore enclosed a woman's perfumed handkerchief."

"And where did I slip?"

"That was simple. You held the note

in your hand and you were able to read enough of it to know what it said even though the terrace was dark. You knew it was a fake, and had someone warn me not to keep the appointment indicated on the note. Now how would you be so sure it was a fake unless you were Maget?"

"I give up." Ann lowered the gun. "I recognize your voice now, though I didn't at first. In fact, it didn't sound like Dick Van Loan's at all."

"It wasn't. I purposely changed it. Ann, you do trust me?"

"Yes, without question."

"Those documents you were microfilming—are they the ones?"

"A man named Danowski gave up his life so I could get possession of them. They're dynamite."

"Can you tell me the whole story?"

"Yes, I want to. I've wanted to ever since I met you, Van, but I wasn't sure you really were Van Loan, and I couldn't afford to take the slightest risk until I was sure."

"I don't blame you, but now that you are sure—"

But before he could finish, or she could answer, there came an interruption which silenced them.

CHAPTER XVI

ANN EXPLAINS



RENFELL moved and groaned. The Phantom gave an impatient shrug.

"We'll have to postpone this," he said to Ann reluctantly. "The less Grenfell knows, the better. But what can we do with him? Unless—Ann, your friend Bill Riley. Can he be trusted?"

"He has proved that a dozen times, Phantom." He noticed her quick switch in names.

"Can you reach him?"

"I'll try." She hurried to the front office and returned after a few moments. "Bill is on his way over. He'll be here in three or four minutes."

"Good. We're going to turn Grenfell over to Bill for safe-keeping."

"Bill will be delighted."

The Phantom said, "Might as well get Grenfell ready. Have you any adhesive?"

Ann had a good-sized roll of it. The Phantom first attended to Grenfell's wounded sholder, then taped his good hand down and gagged him with more tape. Grenfell was still not quite conscious.

Bill Riley arrived as the job was finished, and wrung the Phantom's hand after Ann explained his identity. "The best break we've ever had!" he exulted. "Now what about Grenfell?"

"I want you to take him somewhere and hold him so that nobody finds out what's happened to him. Grenfell knows much the others don't know."

"Wait a minute," Riley exclaimed. "Who was the bloke in your bed, Van Loan?"

"One of the Red gang. You must have told him plenty."

Ann said, "We were so sure it was you, Van. Yes, I told him I was Maget and that I had the papers. But I didn't mention microfilming them."

"So he promptly sent for Grenfell who must have figured it would be a bright feather—red, of course—in his hat if he got to you first and turned the papers over to Zarnow. Naturally Humbert, the so-called male nurse and the man who acted as my double also know you are Maget, but that's exactly how I want it. Zarnow will be told Grenfell went after the papers and when he doesn't show up, Zarnow is going to have a pretty good idea why."

"I'll take care of Grenfell," Riley promised. "It happens I have unlimited use of a sloop anchored not far away. I'll get him aboard and we'll go for a sail." He bent down and picked up Grenfell easily. "This is so simple I don't feel as if I'm doing my part."

"You'll be relieving us of a great headache, Riley."

"Okay." He grinned amiably. "Take care of my girl, Phantom."

"Good care," the Phantom said. "I like her, too."

When Riley had gone off in a carriage, lugging Grenfell as though he were a drunk who had passed out, Ann closed and locked the office door. She and the Phantom returned to the back room. They sat down and Ann lit a cigarette.

"Danowski was my uncle," she said then. "My mother's brother. He broke her heart when he joined the Reds. I wish she could have lived to know what eventually happened. Danowski discovered he was wrong, accumulated these documents and got in touch with me through an Underground in Hungary and Austria that I won't even describe to you."

"How in the world did you get those papers?" the Phantom asked.

"I was in Hungary, too, when it all happened. When I discovered what my uncle was about to do and how much he needed my help, I first of all let Mr. Havens know about those documents. Of course, I kept my identity a secret."

The Phantom chuckled softly. "You gave yourself away there too, after a fashion. I couldn't understand why Maget did not go to the State Department instead of dealing with Frank Havens."

Ann said, "Good heavens, Phantom, after all I'm a reporter. I'm sick of this kind of work here in Nassau. I thought that with a story like this I could go places—after I was able to reveal my identity, of course. And then, so much depended upon secrecy until I was ready that I didn't dare let too many people know."

"Sound reasoning," the Phantom said. "Now tell me about Steve Huston."

ANN told him the complete story. "Mr. Havens sent Steve to Austria where I met him. He doesn't know yet that I also work for Havens. With his help and that of the Underground, we arranged for Danowski to make an official visit to a prison just the other side of the Iron Curtain."

"And your uncle was supposed to get

through the Curtain?"

"Yes. I found a way to slip over the river. I even got hold of a small car. Danowski was to be driven past a hotel at a certain time and if he gave me a signal, I would know he felt sure he could make it across the bridge alone. He did give me the signal, but I followed him anyway and a good thing I did."

"Danowski was killed, wasn't he?"

"Yes," she said. "I don't exactly know what happened, but the car went off the road after the driver warned security guards who opened fire. Perhaps the driver was hit. At any rate, Danowski managed to get out of the car, but he was injured himself. I got there to try and help him, but I was too late. The soldiers were already close by. So Danowski threw the briefcases to me. I swam the river and, thanks to Steve Huston, I made it."

"Steve actually helped you?"

"Yes. He was in a boat, waiting in case Danowski couldn't make it in the car. When I began swimming, Steve deliberately drew the attention of the guards so that I wasn't even noticed."

"Do you know the circumstances under which he was caught?"

"Very little of them, Phantom. Zarnow was in charge and I suppose he kidnaped Steve and took him to his own side of the Curtain. Of course, Steve was forced to talk—they have means that no man can defy. That's why I took the precautions I did. I sent Steve a note, had someone plant it in his pocket, in fact. I told him to meet Maget in Nassau in a week's time."

"Why?" the Phantom asked.

"Because I didn't know how long it would take for the papers to reach Nassau. I flew out that same night, but I didn't dare take the papers along. Those were brought to Riley, in Paris, just in time so he could stow them into his cabin and fly them here."

"You're clever about these things," the Phantom said.

"We're fighting clever people, Phantom."

"And, thanks to you, I was prepared for trouble that night they lured me to Nagel's island."

She smiled. "I did read that note, or part of it. Someone turned on a light in one of the private rooms of Westcott's place. Perhaps you didn't even notice it because it was only for a moment."

"And being Maget, you knew it was a fake. So you had someone warn me."

"I've tried to figure out why they wanted to kill you," Ann said. "Kill Richard Curtis Van Loan, I mean."

"That was easy. They suspected I had been sent by Havens. I even took pains to give such an impression. They decided to get me out of the way. When that didn't work, they created another and better plan. Yvette helped them."

"I thought she was a doublecrossing female," Ann said tartly.

"She may even be Zarnow," the Phantom said. "Unless you know who Zarnow is."

"No, she can't be, Phantom. Zarnow is a man. That much I'm sure of, but who he is—how I wish I knew!"

"Do you think they killed Steve?"

"No. Because he might be useful to them. They like the idea of hostages, especially when they are after something like these papers. Sometimes they find they can trade their hostages for what they want."

"Exactly how I had them figured out. Have you any suspicions about who Zarnow is?"

She wagged her head from side to side and crushed out the cigarette. "Sometimes I think it's Nagel, sometimes Bruger. I even suspect Westcott."

"It's not Bruger, Ann. He was murdered a short time ago."

"Bruger? Dead?"

"He knew too much and he was trying to cash in on his knowledge. When Zarnow discovered he didn't need Bruger, he had him killed so the gambler couldn't come to me. Bruger asked for it."

"They're inhuman!" Ann had acid in her voice. "Life doesn't mean a thing to them. What are we going to do now?"

"Finish microfilming the papers. That comes first, and I'll stand by while you do it."

SHE AROSE quickly. "I'm on the last fifty pages. I can talk while I work." She went to the apparatus and turned on the light which illuminated each page brilliantly. "They tricked me neatly too, Phantom. I should have trusted you, Richard Curtis Van Loan, but I couldn't take the chance. However, as soon as I was positive you really were Van Loan, I went to see you again. That is, I thought I was seeing you."

"They had it all arranged so that Maget would have to come forward," the Phantom said. "So far as they know, Van Loan is dead and we'll let it ride that way for a time. Now we've got them where they had us. They'll have to come forward."

"Be careful," Ann warned. "Remember what they are."

"I'm not apt to forget, Ann."

"Who do you think Zarnow is?" she asked.

"He could be anyone. Nagel shows up the plainest, and Yvette is hanging around him. But Westcott could be the man—he arrived in Nassau just before you did. I don't know whether or not Nagel was here."

"Nagel flew in from New York on the plane before me. He could have been abroad, too, for he travels all over the world."

"Then there's a character named Igor-sky I've met. He admits being a Red. He could be Zarnow. Or even your good friend Bill Riley."

She turned around swiftly. "Phantom, you don't think that! Why, Bill brought the papers over and got them to me."

"Perhaps he figured locating Maget was as important as getting the papers back, especially when that could be easily done so long as he knew you had them."

"I refuse to believe it!" she said. "Dog-gone it, Phantom, I'm in love with that big lug!"

"I thought you were, Ann. We'll hope he's on the level. Now suppose you con-

centrate on finishing this job. I've got work to do also."

By dawn the job was completed. The microfilms carefully packaged and ready to be airmailed to Frank Havens. The Phantom took charge of the original papers, first making certain none of them bore any marks showing they had been held flat while being photographed. Next, he and Ann dismantled the microfilm apparatus and concealed it about the premises where any ordinary search would never find enough to show that such an apparatus had been in use.

"It looks like we've won," Ann said with great satisfaction.

"Not quite," the Phantom said. "I still want to get Steve Huston out of their hands."

"Do you think they might have brought him here, Phantom?"

"It's possible, if they believed there was any chance they might not get their hands on the papers."

She nodded. "I agree with that. They are great dickerers, always when they're holding the upper hand, of course, and here is something else I know. They have means of reaching all parts of the world quickly, even with prisoners. A flying boat, for instance, could have reached Nassau long ago and if Steve was on it, he could have been transferred to a ship of some kind and the flying boat be gone before daylight."

"They've got to come to us now," the Phantom repeated. "Zarnow knows you are Maget. Humbert and my double will have passed on that information long ago. But Zarnow believes Grenfell is after the papers—and you. When Grenfell doesn't show up, Zarnow will be at a loss."

"What if he comes for me?"

"We're getting you out of here as fast as possible."

"Like fun you are! I won't go."

The Phantom grinned. "If you want to keep your job with Frank Havens, you will."

"Doggone it," she objected, "will you never stop giving me orders?"

"Frankly," he said, "I think this is the

first direct order I've given you, and I mean it."

She managed a smile. "I'm sorry, Phantom. You're right. Whatever you say, goes. I want to stay alive until I hear those names and facts being broadcast to Europe and Japan. There were a lot of Japanese names on the list, you know."

"There should have been, with something near half a million war prisoners who have never been accounted for. Come on—we'll slip out of here. You take these films to the airport. I'll be there, and we'll both stay with them until they are aboard the plane and we see it take off. Then we both need rest. Tomorrow may be a big day."

CHAPTER XVII

RED TECHNIQUE



CARRYING the small package containing the film, Ann walked alone to a carriage line where she hired a driver to take her to the airport. The Phantom stayed behind her, never letting her out of his sight.

They had an edge on Zarnow here, for the master spy must believe that Grenfell was on the trail of the documents and would probably get them. But soon, when Grenfell didn't show up, Zarnow would order every man at his command into action and there likely would be many of them. The danger wasn't past yet.

The Phantom had been tempted to insist that Ann accompany the films to New York, but she argued vehemently against that. However, he made up his mind that she was leaving the next day.

At the airport Ann's friendship with stewardesses and pilots paid off. She and the Phantom watched the plane carrying the films take off into the dawn and the Phantom was certain that nobody aboard that plane was an agent of Zarnow's. They both heaved great sighs of relief as the plane vanished in the sky. Then they returned to the city.

"I'm bushed," Ann said. "If I don't get some sleep, I'll probably pass out. And you must feel the same way."

"You get your sleep," the Phantom said. "I'm all right, and I'll be parked right outside of your room until you wake up. Don't argue. I insist on it."

"I'm too tired to argue any more," she said. "Have it your own way. The feeling that my work is done has brought on a terrific let-down."

"Just keep enough strength to walk a few blocks," the Phantom said. "We'll dismiss the carriage well out of the center of town so that Zarnow can't find out we've been to the airport. He'd wonder about that, and I don't want him to believe we've filmed these documents."

Ann patted the two briefcases on the floor of the carriage. "What about these?" she asked.

He frowned. "I hadn't given them much thought. We'll have to go to the hotel where Dick Van Loan is checked in. I'll slip up to the suite and hide them. After all, Zarnow and those connected with him are certain Van Loan is dead so they'd hardly search his quarters for these briefcases. Besides, I have an excellent place to hide them there."

"Good idea," Ann said. "If we're not spotted walking to the hotel, I'll wait in the lobby for you."

"I don't like the idea," the Phantom said, "but it seems there's not much else we can do. I doubt they'd try anything in such a public place anyway. But we'll have to take the chance."

When they reached the outskirts of town, the Phantom dismissed the carriage and, with a briefcase under each arm, he and Ann trudged back to the center of the city. The Phantom found the streets almost completely empty at this hour and was certain they had not been followed.

Near the hotel, he said, "Things look good, but we'll reduce any chance of danger to a minimum. I'm going into the hotel by the service entrance. You walk into the lobby, go straight to the elevator and ride to the tenth floor. As you know, I'm in Ten-sixty, in case you need me. I

wish we could both just walk in, but that's too risky."

"I think you're too worried," Ann said. "After all, Zarnow can't have begun to guess yet that Grenfell isn't coming back, and that we've taken care of those lists they want so badly."

"If I were sure of that, I wouldn't worry at all, but I'm not. Still, we have to take certain chances. Wait until you see me go into that door down the side street. Then meet me on the tenth floor."

She nodded and the Phantom hurried away, hating to leave her, and far more worried than he wanted her to believe. The Phantom had dealt with crooks for too many years to trust anything to luck, but he had to get rid of those briefcases without Zarnow's men getting a hint of where they were.

HE HAD to wait for the service elevator to come in answer to his ring. It was self-operated and he stepped in, pressed the tenth floor button and felt ill-at-ease while the car climbed. He held a gun in one hand when he opened the elevator door, but the tenth floor was quiet and deserted. He hurried to his suite and listened outside the door for a moment. Then he went to work on the lock with a small instrument which had originally been in his makeup kit. The Phantom was as proficient in opening ordinary locks as any second-story man and this one gave him no trouble.

He entered the suite, closed the door and went through the place. It appeared that no one had been in it since Humbert and the double for Van Loan had left it in a mad rush when they recovered consciousness. The Phantom went to the clothes closet, hauled out one of the golf bags and removed the clubs. The briefcases wouldn't fit into the compartment built into the bottom of the case so he had to be content with stuffing them down as far as they would go and inserting as many of the clubs back into position as possible. It was makeshift, but it would probably work.

He put the bags back, hurried out of the

suite and looked for Ann. She wasn't on the floor. He waited another moment or two while his worries increased, then ran down the fire stairway to the floor below and rang for the elevator.

It came up promptly and the operator denied taking Ann up to the tenth floor. He hadn't even seen her, in fact. The Phantom got off in the lobby, walked through it and aroused a sleepy desk clerk.

"A girl was to meet me here," the Phantom explained. "She has brown hair, is about five-feet-five and she wore a white blouse and a pale blue skirt."

The clerk shrugged. He didn't know a thing. The Phantom went to the phone booths and called her hotel. There was no answer. He tried the office and Ann wasn't there. The Phantom mopped perspiration off his face and went out to the street. He had made a mistake in not compelling Ann to leave the island. A most serious mistake if she was in Zarnow's hands because the man wouldn't be inclined toward mercy now. Something had to be done—and quickly.

Two people could play at the same game with identical ruthlessness, he decided. Red technique could only be battled with its own kind. The Phantom headed straight for Igorsky's apartment house. If he was to strike, he would have to do it before they could get set.

Igorsky came to the door. He was fully dressed, but more red-eyed than ever, as if he were badly in need of sleep. He shuddered and stepped back under the threat of the Phantom's automatic.

"Put on your hat," the Phantom said. "We're going somewhere."

"But—but this is kidnaping! You cannot do this!"

"I'm doing it. Get started—and be sure you understand this. I know you have plenty of men around this town. Should any of them make the slightest attempt to rescue you, I'll kill you first. Move!"

He walked Igorsky to Ann's office, determined to make use of it for his purposes, for if Ann was in Zarnow's hands, he would have withdrawn any of the men

sent to watch her office. Again the Phantom got in by picking the lock. He brought Igorsky to the back room and took the automatic from the pocket where he had been holding it during the walk.

"Ann Lansing went to see Van Loan a little while ago. She didn't know he was dead. She disappeared. Where is she?"

"I have been in my apartment all evening."

"Stop lying. Since when do you stay in your apartment fully dressed at dawn? Where is she?"

"I do not know," Igorsky groaned. "I tell you, I have no idea."

"You're an important member of this clique, are you not?"

Igorsky seemed to be proud of his answer. "That is true. Very important, but I do not know everything that goes on."

The Phantom took a long shot. "Yvette and Zarnow are close. She is your superior. If she were to give you orders, you'd take them."

IGORSKY wouldn't answer that one but his startled look indicated his surprise that the Phantom should know these things.

The Phantom said, "One thing about you Reds is that none of you can ever be trusted. That holds good under any and all circumstances, so what I have to do now is necessary."

Igorsky gave a bleat of alarm and tried to get away, but the Phantom's right hook was quick and perfectly aimed. Igorsky went down as if he had been struck with a sledge. The Phantom located strong rope and a bit of rag for a gag. He trussed Igorsky up expertly, gagged him, and put him into a supply closet. Then he quickly left the place and headed back to his hotel.

He thought now that he knew how Ann had been snatched so quickly and efficiently. Yvette also lived there and Zarnow's men could have operated from her rooms. They had been planted there on the theory that Ann might go to see Van Loan, whom she believed was recovering from an operation. That point hadn't en-

tered the Phantom's mind until it was too late, and now he blamed himself for her capture. But he intended to bring the situation to some sort of a stalemate and quickly.

He went in by the service entrance again, got off the elevator at Yvette's floor and pressed the buzzer to her suite. Almost at once she wanted to know who it was. The Phantom, during his long career, had become proficient at imitating the voices of others and when he told Yvette it was Dr. Grenfell, the voice that spoke was remarkably like the doctor's. Yvette opened the door quickly.

"Idiot!" she said before it was all the way open. "What happened—"

The Phantom's gun was at a level. He took no chances with any of these people, male or female.

He said, "Good morning, Yvette. I'm glad to find you all dressed. It saves a lot of embarrassment for both of us. You're coming with me."

"But—but I do not know who you are!"

"I'm the Phantom, and if you believe that being a woman will make me handle you gently, think again. I've met women like you before. Come along."

"Go with you?" she asked, and there was genuine fear in her eyes.

"You hear well. Shall we leave now?"

He grasped her arm tightly, refused to let her take her handbag along, and led her to the service elevator.

Ten minutes later he escorted her into Ann's office and to the room behind it. There he told her to sit down while he went to the supply closet and dragged Igorsky out.

The bearded Red was conscious, and badly frightened. The Phantom removed the man's gag, but left the ropes on. He turned a straight-backed chair around, straddled it and kept his gun ready.

"So here we are," he said. "Zarnow has Ann Lansing and I've got you two. Two for one. Do you think Zarnow will bargain with me?"

Yvette had recovered her wits and she gave a contemptuous laugh. "What will you do with us if Zarnow refuses to bar-

gain? Kill us? I do not think so. You Americans are much too soft for that."

"I wonder," the Phantom said.

"You do not kill women," Yvette went on. "Perhaps you could save this Ann Lansing if you have something more important than Igorsky and me to trade."

"Meaning Danowski's papers? I won't need them, Yvette."

"So then we stay here. What happens to Ann in the meantime? She is Maget, a dangerous enemy of ours. Zarnow will not let her live long."

"I know. That's why I wasted no time either. There's a telephone on that workbench. I suggest you phone Zarnow or whoever has Ann, and tell that person you and Igorsky will pay if anything happens to her."

"Nonsense!" Yvette said. She glanced at Igorsky. "Do not let this man frighten you. He will do nothing to us. Nothing, I tell you."

"I am silent," Igorsky said. "What is there to fear?"

The Phantom spoke casually. "It's true, I wouldn't dirty my conscience with killing you two. It isn't necessary, because I can have it done for me. All legal and pretty."

"What do you mean?" Yvette demanded.

"Just this. You two murdered Bruger last night."

YVETTE bit the lipstick on her lower lip. "That is a lie!" she exclaimed.

"You forget, I was there," the Phantom said. "One of you even went so far as to lock me in the room with Bruger's body, hoping I'd get into trouble with the police. But you didn't have time to do anything with the wires of his private telephone. Nor did it occur to you that I'm somewhat of a law officer myself, without authority perhaps, but policemen all over the free world will cooperate with me. A Lieutenant Martinez is doing that now and he has commissioned me to find the murderers of Herr Bruger."

"You cannot prove anything," Yvette said defiantly.

"But I was there. You keep forgetting that. I can prove your motive, I can place you at the scene of the crime. I can tear down your reputation so that a jury will believe any evidence against you and I can deliver enough so that you will be convicted."

Yvette sneered. Igorsky was worried-looking. The Phantom laid it on thicker.

"This is part of the British Empire and they have no reason to admire your kind of people. Also, they have a habit of executing murderers by the noose and, as you probably know, they never let sympathy for a woman interfere with their ideas of justice."

"Yvette," Igorsky said, "it is possible—"

"You have a choice and it will have to be made fast. Either Ann goes free and unharmed or a hangman will likely stretch your necks. In any event you will have proved yourself inefficient, and inefficiency in your part of the world is usually handled in a definite manner. Dead people cannot make any more mistakes."

Yvette was chewing her lip again. She said, "I can promise nothing."

"But you will try. There's the phone. Delay strengthens the chance of Ann being harmed and if she is, you two are finished. I'd advise you to get busy."

Yvette went to the phone. "If we arrange this, you will let us go? Is that your promise?"

"I'll be happy to get rid of you."

CHAPTER XVIII

THE TRIPLE CROSS



IGORSKY nodded frantically for Yvette to go ahead. The call she made the Phantom recognized. Yvette was getting in touch with someone on Nagel's island.

Whoever it was she called seemed to have answered the phone hurriedly for she immediately began telling her story. She did a lot of listening, too, finally hung up and turned around to face

the Phantom.

"It is done," she said. "Ann Lansing has not been harmed and she will not be. Tonight, at eight o'clock, she will be brought to a table at Westcott's restaurant. You will bring Igorsky and me there and an exchange will be made. Zarnow hopes that will be a satisfactory arrangement."

"You don't know how satisfactory," the Phantom said. "All along I've wanted to know if Zarnow was in this part of the world. Thanks for telling me he is. And now I'm going to tie you up, too, Yvette. I need some rest myself and don't intend for you and Igorsky to keep me from getting it."

She didn't protest when he trussed her to a chair. He examined Igorsky's ropes again, then went out to the front office. The city was beginning to wake up and stir now, but nobody would come to this office. Ann was the only employee.

The Phantom picked up a telephone and made a call. It was lengthy, and he did a lot of talking. But when he finished, he seemed highly satisfied. Then he returned to the back room, sat down and dozed lightly. . . .

At five minutes of eight that evening, the Phantom herded Yvette and Igorsky into Westcott's dining room. The place was well filled, but Westcott himself came forward when he recognized Yvette.

"Your table is ready, Miss Tafler," he said, bowing. "It is a good thing your friends reserved it because we seem to be exceptionally busy this evening. Just come this way, please."

Westcott merely glanced at the Phantom, showing no signs of recognition. He didn't seem to know Igorsky, either. Yvette followed Westcott, with Igorsky behind her. The Phantom brought up at the rear, one hand in his coat pocket, eyes scanning the occupants of the tables he passed. Westcott led them to a table near the rear of the place and held a chair for Yvette.

When she sat down, she fingered her napkin nervously. Igorsky was pale and worried. The Phantom appeared to be

calm and self-possessed. Precisely at eight, Ann Lansing entered, accompanied by two men. She saw the Phantom and her eyes flashed a warning. Evidently things were not quite as serene as they appeared on the surface.

When Ann and her escort were seated, the Phantom leaned toward Yvette. "Go over to their table," he said. "Sit down and send Ann here. Igorsky stabs with me. Any tricks and he gets the first bullet. You get the second one. If either of you escape that, there's always the hangman's noose. You're excused, Yvette."

He arose courteously and helped her up. She walked quickly to the table and talked to the men there for a moment. Then, instead of sending Ann back, she herself returned.

"I am afraid you have made a serious error, Phantom," she said. "Look around you. This table was especially reserved, and so were all the tables surrounding it. At this moment, you are ringed in by our men."

"I've been aware of that for some time," the Phantom said. "What's the rest of the message?"

"You will allow Igorsky to leave first. Then I will leave. After that Ann will be taken away. Otherwise, she dies, and so do you."

"Interesting," the Phantom said. He raised his hand slightly and a dapper man, seated across the room, arose and came over. He bowed for Yvette's benefit.

"Is everything suitable?" he asked the Phantom.

"Oh, quite," the Phantom said. "I'm sorry, Yvette. This is Lieutenant Martinez of the Nassau Police. There's a regular convention of police here tonight. Isn't there, Lieutenant?"

"Indeed." Martinez smiled suavely. "Except for these few tables near you, Phantom, all the others in the restaurant are occupied by men from the Department."

"The odd thing is that none of your men look like policemen, Lieutenant."

"They are from our training school, Phantom. But they are officers in every

sense of the word, and they are armed."

"Then this would be a most unhealthy place for anybody to start trouble."

Martinez smiled again. "Indeed. These young men are most eager for any kind of action— It has been nice to see you again, Phantom. I hope that soon you will be able to tell us who murdered Bruger."

MARTINEZ bowed over Yvette's hand, walked away, and the Phantom slowly rotated his water glass. He said, "Did you think I was that dumb, Yvette? Did you believe for one moment that I trusted you, or Zarnow, or anyone else connected with your gang? Go back and explain that I may be killed, Ann may be killed, but you and Igorsky will most certainly be dead. When the smoke drifts away, every member of your outfit will be under arrest. Remember what I told you—England has a habit of executing murderers. By hanging. It's an unpleasant way to die."

Yvette arose without a word, went back to the table where Ann sat, and talked for a moment or two. Then Ann arose and quietly walked over to where the Phantom waited. He took her arm, bent over Igorsky, and delivered one final warning.

"You'll scramble over to where Yvette is, the moment my back is turned. Tell her, and the others, that anybody who tries to leave for ten minutes after I do will find himself in handcuffs. I'll see you again, Igorsky—if Zarnow allows you to go on living. Come on, Ann. I'm taking you back to your hotel."

They walked out as casually as any couple who had just enjoyed a pleasant meal. But once outside of the place, they moved rapidly. A police car was waiting for them around the corner, and the driver knew exactly where to go. Behind them rode four motorcycle men and another car loaded with armed officers.

"My," Ann said, "you did this up brown!"

"Didn't I though?" The Phantom laughed. "All you need is an understand-

ing of these rats to fight them properly. How did they get you?"

"It was so simple, Phantom. They figured I might go to Van Loan's hotel since I was apparently not aware of the fact that Van Loan is supposed to be dead. They just quietly eased me out of the place and into a carriage."

"Where did they take you?"

"I haven't the faintest idea. They drove around and around the center of town after blindfolding me. I certainly wasn't far away, but they held me prisoner in a pitch-dark room."

"Did you meet Zarnow?"

"He's here. At least, he said he was Zarnow."

"The voice—did you recognize it?"

"He spoke in a low monotone, and never talked to me except in that pitch-dark room."

"Then that means you would have recognized him and his voice," the Phantom said. "That narrows things down nicely, so that I think I know in what direction to head now."

"I wasn't harmed," Ann said, "though they threatened to give me drugs to loosen my tongue. They seemed as worried about what's happened to Dr. Grenfell as they are to the whereabouts of Danowski's papers, though of course they wanted them, too."

"You're safe now, Ann, and that makes me almost as happy as if I'd got Steve away from them."

Ann gripped his forearm tightly. "I think they have Steve somewhere close by. Zarnow implied as much and just before those men at the table let me go, they wanted me to tell you that you hadn't won all the stakes."

"It gets better and better," the Phantom declared. "Now, once you are safely out of harm's way, I'm going to give them a shock."

"Could I ask what plans you have for me, Phantom?"

"Easily answered. A chartered plane is waiting. Lieutenant Martinez arranged it. You'll be flown straight to New York where you'll be met by F.B.I. men and

taken directly to Frank Havens. There you will turn Danowski's microfilmed papers over to them and within a few hours the first of those names will be broadcast."

"I don't want to leave here, Phantom!" she pleaded.

"I know, but you have nothing to say in the matter. Your job has to go on. You're going to write this story for all of Frank Havens' newspapers. You're going to tell the whole world what Danowski did in repayment for his original mistake. I'd have the whole United States Government down on me if anything happened to you."

"I still don't want to go," she protested.

THEY were sweeping onto the airfield now, rolling toward a plane with its props spinning and the crew standing by while a detail of police kept guard.

"There's Bill Riley," the Phantom said. "He'd break my neck too. Oh, no—I'm in too much danger from all sources to risk your safety. Now be good and stop arguing."

The car rolled up to the plane. Ann impulsively kissed him full on the lips.

"Just promise me I'll see you again. Doggone it, why do you have to have a girl you're in love with, and I have to have Bill Riley—the big lug. Take good care of him, Phantom."

"See you in New York," he said.

He sat there until the plane was airborne. Only then did he relax enough to wipe the perspiration off his face. It was a hot night, but the heat alone wasn't responsible for the shirt which clung to his body by sweat. He had never felt so relieved in his life.

Now there was one final act to this play of double dealing and intrigue. He was ready to begin it. . . .

Two hours later, Yvette was pacing the living room of her suite and adding one cigarette butt after another to the already overflowing ash tray. Her phone rang and with a gesture of impatience she let it ring. After the fourth steady ring, she answered it, annoyance in her voice.

On the other end, she heard someone

speak from the dead. "Yvette? How have you been?"

"Van Loan!" she gasped.

"Are you that surprised?" Van asked mildly. "Or are you sore because we messed up that date at Bruger's place?"

"Van," she said quickly, "you have to understand about that. I'm not sure what happened, but—"

"I know. They must have knocked you cold. They scared me plenty. I've sort of stayed under cover since, but I'm not worried any more."

"What do you mean?"

"Don't you know? Why, those papers you promised to give me. I have them. They were delivered to my room just a few moments ago and I'm grateful. You did your part well—Maget."

"Oh," she said. "Oh—that. It was—was nothing. Van, I must see you."

"Sure," he said, "come on up."

"I—I'll be there shortly. I have to dress. In ten minutes. Please wait for me, Van. It's terribly important."

"I'm busy looking over Danowski's list of names," he said. "Some of them are decidedly interesting. There's no hurry, Yvette. Take your time."

Van Loan put the receiver back on its cradle and smiled. He walked over to a small desk, sat down behind it and slipped an automatic out of a shoulder sling. He held it below the desk, out of sight.

The bronze-skinned man in the cheap clothes had vanished and now suave, wealthy Richard Curtis Van Loan would take over from here on. Things were going well enough—better than he had expected. Of course, he still had Zarnow's treachery to contend with, but at least Ann was safe, and those microfilms would soon be in the hands of those who could make the most of them.

All that remained was to get Steve Huston away.

APPOINTMENT WITH TREACHERY



LOWLY fifteen minutes went by, then Van's door buzzer sounded. From his chair behind the desk, he called out an order to enter. The door opened and Igorsky came in hesitantly.

Van said, "Who the devil are you? I expected someone else."

"I must talk to you, Mr. Van Loan. It is vitally important."

"Don't act so nervous," Van said. "Sit down and tell me what it's all about."

Igorsky didn't accept the invitation. He approached the desk slowly. "You are in possession of certain documents, Mr. Van Loan."

"Now who told you that?"

"But do you have them?"

"I might."

"Could I, perhaps, see these papers?"

"Not on your life."

"My life depends upon it. I am only delivering a message, and I cannot fail again. There is a man named Huston. You are interested in saving him, Mr. Van Loan?"

"Yes, I'd go to any extent."

"Even to trading those documents for him?"

"Even that."

"Then, if you show me the papers so I can be sure you have them, we can talk business."

Van opened a desk drawer and took out a handful of the onion skin sheets. "Take a good look," he invited.

Igorsky had only to study a couple of them. His hands were shaking as he put the sheets back on the desk.

"I am satisfied. If it is agreeable to you, Mr. Huston will be exchanged if you come to the island of Harry Nagel, and bring all these papers with you. In two hours—and you must come alone."

Van shook his head. "After what's happened to me, I don't take any more chances. You have to meet my conditions,

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and they're not quite so simple."

"If you will please name them?"

Van said, "How come a dirty little punk like you happens to be mixed up in this? Or—no matter. My terms are these. Steve Huston will be placed aboard one of those bumboats and he will be accompanied by only one man. There is a lighthouse three miles off Nagel's island. The bumboat will proceed to a point directly opposite the lighthouse and one mile off shore."

"Yes," Igorsky said eagerly. "Yes, I understand."

"Wait a minute," Van said. "I'm not finished yet. I'll come to that spot in another bumboat—alone. If these conditions are met, I'll hand over the papers for Steve Huston. If there's a doublecross, I'll at least have an even chance with only one man against me."

"I can promise your terms will be met."

"Mind you, if there are any other craft in the vicinity, I won't show up. Steve Huston is important to me, but these papers are even more important to you. There will be a fair exchange or none at all."

"Of course. Of course."

"And one more thing. Steve Huston had better be sound in health and body. I wouldn't like it if he wasn't."

"I assure you he has been well treated. Nothing has happened to him. Nothing at all."

"All right then. Make the arrangements. Two hours from now. That brings us to half past eleven. Remember, I won't give you people another chance."

Igorsky scurried out of the room as if he were being pursued. Van Loan waited ten minutes before he stuck the gun back into its holster, stuffed the onion skin papers back into the briefcases and, on a hunch, took a second gun and more bullets out of a golf bag.

HE LEFT his suite, took an elevator to the lobby, and left the hotel by the front door. When he had walked half a dozen blocks he started evasive tactics. If he was being followed, the shadow or

shadows were shaken off by the time he reached the pier where Bill Riley's sloop was just putting in. Lieutenant Martinez' men had reached Riley to make this appointment.

Van Loan leaped aboard before the sloop could be tied up. Riley met him with outstretched hand.

"How is Ann?" he asked. "I've been going nuts worrying about her."

"In an hour or two she'll be stepping off a plane at LaGuardia Airport," Van said.

"Swell," Riley said, and suddenly brought a gun from behind him. "Now suppose you tell me how you're mixed up in this, Van Loan?"

Van laughed. "I'm afraid my secret is coming out, Bill. I'm the Phantom Detective. The last time we met was at Ann's office where Grenfell had just tried to kill her and I asked you to take Grenfell away on this sloop. What's more, I'm in a position to prove it now. Look at this. Perhaps you recognize it."

Van Loan opened his closed fist and starlight picked up the high points of the jewels which encrusted a gold badge fashioned in the shape of a domino mask. It was the Phantom's identifying badge, known all over the world.

Riley lowered the gun and relaxed. "I've heard about that badge. Okay, I'm satisfied."

"And how is our friend, Dr. Grenfell?"

"Locked in a cabin below. We've been far from shore. Handling a sloop without a crew is no easy job."

"I'll help you," Van Loan said. "We've got a date to keep."

"You name it, Van Loan."

"We're to make rendezvous with a bumboat a mile off the lighthouse beyond Nagel's island. I'm to be alone in another bumboat so we'll have to get one and make it fast to the stern. Can you manage that?"

"Easy. Wait here. I won't be five minutes."

Riley leaped ashore and disappeared in the darkness. It took him ten minutes instead of five. But when he came back,

he was standing in the stern of a bumboat and poling it close to the sloop. Van ran aft, threw him a line and Riley made it fast before he swarmed aboard the sloop.

"I've cut this a bit close," the Phantom said. "Mainly so they won't have much chance to scheme. They'll be tricky as it is."

Riley maneuvered the sloop out into the harbor and turned it up the channel in the direction of Nagel's island. He was frowning darkly as he guided the wheel.

"Is Nagel behind this?" he asked.

"I'm not sure, Bill."

"I hope he is. Had him as a passenger out of Paris once and a nastier guy never drew breath. Ann thought he might be Zarnow."

"I thought so, too. Maybe we'll find out before long. Has Grenfell been acting up?"

"Plenty, but I busted him on the nose a couple of times and he's sulking down in the cabin. You won't have any trouble with him."

Van Loan chuckled. "He'll be surprised to see me, after arranging my death and being so certain his plans worked. If there was time, I'd face him just for the pleasure of seeing him react. Can you make it in one hour?"

"Half an hour. This craft is speedy and we've got the current with us. Tide, too. What's going to happen when we get there?"

"You stand off half a mile and be ready to run. I'll take the bumboat and meet our friends."

Riley said, "You're actually going alone?"

"That's the agreement."

"You're crazy! One of these bumboats is big enough to conceal half a dozen men. Those babies are loaded with tricks of that kind. They'll blow you to pieces, get the papers, and keep Huston. It won't work!"

VAN shrugged. "We all have to take chances. I'm armed."

"They'll have tommy-guns. I'm telling

you it's no good!"

"Just the same, I'm going. Steve Huston rates any risk I have to take. He's taken enough for me in his day."

"I wish a guy liked me that much," Riley grumbled. "Okay, suppose it happens like I say. What do I do then?"

"Run back to Nassau. Turn Grenfell over to a police lieutenant named Martinez and tell him to send every available man to Nagel's island. That's your job, Bill, if I mess things up."

"It's not things that'll be messed up, Van. It's you. Holy smokes, this is the craziest idea!"

"Look," Van said patiently. "I expect trouble, so I'll be ready to deal with it. Those people are tricky, but complete egoists. They think they're so smart nobody will see through them, while actually they're transparent. If there's shooting, I'll do my share."

They became too busy navigating the craft to talk any more, but every time Van saw Riley's face, it was wrinkled with worry.

The sea was calm, there was no moon, but starlight reflected against the water and they were able to see the bumboat drifting close by the appointed spot when they reached it. At Van's order, Riley heaved to.

Riley said, "Are you still going through with this cockeyed idea?"

"I must."

"But it won't get you anything. They'll kill you and kill Huston, too. What's the sense to both of you losing your lives? You just don't know these people."

"I think I do."

"Want to bet there aren't four or five men in that bumboat, flattened out so you can't see them?"

"I fully expect that there are."

"Then, why— Oh, what's the use? Look, I'm an Irishman who fought all through the war with the British. I was captured by the Germans, escaped, and worked in the European Underground. When the war was over, I started fighting those Communists. I know them like a book. Won't you take the word of an

experienced man?"

"No," Van Loan said.

"There are ways we could trick them. Oh, go ahead and say it. If we pull anything, they'll blast Huston out of existence. But they're going to do that anyway, and you along with him."

"Then you'll have to carry on. Do you have a radio aboard?"

"Yes. That's how the Nassau cops got in touch with me to meet you."

"Then if anything happens, use the radio. Many of these men are on Nagel's island."

"Have it your own way," Riley sighed. "Take the wheel for a minute. I'll get ready to cast off the bumboat. Hold her steady."

Riley went aft. When Van looked for him a few moments later, Riley wasn't in sight. But after a short time he appeared, coming up from below. He walked forward toward Van.

"I'm ready if you are," he said.

"Good. They're waiting, and I can see two men in the boat. One of them must be Steve Huston. Where did I put those two briefcases?"

There was a clatter of running steps aft. Someone scooted across the deck and went overside quickly. Before the Phantom reached the after rail, the bumboat was moving out, rowed frantically by one man. Dr. Grenfell!

RILEY leaned casually against the rail.

"I put one over on you, Phantom. I hope you're not going to be sore."

"Grenfell knows friends of his are waiting in the bumboat," said Van. "He'll go directly to them and they'll kill him."

"Something like that," Riley grunted. "You work in the Underground long enough and you learn how to use people. How to get your enemies killed off by more enemies. It's good for your morale, bad for theirs, and you never have anything on your conscience."

"Riley, if they kill Grenfell and then put a bullet through Steve—"

"They won't. They'll keep on holding Steve. He's already proved to be a valu-

able hostage. Of course, when the cops start closing in—"

"Get this craft under weigh," Van said. "Head back and get up all the speed you can."

"Now you're talking!" Riley grinned.

While the sloop made a neat turn, Van Loan kept his eyes on the two bumboats. This was a ticklish business, with Steve Huston's life at stake, but Riley had so much experience with men like Zarnow that he must know exactly how Zarnow would act. Perhaps there was still a chance. Oddly enough, Riley's scheme had also entered Van's mind, but he hadn't dwelt on it long because it wasn't in his makeup to use a man as bait, even against that man's own killer friends. Riley was different. He would go ahead with it. There was nothing Van could do now but take advantage of the situation.

CHAPTER XX

GANGSTERS ARE GANGSTERS



NOW THE two bumboats were drawing closer. But as the sloop gained speed, it was becoming more difficult to see exactly what went on. Then suddenly the bumboat in which Steve was riding seemed to be swarming with figures.

Streaks of gunfire broke the darkness. There were two or three tommy-guns in action. The night seemed to close in on the murder scene then, but it was broken by a violent explosion. They apparently had thrown grenades into the bumboat in which Grenfell was trying to escape, choosing that way to destroy both the man they believed to be Van Loan in the boat and the dangerous papers he carried.

Van peeled off his coat, tightened his shoulder rig and jammed one automatic hard into its holster. Then he put another gun and ammunition into his back pocket and buttoned it down. He removed his shirt and shoes, tied them, fastened the

shoes around his neck and was ready.

Riley called to him and Van went over to the grim-faced Irishman. Riley said, "I sort of proved my theory, don't you think? You wouldn't have had a chance. And Grenfell isn't much of a loss to our way of life. He was their head man in Nassau."

"You win," Van said. "But from here on, I handle this my own way. Thanks, Riley. You'll find Ann in New York. Just look up Frank Havens and he'll tell you where she is. So long. It's time I took to the water."

"I wish I could go with you," Riley said. "Maybe I'll make it back in time for the fireworks. At any rate—here's hoping."

Van Loan climbed over the rail, leaned forward and let go. He went into a perfect dive, hit the water cleanly and started swimming. It wasn't far to the island and he had to reach it before the bumboat returned to it.

In less than fifteen minutes he crawled up on a rocky beach near the northern tip of the island, some distance from Nagel's sprawling house. He put on his wet shoes, rested a few moments while he examined both his guns and made sure the water hadn't impeded their efficiency. Then he struck out in the direction of the big house.

The bumboat was coming in, and he moved quickly to the dock, reaching it in plenty of time. Two men were standing there waiting. Van slipped up carefully. He couldn't afford to have any warning given now. The pair stood close together. Van slugged one of them with a gun butt and had an arm around the throat of the other before the fellow could utter a sound. He brought up a knee into the small of the man's back, bent him hard and held him that way in a choke hold until he stopped squirming. Another minute and he was unconscious. Van Loan lowered him beside his pal, took a gun from each of them, and stuck them into his belt.

The bumboat was close now. It hit the end of the dock and two men sprang

ashore. They held the boat while a third man got off it. He was holding his arms high into the air. Behind him was the giant who had once tried to kill Van Loan.

Van leveled his gun and fired once. The giant tumbled backward into the water. Van's gun flamed several more times, and he called to Steve. Huston started running. He couldn't move fast, but he used all the strength he had left. As he came near, Van threw him one of the guns he had taken away from the two men who were unconscious almost at his feet. The red-headed reporter started shooting the moment he had a firm grip on the weapon.

Van said, "Back off, Steve! We're heading for Nagel's house."

"I'll say we are," Huston said grimly. "I don't know how you did this, Phantom, but I'll say this much. I never gave up hope until they sprayed that other boat with bullets and blew it up with grenades. That was the low point in my life, believing they'd got you."

"We've got to hold them," Van said. "Help is on the way, but Zarnow is finished. They're going to be plenty surprised in Nassau when they find out Zarnow is Westcott, the quiet, good-natured restaurant owner."

THEY were retreating quickly now and when they reached a path leading to the big house, they broke into a run. Someone was heading their way and Van ducked into the shrubs at the side of the path. So did Huston. A man with a tommy-gun came running down the path. They let him pass them before they leaped. In a moment Huston threw away the pistol and gripped the tommy-gun with a lot of grim satisfaction. Then he looked at Van Loan from close range and almost dropped the gun.

"Hey—wait a minute!" he cried. "You're not the Phantom!"

"Yes, Steve, I am. You've finally learned the truth."

"But Dick Van Loan! That—that's—I'm sorry. I know you're the Phantom

from the way you're handling this. But I also know you're Van Loan, so you must be telling the truth."

"I am—and there's no time for more explanations now. The house is dead ahead. They're alarmed in there, but they sent only one man out to see what the shooting was all about, so maybe we won't have much trouble. Let's go!"

Van burst through one of the French doors, with Huston right behind him. There were three people in the well-lighted room. Nagel, Westcott and Yvette.

"Don't move!" Van ordered them.

Westcott growled something in a foreign tongue, but raised his arms. Nagel sat down heavily. Yvette supported herself with both hands on the edge of a table.

"It's finished," Van said. "That means you, Westcott."

Huston stepped forward a pace. "All right, Zarnow, you once boasted to me that you'd never be taken alive. This is your chance to prove you were right. Make a break. Just try it!"

"I am not a fool," Westcott snapped. "What do I have to fear? I have done nothing."

"Your men murdered Dr. Grenfell," Van said.

"Grenfell?" Westcott said in horror.

"He was taking my place in the bumboat. Grenfell was important to you, wasn't he? Back in the Kremlin they won't like it when they learn you had him killed—even by mistake. But you won't have to worry about that. You also arranged for the murder of Bruger, and even if he was doublecrossing and mercenary, he was still a human being. You'll pay for that, Westcott—or Zarnow."

Nagel was suddenly on his feet. "Listen! They made me do this. They made me turn over my island to them. They've got a lot of my goods in Europe and they wouldn't pay unless I cooperated. And—this two-timing female—"

"I know," Van said. "She made quite a play for you. She's pretty good, at that.

I know that from my own experience. —Now we'll all move into the front hallway where there are no windows so your friends—those who are left—can't snipe at us. Nassau police are on their way to this island right now. As I said—it's finished. . . ."

* * * * *

Twenty-four hours later Steve Huston had lost some of his pallor and regained a lot of his strength. He and Van Loan sat in a room filled with short-wave broadcasting equipment while one of Lieutenant Martinez' men patrolled certain wave lengths. They had a few moments to wait, however.

Van said, "I hope you're finally convinced that I'm the Phantom, Steve."

Huston grinned. "You couldn't have made me believe it, Van, by simply telling me so. But I saw you work, and I know you're the Phantom all right."

"How was it—over there, Steve?"

"Rugged. Very, very rugged. Zarnow—or Westcott as he's known here—was in complete charge. I worked through Ann Lansing, though I didn't know her real identity or the fact that she also worked for Frank Havens. She's a swell kid, Van, and packed full of courage."

VAN nodded his agreement.

"I know. Well, Westcott and Yvette and their men are behind bars. Nagel is out on bond and while they probably won't do much to him, his ego is blasted to bits. They made a fool of him."

"You knew Westcott was Zarnow all along, didn't you, Van?"

"No. I only thought he might be. You see, I knew Zarnow had been in Hungary on a certain day, and it took just so much time to fly here to Nassau. Bruger arrived before Zarnow could possibly have made it. Yvette came long afterward, and Nagel was enroute from Europe at the time things broke over there. Westcott, however, said he'd been in Canada and perhaps could have rigged the proof that he was there, but the time element gave

him away. Besides, I didn't worry too much about his identity. I was sure he'd bring you here and in getting you out of their hands, I'd find out who Zarnow was."

"They fed me drugs," Huston said bitterly. "I couldn't help talking. I told them everything I knew. I guess it's lucky I did, too, or they might not have brought me back here. What about Ann and Riley?"

"They're together in New York right now and I could almost wager exactly where they are. At one of the Voice of America radio stations."

The radio operator twisted his dials, pulled earphones away from his head and snapped a switch. A voice went on the air. It spoke first in English, then in German, Polish, Slav and Russian.

The voice said, "Attention, the friends and relatives of Dr. Sokol, missing from Moscow for two years. He was an eminent surgeon, a capable and honest man. He was taken by the Secret Police because a patient who didn't want to pay him stated that he was not a true Communist. They worked him almost to death in a Siberian prison camp and when he could no longer produce, they shot him. So you can see that not even Russians are safe. Now there are other names. We have thousands of them, and on each broadcast we shall read as many as possible. Names of important people and small people, but all victims of Com-

munist terror. We shall name them, tell what has happened to them, and back it all up with facts that even the Kremlin cannot deny or twist by untruths. We come now to a Pole. A man who served Poland long and well—"

The voice went on and on. Van arose finally.

"Radio Free Europe is broadcasting names, too," he said, "and Radio Free Asia will be doing the same thing soon. This is what we fought for, Steve. The right to let people know what their Communist masters are really like. It will hurt the friends and relatives of those we name, but it will hurt Communism far more. Thanks to you and Ann and Riley and hundreds of others, we've got a fraction of the truth before the world. But I think a little man named Danowski should be thanked most of all."

"I know," Huston said. He looked grim for a short while longer. Then, with a sigh, he stood up. "We'd better be getting back, Van. I have a big story to write. Besides, there's bound to be something that needs your attention back in the States. It'll be a relief fighting plain, garden variety gangsters."

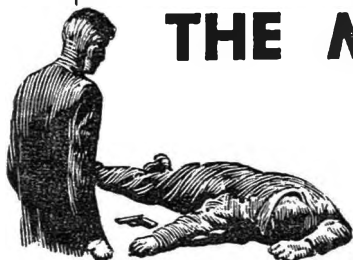
Van Loan shook his head slowly. "There's no difference, Steve. Gangsters are gangsters whether they operate under the banner of some punk, or for Zarnow and his breed. There's one thing we do know, however. They can all be beaten."

THE PHANTOM MOVES IN ON THE RACKETS
IN A HARD-HITTING NOVEL OF
GRAFT AND CORRUPTION!

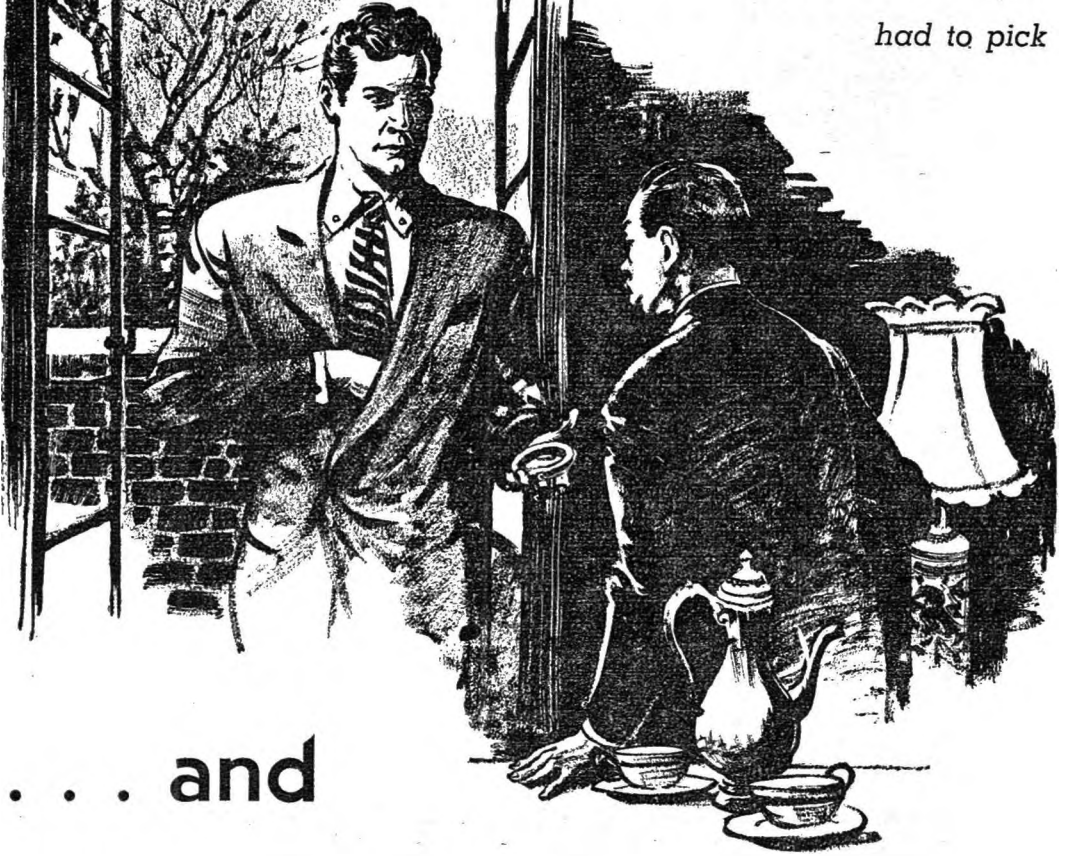
THE MURDER MACHINE

By ROBERT WALLACE

FEATURED IN OUR NEXT ISSUE!



*It was the poppy of sleep,
and dreams, and death—
the poppy Steve Hogan
had to pick*



... and a dash of opium

by DOROTHY DUNN

T-MAN STEVE HOGAN walked into the bureau office in L. A. with a holiday gleam on his face and a hand-shaking swing to his long arms.

The outer office, first.

"Stevie, boy! Long time no lend you five until payday! How was Mexico?"

"Fine, Rick. Fine! Señoritas gorgeous, and Miss Mary Warner under control. Job finished."

Rick grinned. "They must have been gorgeous! A whole year to wind up a weed. Vacation on pay!"

Steve winked. "Some day, I'll show you where they put the Luger slugs. The

scars. No more hair on my chest. The boss in?"

"Ready and waiting. Good to have you back, Stevie."

And it was good to be back, where the ice was cold, where you saw a blonde now and then, where the dance music wasn't all rhumba and samba, where you could cross a street without watching for the lugs with Lugers.

Steve pumped the eager hand of his boss. Harold Cummings was a swell guy to work for, one of the best bureau men on the coast.

"Hi-ya, Cummings. Thanks for the bonus. Now I want a vacation. We won't count the few weeks in the hospital at Mexico City. That wasn't vacation. I had a male nurse, imagine that? I used to dream about—"

Cummings gave that little hand lift that Steve knew so well. Cut the chatter. Listen a minute.

"You deserve it, Steve. Honestly. And you'll get it. But there's just one tiny assignment here that I want you to handle. Won't take long. Then you can have a week free."

Steve groaned.

"Why me? Why not Rick, or Jake, or anybody else? Why me?"

Cummings hunched forward earnestly. "You've been away. You're not known. I think you can do in a day what the others can't even get close to investigate because they're spotted. Will you listen?"

STEVE nodded. He pulled his chair up to the desk and looked at diagrams and got excited in spite of himself. He was back home, being brought up to date.

The layout was a very big thing. The boss had been playing chess with it the whole year that he had been in Mexico.

It was bigger business than marijuana. It was a several million dollar deal in lost souls, representing more poppies than bloom in Flanders fields. The poppy of sleep, and dreams, and death.

"We've got the ship that's been bringing it over," Harold Cummings said. "Coast guard surrounded it last night off

San Francisco. The new delivery will never be made. But a small portion of the last delivery hasn't been recovered. We know the man, but can't prove his method or catch him with the opium. That's a job for you, Steve."

Steve screwed lead up in his pencil and pulled over a scratch pad.

"Name?"

"A Japanese houseboy, Johnny Shuko. Works for Leonard King in Westwood. Full time. Lives at King's place. He cooks, cleans, answers door. Does everything. Small place. Just King and his wife."

"But he gets a day off," Steve said.

"Yes. He gets on a bus at Santa Monica Boulevard. He goes down to the Oriental section and drinks Sake and visits his friends, and that's that. We can't nail him on pick-up, or on delivery. We think he's spotted all the agents we've had on him."

"He sounds very little," Steve said. "Almost too little to worry about. Why don't you just haul him in, if you're sure?"

"We want the rest of the opium. There's not much, and Johnny is very little, compared to the ones we've already got. But we've operated almost a hundred percent on this and I'd like you to make it a round figure for us. Ever hear of Cliff Borders?"

Steve grinned. It was like asking if you've ever heard of Kit Carson. Cliff Borders was a big, bad gambling king on the West Coast, big and rich and untouched!

"I've heard."

Cummings couldn't keep the delight off his face.

"We got him last night, right in the act of paying off for the new shipment of opium. The gambling was just a sideline. His heavy money was in the narcotics. Head guy, American, with a mixture like the United Nations on his payroll! We got Lee Kong, from the San Francisco Chinatown. We got Anton Kevorsky, in L. A. We got a dozen pushers and six distributors. But we

want Johnny Shuko and the rest of the last shipment. We want it a hundred percent recovered shipment, Steve!"

"All you got, and you want more. My greedy little boss! You boys have been working this year, haven't you?"

Steve was more than a little bit impressed by his boss. It sounded easy, all lined up that way, with the names of who was in jail and all the secrets out. But Steve knew what went into a job like that before the final report could be made. He knew how hard the ring boys fight, he knew what solid organization they had, how easily they kill to keep what they have.

The delight went out of Cummings' face.

"We worked, Steve. Like hell. We lost Jake and six imports. On the job, in a year's time. Maybe that's why I want it all, including the puny amount Shuko distributes. You see?"

Steve saw. Jake had been a good friend of his—a swell guy.

"Okay, boss. I'll wrap him up for you. And I get a week of vacation after that?"

Cummings smiled. "You get a week free to chase blondes or butterflies. It shouldn't take long. You might start with the Kings. Our agents worked it from the other end, without any luck."

Steve took down the address of the Kings and left. . . .

IT WAS three o'clock in the afternoon as Steve pushed his heap out Wilshire Boulevard, relishing the sight of the slick, familiar buildings. It was great to be home—just great.

And pretty soon, he'd have the free time and the bonus to take the town apart. The scars on his chest were healed enough now so that he could hug a blonde without hurting. Also the stiff knee was getting limber enough for dancing. He'd get this Johnny Shuko wrapped up in a hurry and get on with the fun he'd been dreaming about.

He'd lied over the phone. He'd told Johnny he was Steve Hogan, that he was a business associate of Mr. King's, and

that his call was urgent.

That got Mrs. King to the phone. She had a husky note in her voice that sounded good to Steve after all the liquid Spanish he'd been hearing.

"Mrs. King, this is Steve Hogan. Is it possible that your houseboy might be listening to this conversation over an extension?"

"Impossible," she said. "I don't have an extension. But why do you ask about that?"

Steve told her why. Not exactly why, but enough to account for his call. "Could I see you about this? It's very important. And I'd like to talk to Mr. King, too. Could I stop by and talk about art or music while Johnny's there, then take you out for long enough for you to give me a quick check of his habits in private?"

She wasn't strictly dumb. She told Steve to call her husband at his furniture plant. She gave him the number. "If Len says I should see you, I will," she explained. "I'll call him after you've talked to him."

Steve liked that little bit of caution. There'd be fewer rackets operating if more people were like that.

Leonard King was even more cautious. He called Harold Cummings at the bureau office before he'd okay the interview.

All doubt dispelled, King was co-operative, even with ideas.

"I've told my wife to receive you, Mr. Hogan. Naturally, we want to help all we can. Why don't you drive her to *The Tropics* for a drink about four-thirty? I'll meet you there. We'll talk about Johnny and then take you home to dinner. That way, you'll see Johnny in action. He's a great little cook! All right?"

It was very good. It sounded like a promising start for a job. Both Leonard and Marjorie King sounded like swell people.

But, as Steve switched over to Santa Monica, headed for Westwood Village, he realized that their interest stemmed from keeping Johnny Shuko out of trouble,

not getting him into it.

They weren't surprised that Johnny was under investigation. Orientals were always being investigated. If they could come to Johnny's defense, naturally they'd be happy to do so.

They hadn't said that, but Steve could feel them thinking it. He hadn't said anything about opium over the phone. He'd just said investigation.

Steve found the house, a white stucco corner building with a cascade of flowers on the front terrace. The street was a hill and he had to park in gear to keep the heap where it was.

The bell made pretty chimes inside.

Then he was looking at a small Oriental, with a black alpaca coat, a string tie, and a gold-toothed grin.

"Mr. Hogan," said Steve. "Mrs. King is expecting me."

Johnny bowed, took the hat, and continued to grin.

"In here, please."

Two steps down into a decorator's dream living room, and there she was, all American, hand extended.

SHE played it up for Johnny's benefit. "Steve! How nice you could come! Leonard insists I keep you for dinner. Now don't say you. . . ."

"Delighted," said Steve. "Very delighted. You're quite thoughtful."

She took his hand and led him up two steps and through the dining room and into a paneled den that opened onto a flower-banked patio. There was a bar in one corner.

Johnny had pattered along behind.

"A drink? Scotch?"

Steve nodded.

She looked at Johnny.

"Two of your special highballs, Johnny, and there'll be one extra for dinner tonight. Mr. Hogan is an old friend."

She was doing it for Johnny, Steve knew that. She liked the little Japanese servant and she wouldn't, for the world, have him know that she was part of a conspiracy to check up on him.

Steve leaned close to her ear, while

Johnny hustled about in the bar. "Loved the welcome, honey! You're superb."

She was a gorgeous dame, even if you hadn't been away for a year. The golden tan was as real as the sun, the eyes were deep blue, and the shape did things for the frock she wore. It did things for Steve, too.

But she tapped a cigarette with such a business-like tap that Steve knew he had been out of line. He flicked his lighter for her and smiled.

"I'd forgotten how crazy you are about Leonard. Sorry."

She smiled. "You've no idea! Good thing you remembered."

That took care of that, and it was just as well to get it over with, fast. If she'd been another L. A. dame, married to money and discontented, it would have made the free week more fun, maybe. Or maybe not. Steve found himself liking her better because she liked her husband. You never respect a married woman who plays, unless you're the boy to be played with. This way, he could concentrate on Johnny Shuko, without curves for taunting competition.

Then he was facing a round silver tray, two tall Scotch highballs, and a beaming brown face.

Steve tasted his drink and beamed, too. "Good!" he said.

Marjorie King also beamed like a proud mother at the praise. "It must be loving hands," she said. "All Johnny's mixing is out of this world."

Johnny had bowed himself out of the den, after making sure that all the ash trays were empty. But Steve didn't want to talk about him here.

There was a plant on the coffee table, a plant with yellow flowers. The pot was wrapped in a garish blue crepe paper, the edges rolled into crepe flower designs. A wine-colored bow topped the cheap and lavish decoration. The whole thing was out of keeping in this house of excellent, quiet taste.

Marjorie King followed his glance and whispered: "It's atrocious, isn't it? But it's a present from Johnny. Yesterday

was his day off."

Steve shushed her, even though he felt sure that the whispered words couldn't be heard by Johnny. He'd scarcely been able to hear them himself, but he'd watched her lips move.

They finished the drink, talking about Los Angeles weather in artificial tones. At four-fifteen, they got into Steve's car, and Marjorie directed him to *The Tropics*.

It was a typical bamboo bar, specializing in Tahitian rum concoctions. They ordered daiquiris.

"Tell me about the plant," said Steve.

She laughed. "Poor Johnny! He's the best servant we've ever had, but his breakage is pretty high. This week it was his third Silex. He feels moody after he breaks something, like a little puppy dog. And I always dread the crash, too. It means another 'present' from him. He comes in like a small boy after his day off and says: 'Look, Mees King. Present!' He's always so proud of his gift!"

Steve laughed. "Always a plant?"

"Yes, and the brighter the decorated paper, the bigger Johnny's proud grin! He's really very sweet, you know. Like a child."

Mr. King arrived then, kissing his wife's cheek as he sat down. He leaned over to shake hands with Steve and got the waiter's eye, all in one easy motion.

King was handsome in a long, lean, bronze fashion, with streaks of silver in his black hair. He had very white teeth and a cordial manner that carried the undertone of authority. Pleasant, but nobody's fool. Probably, he did very well at his business.

He waited until he had sampled his drink and made a few general remarks before he asked: "Just what has Johnny been up to, Mr. Hogan?"

"He's a small spoke in a big ring that sells opium on the coast."

"Oh, no!" moaned Marjorie King. "Not Johnny! There's some mistake!"

MR. KING didn't say anything.

"I'm sorry," said Steve. "There's

no mistake, and I hope you find another efficient servant soon. I'd like to take him tonight after dinner, if I may. I'll try to do it quietly. There's just one thing I need to check up on when I get back to your house."

"You must be very certain," said Mr. King. "And if you are, we lose the best boy in Westwood. Tell me, how did he operate? He works so hard, has no visitors, just one day a week off."

Steve said: "We haven't been able to prove just how he did it. Agents have checked him on his days off. But I have a feeling that all the evidence we need is at your home. Do you have a gardener?"

"No," said Mr. King. "But we use a man who has several places on the block. He takes care of the lawn about once a week."

"Oriental?"

"Yes. Tom Shoji. Reliable. Been with the Bostwicks for two years, with us about the same time."

"How long have you had Johnny Shuko?"

"Just a year. And a wonderful year, at that."

"References?"

Mrs. King said: "The agency sent him out. He had the name of his previous employer and insisted that I call. They praised him highly. Said they had to let him go because they were leaving town."

"Do you remember the name, Mrs. King?"

She poked her straw into the shaved ice of her drink and drew her beautiful brows together.

"It was a Mrs. Cliff something. Now, what was the last name? Let's see—"

"Mrs. Cliff Borders?" asked Steve.

Her eyes cleared.

"Yes! How did you know?"

Steve smiled. "T-men know everything now!" He looked at Leonard King and saw the angry frown. "You've heard of Cliff Borders, Mr. King?"

"Yes, I have. But I didn't know Johnny had ever worked for such a wealthy man. My wife handles all the domestic details."

King wasn't going to worry the beautiful Marjorie by telling her that their houseboy had come from the biggest racket man on the coast. But he was seeing Johnny in a different light now—a dangerous one.

"We might as well go along home for dinner, Hogan. Unless you'd rather skip that and take Johnny right away."

"No," said Steve. "I'll take him after the normal routine of dinner. I want time to examine the plant on your cocktail table; also time to check your yard, if you'll be a good host and show me about after dinner."

"Right."

"Also," said Mrs. King to her husband, "I pretended in front of Johnny that Mr. Hogan was an old friend. So you'd better call him Steve."

Mr. King grinned. "Fine! Marjorie, Leonard, and Steve! Old friends. What's to eat, Marge?"

"Chicken a la Johnny," she said a little sadly. "The dish of his we like best!"

Steve was to follow the King car back to Westwood. He managed a moment alone with Leonard at the curb.

"Don't worry about the Cliff Borders angle," he said. "Right now he's in jail—big shot man of the whole opium ring. Johnny's the last man. After that, the news will probably break. The chief has managed to hold the papers off until he gives the word. Then there'll be a story too big for headlines. Johnny Shuko is just a phrase, not even a complete sentence."

"Devil of a thing, Steve. I'd have trusted Johnny with anything. I'd have left my whole bank account right out in the open!"

Steve laughed. "You could. He's not a thief. He's probably made more money than you and I will ever see. Opium comes high, and goes out higher. Even the little boys like Johnny make a fortune."

THE chicken a la Johnny was as good as a dream that comes out of the pipe. It was roasted to a golden brown, and

something terrific had been done with wild rice and sauces. There were little hot dinner rolls that he had baked himself; there was acorn squash and a salad that had been tossed with artistry.

It was a beautiful dinner, beautifully served in the soft light of candles, on silver service plates. Few women could have done what Johnny Shuko could do.

Steve began to agree with Mrs. King that it was a shame about Johnny. That beaming face, so proud as a dish was offered, so eager for the involuntary praise as you ate! Genial, competent little guy! He was pretty nice for anybody to have around the house.

After dessert, which was ice cream, Mrs. King rang the glass bell and Johnny came in, still smiling.

"We'll have a demitasse in the den, Johnny. And brandy."

"Yes, Mees King."

We adjourned.

"Like to see the place, Steve?" asked Leonard. "How about a bit of air after Johnny's meal? We call his chicken a stuffer."

"I could use a five-mile hike," Steve said. "But I'll settle for your back yard. Lead on!"

To Johnny, Steve was just another guest. The little Oriental didn't bat an eye when they went out through the kitchen.

Once there, Leonard said: "Nothing much here, Steve. Just a young orange tree that has produced exactly one orange. A lot of zinnias and an oleander. What the devil are you looking for?"

"The bottom of a flower pot," said Steve.

The yard was neat. No scrap heap. No freshly dug holes.

The garage was large enough to use as storage for old papers and magazines, empty bottles and tools.

Steve checked each gardening tool carefully, twisting the handles out to see if there could be a hollow hiding place.

He found nothing.

They went back inside and Mrs. King poured their coffee.

Steve crossed to the Lawson and put his cup on the cocktail table. When he was sure that Johnny was in the kitchen, he lifted the plant and ran his fingers under the bottom of the paper covering. The granules of dried glue that he had expected to feel were there, all right. And the part of the pot that remained was much too shallow for the roots of a plant as large as this one. A wooden peg about three inches high was glued to the pot to make it stand as high as the paper covering.

Steve put the plant down and leaned back, drinking his coffee. The garden tools in the garage bothered him. Something was missing. He'd seen a small hoe, rake, clippers, lawn mower, a tiny spade. That was all.

He looked at Mrs. King. "The plant looks healthy right now. Will it live long in that pot?"

"Johnny transplants them in a patio box. They do very well."

"I see." All at once, Steve remembered what had been missing in the garage. "Where do you keep your garden hose?" he asked.

"In the corner of the patio," said Marjorie. "The gardener often comes very early and the garage is locked up. He climbs over the patio wall for the hose."

Mr. King touched a switch and the patio lights went on. Steve stepped through the double doors and saw the hose coiled in the corner.

SIMPLICITY. The most difficult pattern of action to trace. The little everyday tasks, too familiar to be noticed, or questioned. A gardener hopping over the wall for the hose. A gardener who worked for several families and got paid for his work. Tom Shoji was probably a good gardener, just as Johnny Shuko was a good domestic. An established routine.

Who would expect to find opium? Or who would know what it was if they found it?

A narcotics agent, yes. But not people like the Kings. Steve could understand

now how simply the plan had worked.

He spread the coil of the hose and lifted the round metal ring spray. It was about the size of the bottom part of the flower pot. The metal spray came apart in two pieces by a quick pry of Steve's knife. And inside, fitted with precision, was a red pottery ring—just the right size to have been glued to the bottom of the plants Johnny bought on his days off. All Johnny would have to do was detach it and slip it into the metal spray, knowing that the gardener would hop over the patio wall early in the morning.

That meant that a florist gave it to Johnny, and Johnny gave it to Tom Shoji.

All this meant more work for the bureau. That was the tough thing about narcotics. It was such an endless chain.

Steve felt sure that, once broken, the pottery ring he held in his hand would contain the opium that the chief wanted. And he knew he had been lucky. One day later on the job and he could have turned the King house upside down without finding any evidence. Then it might be weeks before Johnny broke another Silex on purpose to make the present seem logical. You didn't have to make a big opium sale every week to get rich.

"That it?" asked Leonard King.

"I think so," Steve said. "We'll see."

They went back into the den. Johnny was there, taking away the coffee service.

Marjorie King looked at Leonard and Steve and said very softly: "Never mind, Johnny. Leave the pot. We'll want more coffee with brandy."

He bowed over the slender coffee urn he held. "Made hot," he insisted. He pattered off to the kitchen with the coffee pot.

Perfection. A silver urn is pretty, but let it sit for a little while and the coffee gets cold. Want it or not, you'd get hot coffee with Johnny around, because that's the way it ought to be!

The Kings looked at each other and shrugged, as at a private joke.

"We can't ever get him to do things the sloppy way," said Marjorie. "He always wins out over little domestic orders

like this."

He was back again with the fresh coffee; he picked up an empty cigarette package; he emptied an ash tray.

Steve took the clay ring out of his pocket. He tapped it against his palm and looked up at Johnny Shuko.

The lid of the silent butler closed softly, a whisper of sound only, as the little Oriental fixed his eyes on Steve's hand. Nothing changed in his face, except that he was not smiling now.

Steve didn't say anything. He sat there, waiting, and the Kings sat on the Lawson, Leonard holding his wife's hand on the cushion between them.

The stillness of the room became a heavy pressure, the tableau almost unbearable. Oriental patience. Steve knew that Johnny Shuko could maintain his waiting silence for hours. There wasn't any point in that.

Steve slipped the clay ring back into his pocket.

HE STOOD up slowly and reached under his arm for his gun—just to make it official, to get the business over with quickly for the Kings.

"You're under arrest, Johnny. Narcotics."

Steve took one step forward, his back to the open patio doors. He didn't even have time to close his eyes. Johnny opened the silent butler, flinging the ashes and the cigarette butts into Steve's face.

You can't shoot with both eyes full of stinging ashes. Steve chopped out with his gun, knowing that Johnny had broken for the patio. He grazed a slippery alpaca shoulder, that was all.

He dropped the gun and lunged in one tremendous flying tackle. He hit solid and had the satisfying feeling of both arms wrapping around the little man.

They were on the stone floor of the patio, rolling.

"Simmer down, Johnny! You're not going anywhere, except to jail! You might as well do it quietly. I don't want to hurt you."

Then Steve felt himself flying through the air like something shot out of a cannon. Damn, he'd forgotten! The little men and their judo tricks! The manly art of being bigger than you are.

He hit the wall and bounced. He got to his feet, his head spinning.

Johnny Shuko had jumped for a hand hold on the patio wall, his back to the house.

"Hold it, Johnny," Steve bluffed. "Or I'll shoot!"

As it turned out, it wasn't a bluff. Leonard King was suddenly there beside him, the gun politely extended.

But Johnny didn't hold it. It was now or never with him—all or nothing at all.

There was just one leg showing by the time the shot was fired. The slug hit, around the knee.

Steve went over the wall, boosted by Leonard King's bent back.

Johnny Shuko was a game little guy. He was still trying to make it, pulling the bleeding leg along after him. But he couldn't escape, unless he did it with a pipe dream.

Steve clipped him lightly to avoid any one-leg judo while he got the handcuffs on. Then he carried him back to the servants' entrance.

"Here!" said Johnny, as they reached the kitchen. "Let me wait here, please. Don't want to see Mees King. She good lady. Please!"

The little guy was pleading with great intensity. Steve stood him up by the sink and looked at him. Handcuffs, a shattered knee, a face that had goodness in it, eyes that were luminous as he mentioned Mrs. King. There was nothing sinister about him, and he certainly wasn't going anywhere. Only his pride seemed to be suffering now.

"You want to save face with Mrs. King? Is that it, Johnny?"

He beamed and nodded anxiously. "So good to me! So kind! Better she not see me hurt!"

"And disgraced, Johnny? You don't want her to see that, either?"

He lifted his head and there was some-

thing in his eyes that was older than time, much older than he was.

"She will know. Better if she doesn't see. Better for me. Not like her to gaze upon poor servant in captivity."

Steve shrugged. "Okay, Johnny. I'll have the ambulance come around to the back door. She won't see. It won't be long. Would you like me to help you over to that chair?"

"I stand," he said proudly. "I stand and wait."

SHUKO had spoken with great dignity and Steve thought how foolish the dignity was at a time like this. He'd damn well *have* to stand and wait, whether he liked it or not! He was just a punk opium peddler who had been caught like all the rest. He was just another underling who had been hired and trained by that great American monkey, Cliff Borders. Steve wondered how much dignity Cliff had mustered at the last minute. Steve had seen some of those big boys break and cry like babies when they got hauled in.

He thought Johnny Shuko's dignity was foolish, but he admired it just the same.

"Won't be long, Johnny."

The little man's smile was ethereal. "Not long, Mr. Hogan. I wait!"

Steve stepped into the den to use the phone, and got the call through quickly. As far as he was concerned, it was all wrapped up and he could start that vacation the minute he left the Kings' home.

"We'll have just a short wait," he announced to them. "And Johnny wants to be left alone in the kitchen. He doesn't want to lose face by seeing either of you. I believe he means it!"

Marjorie King was crying in gentle little sniffs. Her husband was pouring out of a bottle of D.O.M.

"You didn't have your brandy, Steve. Now?"

"Thanks. I can use it, gulp-fashion. It was a lovely dinner, Mrs. King. And don't cry. Johnny's just hurt a little."

"It's not that," she muttered. "It's just that he could . . ."

"I know," said Steve. "I'm thinking the same thought. Those tiny dinner rolls with one hand and a dash of opium with the other! And the presents to you that made him seem like a little boy."

"Yes," she said. "That's it! Presents that weren't presents at all."

"Maybe they were," said Steve. "Partly, at least. The little guy's a funny mixture of old world charm and new world corruption. Personally, I think Cliff Borders sold him quite a bill of goods."

As soon as Steve heard the ambulance nulling up to park on the hill behind the house he excused himself.

"Stay here," he told the Kings. "Johnny wants it that way. For some silly reason, I'd like it to be the way he wants it."

Then Steve went into the kitchen to supervise the arrest of Johnny and the hospitalization for his shattered knee.

The first thing he saw was the drawer under the sink yawning open. Then he saw the row of kitchen knives in the open drawer. Then he looked at Johnny.

The little guy was sitting on the floor, in a ritual position, with his legs tucked under him. His head was hanging forward and his handcuffed hands were hidden by his sagging chin.

The handle of a butcher knife protruded from the crumpled figure. And there on the floor was the most undignified mess in the world, produced by an act that had been designed centuries ago to preserve dignity!

The ambulance boys didn't like it, but Steve made them help. Between the three of them, they managed to remove all traces of the Oriental suicide. Steve didn't want the Kings to know that Johnny had committed hara-kiri in their kitchen!

MAYBE the Americans have their own brand of sentimentality, thought Steve. He was sure of it the next day when he found himself in a florist shop writing a card for Marjorie King. "You're nice people." He sent roses—long-

stemmed American beauties.

He felt a little low about Johnny Shuko and all the others who had been roped in by Cliff Borders. But he knew that Marjorie King would be feeling even lower. She'd be remembering all the domestic details of Johnny as a good and faithful servant.

She'd miss him.

But narcotics is narcotics, no matter how well you can cook! A lot of nice people get to be criminals.

Steve forked over the price of a good bottle of Scotch for the flowers, and then he felt better.

He got back into his heap and drove to a drive-in where a cute little blonde hopped cars with the best hamburgers in town.

He had a week free, and after that year in Mexico, with only the swarthy-skinned

señoritas, he was eager for peaches and cream.

The little blonde kid, however, was on another shift. The girl who brought him his hamburger had black hair.

But her skin was creamy and her eyes were gray.

"Irish?" he asked, grinning.

She flared at him for being fresh.

"You're real Irish, honey!" Steve added. "Temper and all!"

"So what if I am?" she snapped. "So what's it to you, may I ask?"

"If you'll dye your hair blonde, honey, I'll take you out tonight. Hogan's the name. Steve Hogan."

"You should live so long! Of all the nerve!"

Steve spent most of his free week eating hamburgers and trying to get to first base with this brunette.

DID YOU KNOW

*that it is (or was)
against the law—*



TO snore so loud as to annoy your neighbors in DUNN, NORTH CAROLINA?

TO sing "while taking a bath" in PEKIN, ILLINOIS?

FOR a person to cool his (or her) feet by dangling them out of a window in the State of MASSACHUSETTS?

FOR the ladies to view Olympic games in ancient GREECE?

TO laugh in public (for any reason whatsoever) in Communist CHINA?

FOR husbands to kiss their wives when they (the wives) are sound asleep in STERLING, COLORADO?

FOR adults to run, sing, dance, shave—or even kiss children on Sunday in BETHLEHEM'S (N. H.) colonial days?

TO dance the *SAMBA* in the Russian Zone of BERLIN? (A German youth, who did "samba" at a public dance recently, was quickly pinched, tried—and jailed for two years!)

TO watch, or stage, a fight between rats in the State of MAINE?

TO "indulge in a game known as 'Bowling'" in the early days of BALTIMORE, MARYLAND?

—Joseph C. Stacey



"I killed Mr. Montrelli," said the newsdealer

THE KILLER

By WILBUR S. PEACOCK

Every time there was a murder, he was sure to confess . . .

HE DIDN'T walk; he sneaked. He moved with a cringing boldness through the dirty doors of the Police Station and then leaned against the wall, shrunken fingers nervously shredding a cigarette into fragments.

"I cut off his legs," he told his story to himself again, "and then I wrapped them in the burlap and threw them—"

He licked dry lips, excitement building. This wasn't the first time he had come into the station, nor the fifth, nor the tenth. But each time the excitement surged in him anew, and the feeling was good.

"I put the rest of the body into the trunk—"

He was walking down the grimy corridor toward the sergeant's desk, and he mumbled his story aloud, as though the sound would make it more plausible. He could see the sergeant now. A couple of reporters were tip-tilted in chairs at one wall, while the switchboard operator smoked boredly while answering calls.

He was old, and his rheumy eyes squinted at the men ahead. He didn't recognize any of them, and he felt pleasure at that. They would listen, and perhaps take pictures. There would be questions and answers and excitement—until Captain Frobish made his own personal investigation.

He scowled at the thought, feeling the

tide of his dislike for Captain Frobish rising like a flood. Captain Frobish had tried to get him put away before, but without success. Even when Dorothy was alive, they hadn't liked each other. Now with her gone, lying in a suicide's grave, their dislike had become hatred.

Then he shrugged, moving up to the sergeant's desk. Captain Frobish wasn't here now; for a time, he could have the spotlight.

"What's on your mind, Pop?" the sergeant said, vague irritation on his face at being interrupted in making out reports.

The reporters watched idly, not really interested. Bums were a dime a dozen, and about the only thing good about this one was that he was neat and clean.

He cleared his throat. "I want to confess to having committed a murder," he said clearly.

"Huh!" the sergeant said, eyes tightening.

"I said I wish to give myself up for having committed a murder."

HE WAS shaking now; he always did in the excitement of the moment. But the shaking would go away. He wished he had a drink; but whisky disagreed with him, and he didn't like wine.

"Sure, sure, Pop," the sergeant said in heavy humor. "So you killed somebody, eh! Anybody I know?"

The killer smiled diffidently. "Maybe," he admitted. "It was Felix Montrelli. I cut him up and disposed of the pieces." He sighed. "I guess the job wasn't very good; anyway, you found him."

The reporters were listening now, and even the switchboard operator had turned to look. The killer smiled vaguely at them.

"I cut off his legs," he said, "and wrapped them in burlap and threw them into the river. Then I—"

"Wait a minute, mister!" The sergeant wasn't bored now. He leaned forward, reports forgotten. "Just who in the hell are you?"

"Me! Oh, I'm Henry Potter. I have a

newsstand over on Sixth Street. But as I was saying, I killed Mr. Montrelli and cut him up; and somebody discovered the torso, and then somebody found the legs and arms and head and—"

"Get the captain," the sergeant snapped, without turning his head. His hand was moving down now to the drawer where he kept the gun.

"What gives, Sarge?" one reporter asked, and came from his chair. He stopped beside the killer, towering over him. "What were you saying about Montrelli?"

The killer blinked mildly, a vein throbbing at his temple. He could feel the faint sheen of perspiration on his back now, and his heart was a thudding drum inside his narrow chest. He could sense the tension and excitement and suspicion growing, and he almost laughed aloud.

"I said I killed Mr. Montrelli," he explained. "We didn't like each other. He cheated me with a bad bill when he bought a paper. And he threatened to kill me if I talked. And so, last week, I waylaid him and smashed him down, and then I dragged him into the bushes and cut—"

"Captain's not here yet," the switchboard operator said. "Lieutenant Orr will be right down."

The sergeant came from about his desk, pushing through the railing gate with heavy legs.

"Why'd you come here?" he asked.

The killer swallowed. "I know Captain Frobish," he said.

The second reporter watched, without speaking. The first reporter glanced at the sergeant, then glanced back at the killer.

"Why give yourself up?" he asked.

"My conscience," the killer began. "I couldn't stand it any longer."

"Let's see what you've got on you," the sergeant said, and his hard hands searched the worn clothes with a rough thoroughness. He found the billfold and the change and the keys and the pencil and the handkerchief and the thick wad of newspaper clipping.

"You've no right to take those things," the killer protested.

"Yeah, yeah, sure," the sergeant said, and spread the clipping as if he were fanning a hand of cards.

"Where do you live?" the first reporter said.

"On Tenth Street," the killer answered. "I've got a room." He smiled. "I never killed anybody in my room."

"He's bats," the second reporter said then. "He's a rummy."

The door banged at one side, and Lieutenant Orr came through. He was young and hard and tough; and now excitement lay in him, growing, building. The Montrelli case was a mess; the papers were having a holiday, and there hadn't been any breaks.

"This the man?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," the sergeant answered, and handed the clippings to the other. "He had these on him."

"Uh-huh!" Lieutenant Orr glanced at the scraps of paper, then swung to the killer. "Let's hear it again," he said.

THE killer smiled vaguely, remembering his story, hoping he wouldn't be interrupted. The five men watched him; and he straightened a bit, liking the scene, knowing he was the center of interest.

"My name is Henry Potter. I own a newsstand. Anyway, I was just telling these gentlemen that I killed Mr. Montrelli. He and I were enemies. He murdered my brother, and so I had to—"

"Wait a minute," the sergeant said. "You told me he gave you a bad bill, then threatened you. Now you're saying he killed your brother."

"I'm sorry," the killer said gently. "I'm a bit excited, and I said the wrong thing. I meant to say—"

"He's a psycho," the second reporter said sourly. "A headline hunter!"

The killer frowned. "I assure you that I am perfectly sane," he said. "After all, when a man gives himself up for murder, he naturally is a bit excited."

"Captain's just come in," the switch-

board operator said. "He's coming down."

The killer smiled. Captain Frobish always came down. That, too, was part of the game. It made for more excitement and suspense. But there wasn't much point in waiting.

He said: "My conscience has been bothering me, and so I decided to give myself up."

"All right, all right," the lieutenant said. "Now, just tell us what happened."

"Well," the killer said, watching a fly crawl along the desk top, "it was a week ago Tuesday when I decided to kill Mr. Montrelli. I bought three burlap bags and a meat cleaver and a butcher knife, and I took some brown paper and twine. I went into the park, for I knew Mr. Montrelli walked there every night. I waited about an hour before he came by. When he did, I hit him with the cleaver, then pulled his body into the bushes and cut it up." He smiled around the group. "It was rather hard, you know, working in the dark; and anyway, I'm not a very big man."

"Where in the park and what park?" Lieutenant Orr asked.

The killer looked at the reporters. "Maybe you had better take notes," he said. "Might be a good idea to call for photographers. Then you'll have a scoop."

"Nuts!" the second reporter said scornfully.

"It could be," the first reporter said. "Lord knows we've checked every other angle. Maybe he did do it."

"What park?" the lieutenant persisted.

"Central," the killer said.

The second reporter pushed forward. "Ever kill anybody else?" he asked.

The killer almost smiled. A chuckle was in his throat. His rheumy eyes centered on the man.

"Well, not lately," he admitted.

"What's that?" the lieutenant snapped.

"I said, not lately. I killed a few people the first part of this year, and last year I think I murdered nine." The killer shook his head. "But not lately, I guess,

except for Mr. Montrelli."

"I told you he was nuts!" the second reporter said.

Captain Frobish stormed into the room, slamming back the door, his beefy face red and ugly in throttled rage. He paced forward, breaking into the group and facing the killer.

"I told you to stay away from here," he said. "You crazy pest, I told you to stay away!"

"But, Captain—" the lieutenant began, and Frobish didn't bother to turn his head.

"The man's crazy!" he said savagely. "Every time somebody's killed, he comes in and confesses. I tried to get him put away, but he is just smart enough that the docs won't commit him."

"I'm as sane as you—saner, if anything," the killer protested hotly. "Anyway, you've got to arrest me, for I've confessed to Mr. Montrelli's murder." He beamed at the reporters. "Better call your photographers now; that way you'll have a scoop."

ANGER knotted the lieutenant's hands. "Get him out of here," he said to the sergeant.

"I'll handle this," Captain Frobish said viciously. "I'll make certain he doesn't come back."

The first reporter stretched. "Damn me, if I didn't fall for that yarn at first," he said.

"I assure you gentlemen—" the killer began.

"Shut up!" Captain Frobish snapped and scooped the killer's few possessions from the desk top. He thrust them at the little man. "Take these and get the hell out of here before you see real trouble."

"Lieutenant," the killer pleaded, "you must arrest me for murder. Captain Frobish hates me; that's why he won't arrest me. He wants me to be tortured by my conscience the rest of my life."

Frobish's hand whirled him savagely about and sent him half-spinning toward the outer door. The killer caught his balance, the vagueness still on his face.

"You have no right to do that," he said. "I'm a taxpayer."

"Get out!" Captain Frobish came after him, herding him, thrusting him toward the door.

The lieutenant shook his head, then went back toward the door leading to the rear stairs. The sergeant grunted his annoyance, then went through the railing gate and sank into his chair again. The reporters watched the killer being herded down the hall, then drifted back to their chairs. The switchboard operator was already back at work, cigarette dangling limply from his mouth.

The killer struck the swinging door, almost falling, feeling the pain run along his shoulder where Captain Frobish's grip had been.

"Captain," he said, "this is no way to treat me."

They were outside now, the air cool, cars scudding by, the walks almost deserted. Captain Frobish kept his voice down, even though it was savage and hard.

"This is the last time," he said. "Come around here again, and you'll see more trouble than you ever thought existed. You understand?"

"Yes, I understand," the killer said, and turned away.

But eight days later the killer was back at the station house. He sidled through the swinging door, nervously shredding a cigarette. There was a cringing defiance in his body, and he licked dry lips.

He walked down the grimy hall, toward the sergeant's desk, slowly rehearsing his confession in his mind.

"I took the gun," he whispered, "and I—"

He was at the desk.

"Excuse me," he said to the sergeant, "I wish to give myself up for having committed a murder."

"You *what!*" The sergeant's face grew redder by the second. Then he was coming from about his desk, heavy legs pushing the railing gate open.

He caught the little man in a vicious grip, whirling and propelling him toward

the street door. The switchboard operator laughed aloud, and the reporter who'd been so cynical a week before yawned openly.

"But, Sergeant—" the killer tried to explain.

"Shut up!" The sergeant bit out the words. "Lieutenant Orr and Captain Frobish both gave me hell last time. Get out and don't come back."

He threw the killer against the door, and the little man went through, stumbling and falling down the three steps to the street. He shook his head in pained bewilderment, then rose slowly to his feet.

"You had no right—" he began, and the sergeant's voice was ugly and vicious.

"Come back and I'll beat the hell out of you personally. You're a headline crank. Now get away and stay away from here."

The door swung to, and the killer was alone, traffic whirling by. A few pedestrians watched curiously for a moment, then passed on.

THE killer hesitated, then sighed and drew a small pad of news clippings from the pocket of his worn suit. He thumbed them absently, as he had done so many times in the past three days. This was such a good murder to which he could confess. It had color and thrills. But nobody believed him, and so the faint wash of excitement faded and died within him.

He tore the clippings in half and threw them into a trashbasket. Walking slowly, he went to the corner and boarded an uptown bus. He huddled in a back seat, oblivious of stares, muttering to himself, concocting another confession for murder.

He left the bus, at last, and walked along a dark side street edged by ancient brownstone buildings. He'd been here before, many times. Dorothy had lived in the farthest house, Dorothy of the quick smile and the radiant hair. Dorothy who had married and been disillusioned and who then had taken her life because

she could no longer resist the urge to die.

The killer sighed. That was so long ago, almost three years now.

It was an eternity, and yet it had passed swiftly, especially since he had the game to play.

HE WALKED a bit faster and then went up the nine steps to the far brownstone. His thin finger pushed the bell, and he could hear the dim clamor inside. He waited, and then a shadow moved on the glass.

A lock snicked back, and the door opened, and a man peered out.

"What the hell do you want?" Captain Frobish said.

"I just wanted to tell you that they threw me out of the station house a while ago," the killer said.

Captain Frobish grinned. "Good! Now go away and let me alone. You're damned lucky they didn't work you over before throwing you out."

The killer bobbed his head nervously, rheumy eyes hating the bull figure before him.

"Like you did to my daughter, Dorothy," he said softly. "Like you threw her out and brought that tramp in—the girl who ran out on you last week."

Frobish's hand slashed at him, knocking him sideways against the vestibule wall.

"Get out," he said savagely.

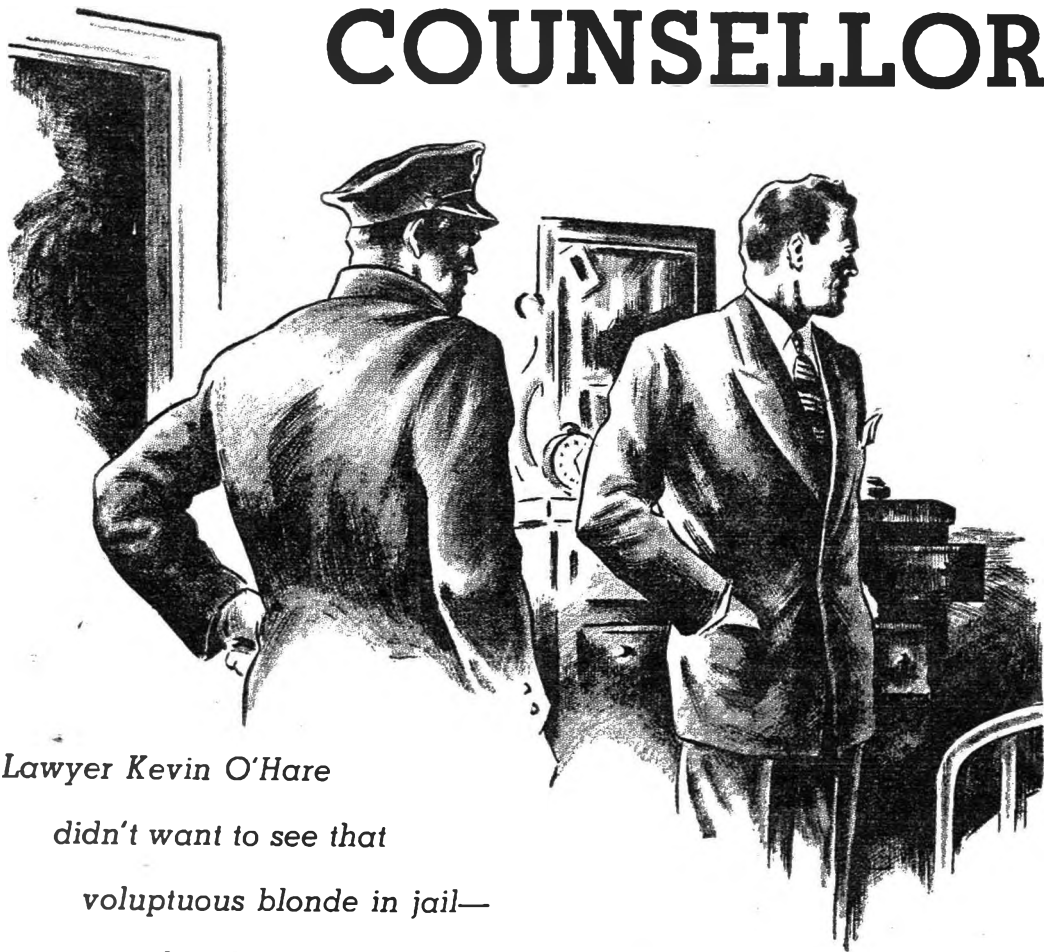
"Yes, I'm going," the killer said then. "I just wanted you to know that I won't be a bother to the police much longer. Just once more, I think. Then I'll quit confessing."

"Once more!" Captain Frobish said.

"Just once more," the killer repeated. His laughter came then, clear and sane and free; and suddenly there was no vagueness in his face. "You know," he said softly, "I don't think they'll believe me."

He took the small gun from his pocket then, seeing the terror and horror and knowledge leap into life in Captain Frobish's face.

COUNSELLOR



Lawyer Kevin O'Hare

didn't want to see that

voluptuous blonde in jail—

so he almost landed there himself!

CHAPTER I

MESSY MURDER

SAMMY WONG opened the door and looked at his boss dripping water on the highly polished tile floor. Kevin O'Hare's six and a quarter feet of rain-drenched tweed and leather seemed to crowd the small entranceway of the penthouse. He smelled wet.

"Look who's been out splashing in the puddles," the young Chinese remarked, deadpan.

O'Hare grunted, shrugging out of his sodden topcoat, thrust it at Wong as he passed. Sammy grabbed the boss's limp

Homburg, too; watched O'Hare stalk through the living room, leaving a trail of wet footprints in the heavy, buff nap of the rug.

Wong shook his head, took the coat and the hat to the kitchen, spread them out to dry. He stopped at the bar, built a brandy and soda without ice, which he took to O'Hare's bedroom. The boss had stripped down to his underwear, his suit a soggy-looking mound on the floor.

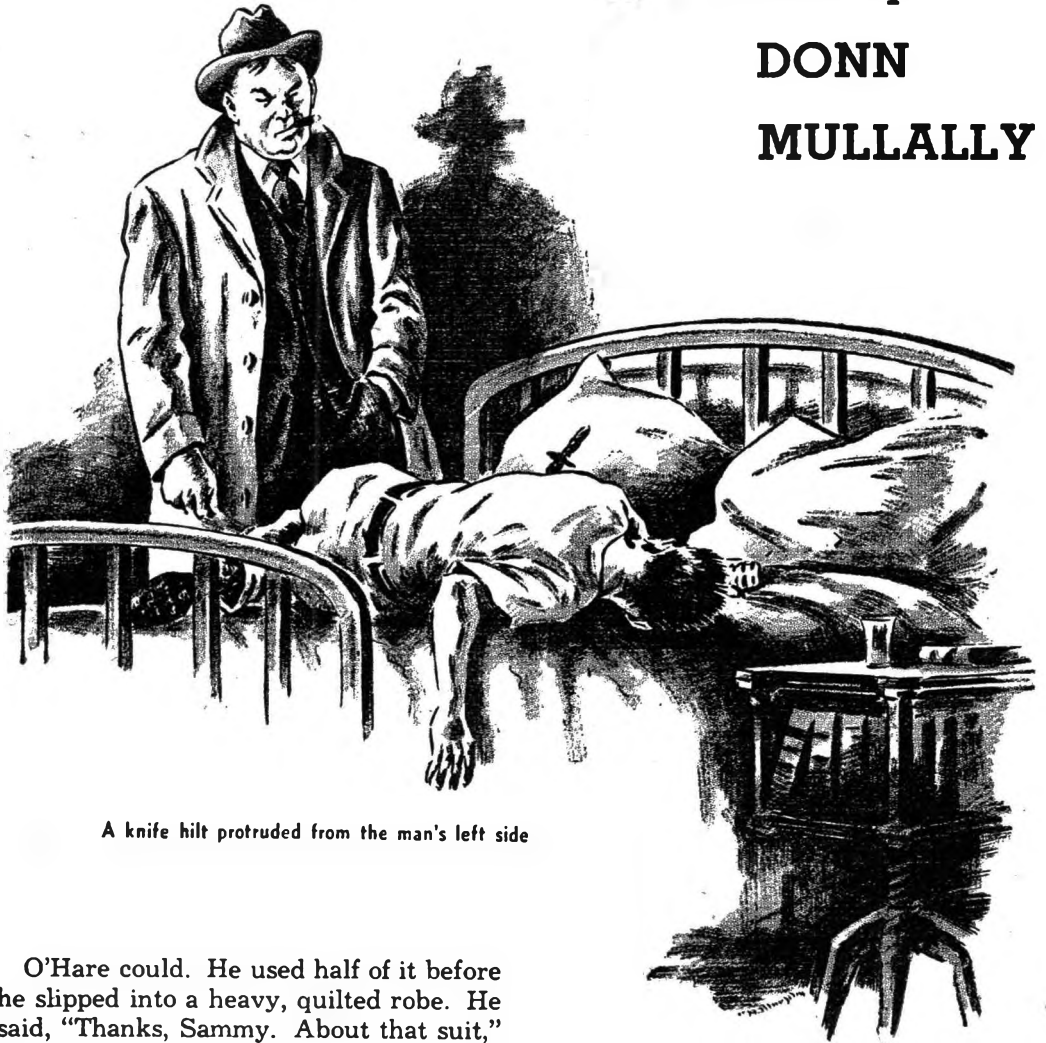
Sammy handed him the drink, saying, "You can probably use this."

at CRIME

a novelet by

DONN

MULLALLY



A knife hilt protruded from the man's left side

O'Hare could. He used half of it before he slipped into a heavy, quilted robe. He said, "Thanks, Sammy. About that suit," he indicated the wet bundle of Donegal tweed on the floor with a wave of his glass, "you can send it out to be pressed tomorrow."

"What's the matter, boss?" said Sammy, "don't you like the way I press your suits?"

O'Hare shook his head. "Did I say so?" he growled. "I thought you were sore because I was making work for you."

"Who's sore, boss?"

"Then why the crack when I came in?"

Sammy grinned, his slanty eyes almost disappearing behind his cheeks. "Boss confused. China boy allee samee no savvy strange Western custom. Walkee in rain, chop-chop!"

"And you can knock off the phony Charlie Chan talk, too," snorted O'Hare.

"Okay," said Wong. "But isn't it a little eccentric? Here you've got a six-

room penthouse, complete with fireplace and a view of San Francisco Bay, for which you cough up five hundred clams a month rent. Downstairs in the garage, you have two expensive foreign-made heaps. So you go out and tramp around all night in the rain."

"I happen to like walking in the rain," declared O'Hare. "Is it all right with you?" He sparred with a sneeze and lost.

Sammy grinned. "Sure, boss. Gesundheit. Better get in a hot tub. I'll bring you another drink."

WHEN Sammy Wong returned, O'Hare was already neck-deep in steaming water, his red hair a damp, kinky mat across his forehead. O'Hare reached a wet hand out of the tub and took the drink Sammy had brought him. He also took note of the telephone Sammy was holding.

"Who's on that thing?" he growled.

Wong smiled. "Nobody—yet."

O'Hare put his glass down on the edge of the tub, squinted at the houseboy. "I suppose you just carry it around with you because it has a long cord?"

Wong shook his head. "No, boss," he said. "We're due any second."

"Due for what? What are you talking about?"

"A call from Mrs. Maurice Safley," Wong replied stoically. "For the last couple hours she's been ringing in every ten minutes, wanting to talk to you."

As he was speaking, the phone jangled. Wong nodded to his boss wisely. He lifted the instrument out of its cradle, said, "Yes, Mrs. Safley. He's here now. Just a minute." He waited until O'Hare had dried one hand, then passed him the phone.

"Hello, Diane," O'Hare said. "Wong tells me you've been . . ."

"Oh, Kevin!" she cried. "Thank God, I've reached you!"

"What seems to be your problem, Diane?"

"Kevin, I'm in a terrible jam!"

"Yes?"

"I'm in Jonathan Moore's apartment—locked in the bedroom."

Kevin O'Hare glanced up at his boy, motioned for him to put the phone base down on a dressing stool beside the tub and get out.

"How did you manage to get locked in the bedroom?" he asked Mrs. Safley.

"Please, Kevin," she pleaded. "We haven't time. Something dreadful has happened in the other room—I'm afraid."

"Look, Diane," he objected weakly, "Colonel Moore. What about him?"

"I don't know!" Mrs. Safley was shrill. "The door's locked, and I don't know what has happened to him. He doesn't answer me! Kevin, please! Please come over here at once!"

"Right away," he sighed. "I'll be leaving right away."

He hung up and yelled for Wong. "Lay out some dry clothes," he said. "I have to go out again."

Wong's round, dark face was split with a wide, toothy grin.

"All right, what's so funny?" O'Hare growled.

Wong slipped his hands into the sleeves of his white coat, bobbed sharply at the waist, his face poker-serious. "Confucius say, Man who doesn't know enough to come in out of rain—all wet!" The boy ducked back through the bathroom door as a cake of soap crashed close to his head . . .

Kevin O'Hare drove his M-G sports car to Colonel Moore's apartment on Russian Hill. He had the top up on the little British job, the side curtains buttoned securely. He was sure Wong and Confucius would have approved. It was raining even harder now than when he'd been out before. The windshield wiper swamped about every third stroke, rain drumming on the taut canvas overhead.

HE CREPT past a cable car bumbling along in the weather. He could see a couple of passengers huddled, cold, in the closed middle section. The gripman was out on the open, forward platform, crouching over the big levers that hang

on to the underground cable. The man's black rubber coat glistened in the weak light over his head. O'Hare thought of his father—old Sean. He'd been a gripman on this same line. Nights like this—hundreds of them—he'd wrestled with those levers.

Sean hadn't been a large man, either. Not as tall as his son. Small, and dark, and wiry, and independent as the devil. He'd always boasted, "My boy isn't going to work for anybody, any boss. He's going to be the boss himself!" So Sean had worked, sacrificed to put Kevin through Santa Clara Law School.

As O'Hare drove down California Street, he wondered if the sacrifices had been worthwhile. Sure, he was a towering success as an attorney—so he could dash out on this sort of fool's errand to disengage a too-wealthy, too-foolish woman from an embarrassing situation!

He swung the little M-G angrily around the corner at Larkin Street. The high-pressure tires clawed for a grip on the slippery pavement. Another few minutes, and he parked in front of Colonel Moore's apartment building.

It looked like a large, very wet cake of soap standing on end. Only the empty lobby and a couple of bay windows on the sixth floor showed a light. The latter would be Moore's living room.

O'Hare splashed through the rain to the tall, plate-glass-and-wrought-iron door. Out of deference to the proprieties of the situation, he pressed Moore's bell and waited.

Nothing.

Of course, he thought, he could always turn out the building manager. But what would O'Hare say to him—"Sorry to get you up at two a. m., old man, but I have a lady client locked in a gentleman's bedroom?" Somehow, O'Hare didn't believe Mrs. Safley would appreciate that.

No, O'Hare decided, as long as the lady was paying for service, he ought to sell a more subtle line of merchandise.

He went back to his car, rummaged in the glove compartment until he found what he was looking for—a six-inch plas-

tic rule. No burglar kit complete without one.

He returned to the service door at the side of the building, inserted the ruler in the crack between the door and jamb, level with the knob; located the bolt. Then, lining the rule up on the bolt, he pressed gently, evenly, until the rule glided the bolt out of its slot. The door swung open.

O'Hare padded down a dark corridor toward a lighted area in front of the service elevator, which he rode to the sixth floor. The back door of Colonel Moore's apartment was also locked, but gave O'Hare no more struggle than the one downstairs.

He entered the darkened kitchen, stood there for a moment, listening. Except for the hum of the refrigerator, there was no sound in the apartment.

He felt his way along, past the kitchen sink, the stove, to a swinging door. He could see a long, dark hallway with a lighted arch at its other end.

O'Hare moved quietly over the hall's thick carpet. His own breathing, the rustle of his damp topcoat, seemed loud enough to announce him to the dead. They didn't.

Kevin O'Hare got as far as the arch to Colonel Moore's living room. It was a gore-spattered shambles. A decapitated figure sprawled on the thick reed-mat rug. The head had rolled under a square table in the elbow of a squat, three-part divan. From where he stood, O'Hare could see Colonel Moore's frozen, leering features.

Beside the body glittered a jewel-crusted Samurai sword, its blade driven into the floor.

O'HARE looked around the room. The curved scabbard on the wall registered faintly. Two empty cordial glasses monopolized the ebony top of the table. One of them bore a trace of lipstick.

O'Hare remembered what he was doing there, called, "Diane!"

Immediately, there was an answering tap on a closed door at the other end of

the room, and her, "Kevin! Is it you?"

He grunted that it was, indeed.

He went to the door. The key was in the lock. O'Hare knew what had to be done, and he had no stomach for it. After this, he wasn't sure he'd have a stomach—period.

He opened the door, pushed Diane Safley back into the bedroom, closed the door behind him.

"What's happened, Kevin?" she cried. "Your face . . ."

"I know." He nodded. "I look sick. Frankly, I am sick. Where's the telephone?"

She waved vaguely in the direction of a large bed in the corner of the room. The walls on two sides of it were lined with bookcases. O'Hare saw the telephone on an empty shelf at the head of the bed. He started toward it.

Diane Safley followed him, pawing his coat sleeve. "You've got to tell me, Kevin! What's happened? Who are you calling?"

He stopped and looked at her. Diane Safley was about thirty-two, passing for twenty-five. She was a blonde, with large blue eyes and tiny features, and had on a strapless net evening gown with a rhinestone belt—very chic, very appropriate. The only color in her face was a narrow margin of lipstick on her mouth.

O'Hare didn't spare her. "Moore has been killed," he said roughly. "Decapitated."

She stepped back, doubling over as though he had hit her below that rhinestone belt. "Oh, no! Kevin!" she gasped. "No!"

He nodded grimly. "Yes, Diane. Very definitely and finally and for all time, yes." He handed her a cigarette. "Smoke this," he said, "and see if you can get used to the idea, while I phone the police. I'll want to ask you some questions before they get here."

"Not the police, Kevin!" she wailed. "Not that!"

He guided her gently to a large, wing-back chair, saying, "I'm sorry, Diane. I realize this will ruin you at some of the

better tea fights on Nob Hill. Unfortunately, a man has been murdered. We don't play games with murder, not unless we are determined to play for keeps."

"But, Kevin!" she pleaded. "I didn't murder anyone! I was locked in here. You know that!"

He nodded. "True, Diane, true—and I mean to make the most of the fact when the proper time comes." He patted the back of her cold hand.

CHAPTER II

WAYWARD WIFE



WALKING over to the phone, O'Hare dialed the Hall of Justice, asked to speak to Captain Gorman of the Homicide Detail. When Gorman came on the wire, O'Hare said, "Captain, I hate to break up your pinochle game, but I'm afraid I have a job for you."

"What is this, a rib?" Gorman barked. "Who's calling?"

Kevin O'Hare grinned thinly. "I'm surprised you don't recognize my voice, Captain, after the bad time I gave you in court the other day."

There was a moment's silence on the wire, then Gorman exclaimed, "O'Hare! Where are you and what're you drinkin', and what's this about a job?"

"I seem to have a corpse on my hands," O'Hare said. "A gentleman named Jonathan Moore, former Colonel in the United States Army."

"He's dead?"

"Quite."

"You didn't kill him, did you?" Gorman asked slyly.

"That's why I'm calling you, Captain," O'Hare responded. "I couldn't wait to confess!"

Gorman snorted into the phone. "I'll be right over. Where are you?"

O'Hare gave him the address, hung up. As he did, he caught a flash of movement from the other side of the room. Mrs. Safley had bounced out of her chair, was

running toward the door. She opened it, wide, took one step into the living room. O'Hare heard her gasp. She fainted. Hard.

O'Hare knew it was the real thing, from the way she hit the floor; the unbecoming, grotesque shape her body took in the doorway.

He carried her to the bed. There was certainly nothing to loosen about her dress. He went to Moore's bathroom, dampened a small hand-towel and brought it back, bathed her face.

She came to, with a lovely set of hysterics.

When she made sense at all, stopped mauling the front of his suit, she cried, "Kevin! Kevin! Who? Who could have done such a terrible thing?"

He shrugged. "I don't know, honey. That's how it is with murder. Sometimes, a person's best friends—"

She gasped, her lips white. "Kevin! You don't think I—?"

He shook his head. "You might as well be prepared for the worst, Diane. We're going to have to prove to the police that you didn't. So let's start at the beginning. How you happen to be locked in here. Tell me everything you can think of, whether it seems to have any particular bearing on what has happened, or not."

He offered her another cigarette, watched her smoke for a moment, her hands nervous.

Finally, she pouted. "I'm not trying to make up a good story, Kevin," she said. "I've suddenly realized how little there is I know." She shrugged her bare shoulders. "Jon and I had dinner—here. After dinner, Jon told his boy, Wada, he might have the rest of the evening off. We were alone, so far as I know."

"How did you get separated? I mean," he nodded toward the door, "Moore in there, and you locked in the bedroom?"

"The doorbell," Diane explained. "Jonathan went to answer it. I came in here."

"When was the bedroom door locked, do you know?" he asked.

"Shortly after I heard voices in the

other room," she said. "Jonathan was talking to someone else. I heard the lock snap. At the time, I thought it was a rather strange thing for Jon to do, but—"

"You didn't recognize this other voice?" he interrupted.

SHE shook her head. "No," she said. "How about Maurice?" O'Hare asked, eyeing her closely. "Did he know you and Jon were this cozy?"

"I wouldn't be surprised," she said indifferently. "We never discussed it."

O'Hare walked to the windows, listened to the rain fingering the glass. He turned, his eyes level on Diane Safley. "You expect me to believe Maurice doesn't care?" he asked.

"Of course. It's true."

"Forgive me," he said. "I understand we're veddy, veddy modern—but, after all, Moore and Safley were partners. It's a little difficult to believe, Diane, that Maurice would extend his business arrangements so far."

"You don't have to believe me," she pouted, her eyes looking as though they might fill.

He said, "That's exactly what I have to do, Diane—believe you. It's going to be tough enough to handle Gorman after he sees what's in the other room. I can't have any reservations in my own mind."

Diane lowered her eyes. She locked and unlocked her fingers in her lap. Without looking up, she said, "Then, you'll have to ask Maurice. Ask him why we haven't lived together as man and wife for the last two years!"

O'Hare dropped beside her on the edge of the bed. "As long as Maurice has taken over the conversation," he said, "I'd like to know where he is. Do you have any idea?"

"I believe he's in Stockton," she replied. "He said something about running up there on business, this morning—said he wouldn't be home tonight."

O'Hare nodded, stood up. "Moore never mentioned there was anyone he feared, anyone out to get him?"

Her blonde curls moved negatively.

"And when the doorbell started to ring," O'Hare asked her, "Moore didn't make any comment as to who it might be?"

"No, Kevin, he didn't. I think his exact words were, 'I'm not expecting anyone.'"

THE sound of chimes filtered through the closed door. O'Hare shrugged. "The police," he said. "Brace up, kid. I think we can sell them your story."

She wiped her palms on the bedspread, stretching her fingers like talons. "Kevin, they can't—they won't—"

He smiled at her. "They can, and they will, honey. They'll ask 'a lot of questions; but you're not to open that pretty mouth—understand? I'll do the talking. That may sound easy," he told her, moving toward the door. "It won't be. It'll be the hardest job you ever tackled in your life."

He went out, managed to cross the living room without seeing Moore's body. In the hall, he found the button which released the electric lock on the front entrance. He opened the apartment door, waited until he heard the elevator whine to a stop at the sixth floor; saw Captain Gorman and his Number One boy, Masterson, step out of the cage.

The captain walked as though his feet hurt—fast, so he could get somewhere and sit down. Gorman was short, carried himself tall. He brushed past O'Hare into the apartment. Kevin waited for Masterson to lope in, then closed the door.

Gorman had started to slip off his coat when he saw the carnage in the living room; stood transfixed, like an art critic in a gallery. He jerked his head around, grinned sourly at O'Hare.

"Hello, butcher boy," he said. "I didn't think you had it in you." He finished stripping out of his damp coat; tossed it, and his hat, on a chair.

"You're right," O'Hare told him solemnly. "I don't have it in me. Not for this sort of thing. If you ever catch me at murder, I promise it'll be much neater."

"What's the matter?" cackled Gorman.

"Can't you stand the sight of blood?"

O'Hare shook his head. "Not in quantity, Captain."

Gorman ran a gnarled, brown hand over his bald head, smirked. "Well, suppose we go to work. What do you know about this, O'Hare? What're you doing here?"

"I'm here on behalf of a client."



They Got Their Lumps

IMAGINE being packed off to jail because you wanted to drink a cup of ordinary coffee! Yet that's exactly what happened in Prussia in 1777, after Frederick William the Great passed an edict which declared that since he himself drank beer, it ought to be good enough for anybody. What's more, didn't his ancestors do the self-same thing?

The law restricted not only the actual drinking of the brew, but controlled the roasting of the bean: This could be done only in the royal establishments, and all licenses were issued by the crown alone.

One way in which he enforced this strange law consisted of deputizing special agents actually to go around and sniff the breath of innocent citizens. If the coffee aroma seemed prevalent, the victim was fined—and the undercover spy got one-fourth of every amount collected. Penalties for smuggling the bean or roasting it illegally carried an extremely stiff fine and long confinement in the village stocks.

—Mark Knight

The police captain jerked a crooked thumb at Colonel Moore. "Not him?"

Kevin O'Hare answered glumly. "As a matter of fact, I did represent the Colonel—his firm. However, I was called here by his partner's wife, a Mrs. Safley. She's in the other room, Mike." He nodded toward the bedroom door.

"She found the body?" Gorman asked.

"No, Mike. I did."

"All right, Counsellor," Gorman

shrugged. "You got me confused, so you're a success. Now, let's go back and do it again, so poor, old, dumb Me will understand it."

"Don't apologize, Mike." O'Hare smiled narrowly. "This is a confusing situation. It's not a cat. You don't pick it up by the scruff of the neck."

"Okay." Gorman's bald head bobbed angrily. "Start with the whiskers, or the tail, I don't care where."

"I'll keep nothing from you, Mike," O'Hare promised him. "It seems Mrs. Safley and the late Colonel." he nodded at the still figure on the floor, "had dinner here together. After dinner, the Colonel dismissed his boy; and they had a cozy, after-dinner drink before the fire."

O'HARE pointed out the empty glasses on the table adjoining the divan. "After some elapsed time, the doorbell rang and, quite properly, Mrs. Safley ducked into the bedroom. The Colonel answered his door. Shortly thereafter, she tells me, she heard the bedroom door being locked; voices out here. Much later, when she heard nothing from this room, she became alarmed—tried the door and found herself locked in. She called my apartment."

"Your apartment?" snorted Gorman. "What are you, a locksmith on the side? Or maybe," the Captain jabbed his busy forefinger at Moore's body, "maybe she had a hunch she'd need an ambulance chaser!"

"No, Mike; it's much more simple," O'Hare told him. "Much. The lady was locked in a gentleman's bedroom. As an attorney, her friend, she felt I was the most eligible person to rescue her. When I arrived, I found the Colonel dead—the key in the lock of the bedroom door. There you have it, Mike—whiskers and all."

Gorman scratched his freckled head. "Question: How did you get in here, if Mrs. Safley was locked in the bedroom?"

O'Hare looked from Gorman to Masterson. The tall, blond young cop was tak-

ing notes. O'Hare said, "This doesn't go in the record, Gorman."

"Why not?"

"I said, it doesn't go in the record."

Gorman waved at Masterson. "Okay. Okay. Take a look around the apartment, Sergeant—but stay out of the bedroom. I don't want you mixed up with any society-type adventuress!"

CHAPTER III

SECOND CORPSE



AFTER Masterson had disappeared into the hall leading to the rear of the apartment, the little detective captain snapped, "Now, Mr. Valentine, how'd you get in here?"

O'Hare grinned, showed him the plastic rule he had used to slip the bolts on the night-locks.

"I knew it!" Gorman jeered. "Sooner or later I'd catch you, sweetheart—and this time I have, but good! Breaking and entering! I can blackmail you the rest of your life."

"Mike, you're cute," O'Hare said. "Would you like to meet Mrs. Safley?"

"Will it do me any good?" the little cop smirked.

"No," O'Hare admitted. "She won't tell you anything I haven't already explained. But, she's a charming lady..."

"You're pretty cocky, aren't you?" Gorman sneered. "You wouldn't be so chipper if I booked you and your charming lady client for murder!"

"Mike," smiled O'Hare. "You know you wouldn't be any good at all pounding a beat out in the Sunset, out where you could hear those lonely waves crash on the beach!"

The captain snorted. "Hah! Let's meet the broad."

O'Hare followed Gorman to the bedroom, saw Diane had moved from the bed to the wingback chair. He said, "Mrs. Safley, this is Captain Mike Gorman of the Police Department."

The lady's face formed a masklike

smile, her lips putty-gray where she had chewed the lipstick.

Gorman was all charm. He said, "Glad to meet you, Mrs. Safley. I've been talking with your attorney, here," he nodded at O'Hare, "and I—"

"Excuse me, Captain." It was Masterson, standing in the bedroom doorway. "There's something back here I think you ought to see," he said.

Gorman, still on his Sunday behavior, begged Mrs. Safley's pardon and left in Masterson's wake. O'Hare hissed, "Drop the country-club act, Diane. When Gorman comes back, be stunned—broken up; but remember, you're not trying to make him!" He stalked out of the room, trailing the two detectives to the back of the apartment. A light had been turned on in the kitchen. O'Hare saw an open door, heard Gorman and Masterson talking inside. He looked in, said, "What have we got?"

GORMAN shrugged. "More sukiyaki," he commented.

The room was small, simply furnished; brown metal bed and matching dresser, a writing-desk under the windows, one seat-sprung overstuffed chair. A man was lying on the bed, facing the wall, his legs drawn up as though he had stomach cramps. He wore white duck pants and a T-shirt. His coarse, black hair stood out like the bristles of a clothes-brush.

The bed-covering was heavily stained with blood; a knife hilt protruded from the man's left side.

O'Hare closed his eyes and swallowed hard.

"Hairy carry," Gorman kept repeating. "Hairy carry. What d'ya know?" He punched O'Hare with a sharp elbow. "Can you identify this joker for me?" he asked.

"It's Wada," O'Hare said, "Colonel Moore's houseboy."

"Uh-huh," Captain Gorman grunted. "You told me the Colonel gave him the night off."

O'Hare nodded. "He did."

"So what's it all about?" Captain Gorman wanted to know. "Moore gets disconnected from his head in the living room, his lady friend is locked in the bedroom, and his boy turns a knife in his own guts back here. I'm only a cop," Gorman went on, speaking to O'Hare. "You understand these people. . . . What happened?"

"If I had a fast answer for you, Mike," O'Hare responded, "we could all go home. I do think I can put together a pretty fair picture of the crime, however."

"Okay, I'll look at the picture," Gorman said. "I don't promise to buy it."

"It's not for sale, Mike; but here's what I see. Someone hacked Moore's head off with a Samurai sword—a rather exotic method of killing. It wouldn't occur to everyone. However, I believe it was common practice among the Japanese Shoguns."

"Shoguns? What's that?" Mike snapped.

"The ruling class of Japan in medieval times," O'Hare explained. "Now, we find the boy—although he was a Nisei, still a Japanese—dead by his own hand, employing the traditional Japanese angular cutting of the abdomen. I believe they call it *hara-kiri*, or *seppuku*."

"I don't know a great deal about the boy's background. But assume he believes he has some valid reason for destroying his boss. He knew Moore was up here with Mrs. Safley—would not be expecting any other company. Mrs. Safley was easy to dispose of. The boy simply buzzed from the front door, betting she'd take cover to protect her good name. He came up the back way; surprised Moore, who expected someone to come from the front entrance. Wada locked Mrs. Safley in the bedroom; engaged Moore in an argument—the outgrowth of which was, possibly, a blow on the head. Next, the lethal stroke of the Samurai sword. He then took his own life."

Gorman said, "Too pat—but I'm stuck with it for now."

"You asked my opinion," O'Hare reminded him.

"Yeah," Gorman flung the word over his shoulder as he strode out of the room, going toward the front of the apartment. "Where'll I find the telephone?" he asked.

O'Hare was one step behind him, replied, "There's one in the bedroom, Mike. But before you call the Hall of Justice and get your mob of technicians and medicos up here—and, incidentally, half a dozen police reporters—would it be all right if I took Mrs. Safley home? If you have no further questions . . ."

Gorman cast a sidewise smirk at O'Hare. "No, go ahead. I'll make sure those police reporters spell your name right, too."

O'Hare's jaw dropped. He studied the little police captain's crooked grin. "I knew I could depend on you, Mike," he said grimly.

Sammy Wong woke O'Hare up the next morning—by dropping a stack of newspapers on his chest. O'Hare sat up in bed, lashing out blindly, sleepily. He opened his eyes; saw Sammy's guileless smile.

"Good morning, boss," the Chinese boy said. "How does it feel to wake up a celebrity?"

O'Hare looked around his bedroom, yawned. He picked up one of the papers, stared dimly at a picture of himself. The story accompanying it was a routine police-department handout, except where Gorman had repeated almost verbatim O'Hare's construction on what had occurred in Colonel Moore's apartment—and credited the source.

DRUGGED with sleep as he was, O'Hare knew the little Inspector well enough to realize there had to be a motive for all this self-effacement. "Gorman must be working on another angle," O'Hare thought. "One he's pretty sure is going to pay off, and show me up."

Sammy wisecracked, "We gotta think of a name for you, boss. The radio's already got the Fat Man, the Thin Man, the Whistler, the Shadow. What are we

gonna call you, boss?"

O'Hare's eyes hardened. "I know what I'll call you, Sammy, unless you hop out to the kitchen and scramble some eggs."

Sammy Wong didn't move. He looked at O'Hare thoughtfully. "On the level—how did you know about Shoguns and *seppuku*?"

O'Hare threw the covers back, swung his feet over the side of the bed. "I went to see *Madame Butterfly* a couple times," he growled. "Now get with those scrambled eggs!"

O'Hare went in the bathroom; nicked himself shaving, swore.

What was Gorman's angle? What was the little heel up to?

The question was still with O'Hare through breakfast, his third cup of coffee. He sat at the table after Sammy removed the dishes; stared unseeingly out the wide picture window at the cold, gray city. The water of the bay was metallic, looked hard as the towers of the Bay Bridge. There'd be more rain today.

He could hear Sammy rattling dishes in the kitchen sink. The sudden, urgent peal of the doorbell jarred the room. O'Hare heard glass shatter in the kitchen, Sammy swearing.

O'Hare chuckled. "Save the pieces," he called. "I'll get the door."

His caller was leaning on the button, by the time O'Hare got to the hall of his apartment, picked up the phone to the lobby. He growled, "Okay, okay; leave it in the wall! Who is it?"

A voice came back, bleary, mechanical: "This is Maurice Safley, Kevin. Can I come up?"

He said, "Yeah," released the lock on the front entrance downstairs. He waited until he heard the elevator stop at his floor, then opened the door. Safley slanted out of the cage, weaved past him. Maurice brought his own private, stale, alcoholic fog into the apartment.

He wore his liquor very badly. His suit was wet, baggy, looked pinched at the shoulders and waist. Safley's figure had gone the way of too many bar-stools. The flesh on his face was loose, gray,

with fever blotches high on the cheeks; his eyes seeming to swim in a bath of mineral oil. "Where is she, Kevin?" he muttered. "Where is Diane?"

O'Hare followed Maurice Safley into the living room. "Isn't she at home? I left her there early this morning; I'd say, about three o'clock."

Safley flopped in a chair before the fireplace, threw his wet hat on the floor at his feet. "No," he declared. "She isn't. And what's this all about, Kevin? I don't understand any of it. Diane's gone. Where is she, Kevin? Where?"

O'Hare studied him. "I don't know."

"But why? Why?" wailed Safley. "Why'd she leave me?"

"I'm not sure she has," O'Hare said.

Safley held his head in his hands. "She wasn't home this morning, when I got in."

O'Hare nodded. "So you told me. Did she leave a message for you? Did you ask her maid?"

"Sure," asked, Safley hiccupped. "I asked the maid and the housekeeper. They didn't know anything—just, Diane didn't sleep there last night."

"Strange," O'Hare conceded thoughtfully. "I took her to the door this morning, saw her go in. You say she didn't sleep there? No one saw her at all?"

"The housekeeper said she heard someone at the door about three-thirty this morning; thought it was Diane talking to a man."

O'Hare walked to the picture window, gazed over the gilt pagoda roofs of Chinatown terraced out below him. "Mrs. Turner didn't hear what Diane said?"

Safley's sour stomach flared back on him again. He shook his head. "No. She thought something was said about 'police.' The man Diane was talking to—"

O'Hare turned away from the window. "Police?" he smiled. "You don't have a thing to worry about, Maurice. Diane is all right."

"What do the police have to do with it?"

"She was in Moore's apartment, after all," Kevin pointed out. "Naturally, I did

the talking last night—wouldn't let Captain Gorman have his innings with her. I think perhaps the little man was piqued. He'd want to get her to himself."

"You mean—she's in jail?"

O'Hare shook his head. "No. She's probably in some hotel room now, with Captain Gorman and a couple of inspectors. They're trying to wear her story down. When they get tired, they'll release her."

"Isn't there something we can do about it, Kevin?" Safley barked, getting a sudden belligerent kick out of his booze. "Is this sort of thing legal, I mean?"

"No," replied O'Hare. "Of course it isn't legal. I don't know what we can do, though, until they release her. It comes under the heading of police work."

Safley looked dumbly into the cold, black opening of the fireplace. "This is a hell of a time," he muttered, "but could you let me have a drink, Kevin?"

"Name it."

Safley said, "Bourbon and water." They went into O'Hare's study.

As he was handing the glass to Safley, he said, "Look. There's no point in tearing around town, working yourself up over this thing. You need rest. Why don't you move into my guest room, take it easy? Just as soon as we learn anything about Diane, you'll know it."

Safley seemed to want to debate the idea, but O'Hare poured him another drink. That settled it. Maurice Safley, the surviving member of the firm of Safley and Moore, passed out.

CHAPTER IV

FATHER OF WADA



UCH amused at the situation, Sammy Wong helped his boss put their guest to bed. He cracked, "What are we running now, boss—a clip joint? You givin' your customers Mickeys?"

O'Hare was struggling to pull off Safley's trousers. "Don't give me any ideas,"

he grunted. "Sometimes I get a little fed up with the practice of law!"

Before they finished bedding Safley down, the doorbell sounded off again. This time, Sammy went to answer it, leaving O'Hare to tuck his client in. In a few minutes, Sammy was back—smiling.

"There's an Oriental to see you, boss. I left him in the living room. Says his name's Wada. Here's his card."

O'Hare glanced at the heavy black engraving. "Matsuo Wada."

"Wait'll you see this joker," Sammy remarked. "He's king-sized—about six foot two. Gray hair, he wears in a butch bob. Eyes like a bloodhound. From the rear, he'll remind you of a circus elephant standing on its hind legs!"

"Okay, okay!" O'Hare cut him off. "Let me form my own opinion."

"I was only trying to save you from shock," Sammy declared solemnly.

Matsuo Wada was standing at the picture window, his back to the room, when O'Hare came in. Sammy's description would do . . .

O'Hare said, "Mr. Wada?"

The Japanese turned, fastened him with sad, watery eyes; bobbed heavily from the shoulders. He lumbered across the room, squashed into the chair O'Hare indicated. "I trust you will pardon this intrusion, sir," he said, "but I called your office and they told me they weren't expecting you in this morning. It is very urgent I speak to you."

O'Hare nodded. "Quite all right, Mr. Wada. What can I do for you?"

"I hope you will be able to correct a very great wrong," Wada stated, with effort. "You see, Mr. O'Hare, I am George Wada's father."

O'Hare sat down on the edge of the davenport.

The old Japanese gentleman seemed to be searching for words, found them. "I read the papers this morning, sir," he said. "Their interpretation of what happened at Colonel Moore's apartment last night was very interesting—but, I'm afraid, quite inaccurate. I'm sure," he

went on quietly, "you wouldn't wish any injustice—"

"As a matter of fact," O'Hare interrupted him, "I'm embarrassed about that newspaper account. When I made those remarks, they weren't for publication. Being an attorney, I realize too well they're loaded."

Wada held up a limp, fat hand, its palm the color of a fish's belly. He wheezed, "I know George couldn't have done this thing. He wasn't capable."

O'Hare's eyes narrowed. "What do you mean?"

Wada moved his big shoulders in a mountainous shrug. "Perhaps the easiest way for me to explain is to tell you a little about George. He was born in San Francisco; attended public school here, graduated from the University of California. He enlisted in the Army during the war and went to Japan with the occupation forces, where he was on Colonel Moore's staff. He and the Colonel became close friends, and when they returned to this country and mustered out of uniform, it was the Colonel's suggestion George work for him—at least, until George could save enough money to continue his postgraduate work."

O'HARE nodded thoughtfully. "Very revealing, Mr. Wada, but—"

Again the spongy-looking palm was held up. "The point I wish to make, Mr. O'Hare," the old gentleman rumbled on, "is that George was first and last, and simply, an American young man. He was not a member of a Black Dragon society. All of this Shogun symbolism would never have occurred to him. As far as his ancestors were concerned, George thought of them as strange little men with paper parasols and kimonos."

O'Hare rubbed the back of his hand against his jaw, stood up. "I'm sorry, Mr. Wada," he said. "I wish I could help you. But I can't call those papers in. I can't even make them print a retraction, because I did say those things."

For a moment, the old gentleman seemed to sink lower in the chair. Then

he sighed heavily, boosted himself to his feet. "Yes, of course—there isn't a great deal to be done, is there?"

O'Hare walked with him to the door. "I will promise you this, Mr. Wada," he said humbly. "I feel a heavy responsibility in this matter. I'll do everything in my power to see your boy's name is cleared."

Wada dipped his close-cropped head, his thick shoulders. "Thank you, sir," he said. "You will find some means, I'm sure." He extended his hand to O'Hare.

After Wada left, O'Hare got his own hat and coat, told Sammy he was on his way to the Hall of Justice to go a few fast rounds with Captain Gorman. He said, "Look in on Mr. Safley once in awhile—make sure he's all right. If he makes up and wants a drink, okay."

Sammy grinned. "If he wants a drink? Are you quoting odds? If you are, I want some of it."

O'Hare found Gorman in his office. The little cop looked almost as tired as his old, roll-top desk, the filing cabinets leaning against each other in the corner of the room. Gorman had enough energy to wave O'Hare to a chair beside the desk.

"Greetings, counsellor," he rasped. "I suppose you worked yourself up a hang-nail this morning, cutting out newspaper clippings for your scrapbook."

O'Hare said, "I want to talk to you about that, Mike. What was the idea of putting this hunch of mine in your hand-out?"

"I thought it dressed us up," Gorman grinned slyly. "Made us look real intellectual, like those Hollywood detectives."

O'Hare nodded. "Okay, I can take a rib. But Wada's father was up to see me. The old boy is pretty shattered."

Gorman leaned back in his office chair, cocked a foot on an open drawer of the desk. "Yeah, I know. He was crying on my shoulder, too. He said his boy wasn't the type, or something. What the hell? Nobody's ever the type to commit murder. If they were, the City could give

this job to a casting director, and no more crime."

O'Hare said, "How's the case developing, Mike? Anything new?"

"What could be new?" the inspector countered. "Everybody in this caper's dead, aren't they?"

"About fingerprints, Mike—did anything come down from the lab yet?"

"Yeah," replied Gorman. "We got one perfect set of prints off the handle of the knife the kid buried in his own guts. A big help! Of course, the Samurai sword was nothing. The hilt was too highly decorated."

"I see," O'Hare remarked.

GORMAN sat up, dropping his feet hard on the floor. "You know, it's funny about the Samurai sword," he went on. "I went over to Safley & Moore's this morning with the Public Administrator. He's buttoning the joint up till after this gets squared away. Some curio shop they got there, huh?"

O'Hare nodded. "They import a lot of things from the Orient, yes. What was this about the Samurai sword?"

Mike squinted at him. "Over there, I find the mate to the sword in Moore's apartment. Exactly like it—scabbard, everything—except, the one at the store was dull as a cheese knife. I don't think it'd even hack through a cheese. So, whether his father thinks he's the type or not, it looks as though little George Wada had been planning this bloodletting for some time—at least long enough to put an edge on the pig-sticker at the apartment."

O'Hare stood up. "Well, I guess that covers everything," he remarked. "Unless, Mike, you want to tell me when you plan to release Diane Safley."

"Release her?" cackled Mike Gorman. "First, I have to take her into custody."

"Come off it, Mike," O'Hare waved a hand at him. "I know how you work. After I left her at her home this morning, I understand through her housekeeper a couple of officers came by and picked her up."

Gorman leaned his elbows on the desk, nesting his chin in his bony fingers. "What kind of a routine you giving me now?" he growled. "I say the dame is still at liberty, as far as this Department is concerned."

"Then we'd better check with the Sheriff's office, Mike, because somebody put the pinch on Diane this morning and she isn't home yet. I was talking to her husband before I came down here."

Gorman shook his head. "You know the Sheriff's office wouldn't—"

O'Hare wagged his head at him. "A good show, Mike, but you're wasting talent on me. All right, you've got her for twenty-four hours on a holding charge. But expect me in here tomorrow morning—with a writ!"

Gorman slammed his fist down on the top of the desk. "So help me God, I haven't copped your dame! What would I want with her?"

"You'd better think of something, Mike," O'Hare told him, "or you'll have a rough day in court."

CHAPTER V

DEATH STRIKES AGAIN



O'HARE dropped by his office, on the fourteenth floor of the Russ Building; looked over the day's mail and gossiped a little with the partners. Everyone in the office made a fuss over him, insisted he tell the inside story of the Moore killing.

"There's no inside story," he told them. "Just what you read in the papers."

That didn't satisfy anyone, but they let him off. How close could they question the office brain? He told his secretary he'd be down early in the morning: "We'll kick some of this correspondence around," he told her, indicating a stack of letters in the center of his highly-polished desk. He had a drink at the bar downstairs, and then drove home.

Sammy Wong was on hand to take his hat and topcoat, answered O'Hare's question about their star roomer, Maurice Saf-

ley, with a smirk: "He's feeling no pain."

Sammy followed O'Hare to the living room, watched him sit down. "Boss," he said, "what would you like for dinner tonight?"

O'Hare looked up at him, grinned. "Is this my birthday, or something? All of a sudden, I have a choice."

"It's an occasion," Sammy said. "I won't be cooking for you after tonight."

"What're you talking about?" O'Hare scowled.

The Chinese boy moistened his lips. "I'm—I'm quitting."

"Oh? Just like that, you're quitting. Aren't you happy here, Sammy? I thought we had a pretty good deal."

"So did I," answered Wong solemnly. "I liked working for you, Mr. O'Hare. Really, I liked it—but . . ."

"Look." O'Hare was sitting forward in the chair. "If there's something wrong, let's talk it over. I mean, I can't stand the suspense, Sammy—what did I do?"

"I don't want to tell you, Mr. O'Hare," Sammy said.

O'Hare sprang to his feet. He grabbed the Chinese boy by the shoulders, spun him to the davenport. "Now, look, bucko," he said, "You're sitting there until you tell me what's eating you. If I'm not paying you enough, say so!"

"It's not the pay, Mr. O'Hare," Sammy said, looking frightened.

"All right, then. What?"

"Well," said Sammy, "I guess, if you want me to, I'll tell you. I—I just wouldn't feel safe in the same apartment with you any more."

O'Hare scowled down at him for a minute, his big hands folded across his chest. "Sammy," he said, "if this is some kind of an Oriental gag, I'm prepared to say no more about it if you don't."

"It's no gag, Mr. O'Hare," Sammy said with a shake of his head. He edged off the davenport.

"Then I wish you'd make some kind of sense," O'Hare snapped angrily.

Sammy sucked his breath. "Make sense, like you did last night?" he asked, his throat tight.

"What's last night got to do with it?"

"When you came in last night," Sammy's lips kept getting dry as he spoke. "When you came in last night from your walk, you tossed me your wet topcoat. I took it out in the kitchen, hung it over a chair to dry. Later, I picked up the suit you'd been wearing and took it out there, too. Strange thing, Mr. O'Hare, but your suit seemed wetter than your topcoat. Maybe I think it's screwy to walk in the rain, anyway—but I don't think you'd be carrying your coat.

"It didn't figure, Mr. O'Hare, unless you had to wash something like blood off the sleeve—but that would leave it wet. So, the rain was a good break. You'd get soaked clear through; Sammy wouldn't think anything about it."

"How many people did you tell this wild story to, Sammy?" barked O'Hare. "The police?"

"Sure," Sammy said. "You don't think I'm nuts—I want to end up like Moore's houseboy? We Chinese are different. We don't go for *hara-kiri*."

"That was a jerky thing for you to do, Sammy," O'Hare declared.

"I don't think so!"

The voice came from O'Hare's study door; he recognized it even before he wheeled. Mike Gorman. Masterson towered behind him. They sauntered into the living room, Gorman adding, "It's about time somebody gave us poor cops a break."

"I'll give you a hole in the head," growled O'Hare. "You ought to know better, Mike—lining up with this kid's imagination!"

"Why shouldn't I?" rasped Gorman. "I remember you're the boy who knows how to get past locked doors. You could have been waiting for Wada, when he came back to his room, after serving his boss and Mrs. Safley dinner, and killed him. Then you might have pussyfooted downstairs and chased Mrs. Safley to cover by playing the doorbell. It would be no big stunt for you to return to the apartment, lock Mrs. Safley in the bedroom, and chop-chop with the Jap sword

on Colonel Moore. You *could* do all that—and strangle Safley's old woman!"

Kevin O'Hare had his lip curled, a devastating answer ready, until Gorman added that last. His heavy jaw dropped. "Strangle Diane?" he stammered. "Then—then, she's been found?"

"Yeah," grinned Gorman, off-center. "How long did you expect her body would stay at the bottom of the Bay?"

"In the Bay?" gasped O'Hare. "You're sure it was Diane?"

"Positive," said Gorman solemnly. "I saw the body at the Morgue, just before I came up here. It was a little beat from the barnacles on the pilings under the wharf where they found her, but there's no question about identification.

"What was the matter, Mr. Counselor?" jeered Gorman. "Did she let something slip when you were driving her home from Moore's apartment? Did she know too much?"

O'Hare dealt himself a slow study of the three faces in front of him. All of them were sober, waiting. He said, "I hate like hell to ruin your day, Mike, but I'm afraid I'll have to. Come on."

"What are you trying to get away with?" snapped Mike Gorman.

THE attorney stopped a few feet from the door of the guest room, answered Mike. "Murder," he grinned; adding, "Now, look. There is only one way out of this room, and this is it. I want to go in here by myself for a couple of minutes. You can wait here—I can't leave without passing you."

"Is this on the level, about the door?" Gorman asked Sammy Wong.

The Chinese boy nodded.

"Then, okay," said Gorman. "Only no tricks, sweetheart."

"Don't worry, Mike," O'Hare answered. "I won't jump out a sixteen-story window just to make you look good."

He opened the door quietly and stepped into the darkened room. The day was gray enough, and the drawn Venetian blinds brought on a total blackout. O'Hare ran the blinds up. While he was

near the chair where they'd thrown Safley's clothes, he picked up the body-sprung pants and took them to the bed. Safley smelled like a very stale drunk, indeed. O'Hare shook his guest's shoulder, said, "Wake up, Maurice. I've got news for you—good news."

Safley grunted and rolled over, his face red, welted by the pillow. He mumbled, "Yeah? What news?"

"Diane's here," said O'Hare. "I had her wait in the living room. Thought it best. You wouldn't want her to see you like this."

"See me like this," echoed Safley vaguely. He pulled himself up by gripping O'Hare's jacket collar. "You said Diane's here?"

"Right. So you worked yourself up for nothing. How about crawling out of the sack, now? I'll help you dress."

He held Safley's pants for him. Safley threw his hairy shins over the side of the bed, reaching for the bedlamp as he did. "Gotta have some light . . . Gotta see what I'm doing," he muttered.

O'Hare was moving with the lamp-base that Safley swung at his head, managed to catch it on his shoulder. He fouled the pants around Safley's wrist before his friend could raise the lamp for a finishing blow—jerked Maurice to his knees.

O'Hare's right shoulder was numb, but he had too much left hand for Safley. He hammered it into Safley's face until Maurice lost interest in the whole thing. Then he opened the door.

"Mike," he said, "there's a guy in here you should meet. In a couple of minutes, I have a hunch he'll be burning to confess three homicides."

It wasn't exactly that easy. Maurice had to be urged to talk, even after O'Hare told him, "Look, when you killed Diane and threw her body in the Bay, you really yanked the rug out from under yourself. Diane was your alibi, said you were in Stockton on business last night. I think she really believed you were. So, when I took her home this morning and she found you at the house, she wasn't long coming around to the answer. She

knew you had killed Wada and Colonel Moore. Maybe she even guessed why."

"You're crazy!" snorted Safley.

"Then why did you try to conk me with that lamp base?" O'Hare smiled thinly. "Did you just decide you didn't like me? Or was it because you knew I was lying about Diane—she couldn't be here?"

GORMAN said he'd heard enough. "I'll take this joker downtown," he asserted crisply. "Maybe I can encourage him to open up."

"Okay," shrugged O'Hare. "I suppose you have to earn your money. And, while you're at it, you might have someone check the books of Safley & Moore. As their former attorney, there are ethical reasons why I can't suggest that since the Commies took over in China, the importing trade has been a little off. You'll have to find out about that for yourself.

"But it's possible the partnership insurance on Moore's life had begun to appear very desirable to Maurice. More desirable than bankruptcy."

He studied Safley's face for a long minute, saw the skin color drain down inside Maurice's tight, wilted collar. O'Hare winked at Gorman and Master-son. "I suspect we may have something."

O'Hare went to the door with Safley and the two cops. Maurice was embarrassed by the bright metal on his wrist, slunk into the elevator, keeping his eyes averted. O'Hare stood in his door and watched the elevator indicator.

When he turned around, he saw Sammy Wong. The Chinese boy had taken off his white coat, was wearing a suede jacket. There was a small suitcase in his hand. He couldn't meet O'Hare's eyes.

"Now, where do you think you're going?" O'Hare wanted to know.

The boy's thin shoulders rose and fell. He shuffled his feet. "Why—I—" he stammered. "I . . . I thought I better look for a new job—after what I did."

"You're a stinker," admitted O'Hare grimly. "But you still make the best matzoh-ball soup in San Francisco. It looks like I'm stuck with you!" ● ● ●

Neighbors Is Lovely

By GREG SANFORD

Joe had his troubles with that clunk Gilhooley in the flat below

GILHOOLEY was at it again. He glared, as Joe came up the walk, and Joe could see he was itching for a brawl. But Joe breezed past him up the steps as though he refused to ad-



Joe held up the electric cord for the gangster's inspection

mit that anything so low as Gilhooley existed.

That treatment always got Gilhooley. "Listen, Loomis," he snarled after Joe, "I'm warnin' you—and this is the last warnin' you get. Just once more with that *thing* upstairs, and I'm gonna—"

"You're gonna drop dead—I hope," Joe put in with elegant calm. He waited just long enough to get the satisfaction of see-

ing Gilhooley go red in the face, then he pushed open the front door and started up the stairs to his flat.

Neighbors, Joe thought with disgust. And, of all the neighbors in the world, he had to draw a clunk like Gilhooley in the flat below his. Trying to make trouble over nothing—well, practically nothing. Now if Gilhooley had been halfway nice about it and registered his complaint in a nice way, Joe might have done something about the *thing*. But no, Gilhooley had to shoot his big yap off, making threats.

Well, to hell with Gilhooley, Joe thought as he reached the top landing and opened the door to his flat.

He switched on the hall light. The place was awfully quiet, what with Susy and the kids away in the country. Got to be pretty lonesome. . . .

But, as Joe hung his hat on the clothes tree, he suddenly got the feeling that he wasn't alone. The first inkling he had was the smell of stale cigarette smoke. Joe didn't smoke, and anyways hadn't been home all day.

The second inkling was a little more definite. Joe heard a sound behind him—then he felt something uncomfortably hard prodded into his back. He almost let out a yelp.

"Keep it nice and quiet, buster," an unpleasant voice told him from behind.

JOE turned slowly, and then he was face to face with a face which, being more than somewhat rat-like, was every bit as unpleasant as the voice. It belonged to

a little man whose little hand was competently wrapped around a big gun pointed at Joe's middle.

"What gives?" Joe asked, trying to keep his voice steady. He didn't like guns.

"You got company," the unpleasant little man said dryly. "You got objections?"

Joe had, but he didn't name them. "H-how'd you get in here?" he asked instead.

Rat Face shrugged and tittered. "I'm in. Been in all day, practically." He waved the gun. "Get into the parlor and we'll talk."

Joe walked ahead into the parlor. "Siddown," Rat Face told him. Joe sat.

Rat Face stared at him in sardonic amusement for a moment, and Joe found the silence uncomfortable.

"Okay, now here's the pitch," Rat Face finally said, poking a cigarette between his thin lips and lighting it with his free hand. "I'm hot, see? I need a hideout—somewhere nice and respectable-like where the cops wouldn't t'ink of lookin'. So this is it, see?"

Joe didn't see, but he kept quiet. Rat Face grinned at him knowingly. "Wifey's away, huh?"

Joe nodded reluctantly. "How'd you know?" he muttered.

"Elemental. First I case the joint from the outside, see? I look in the back yard. It's Monday, so natch everybody has got their washin' out on the line. Except this here flat. No washin', no wifey—see?" Rat Face smirked, proud of his logic.

"So I enter," he continued. "Furniture all over with sheets. That proves I doped it out right; wifey's away. You, buster," he told Joe, "I didn't figure on one way or the other."

"My wife and kids are in the country," Joe said. He added with meaningful dignity, "Me, I work for a living."

"Okay," Rat Face said, unabashed. "That makes it nice and cosy. Now we start keeping house together, just you and me."

"You mean you're going to stay here?" Joe demanded incredulously.

"Rat Face tittered. "Sure, why not? Maybe a couple of days—till the heat's off, anyway." He made a broad gesture. "Ice box full—all the comforts of home—so why not?"

"B-but you can't!" Joe spluttered. "I—I mean, like tomorrow I got to report for work."

"Just call in and say you're sick," Rat Face said.

"But then I lose my time," Joe protested. "I need the dough."

"Look, buster," Rat Face scowled, and his voice had dropped to a dangerous monotone, "there ain't no use beating your gums at me." He gestured with the gun. "Baby here says you do like I say or else, see?"

Joe saw. He felt very helpless. He wondered what he was going to do next.

Rat Face told him. "I'm hungry," he said. "Get into the kitchen and make with some supper."

Later, Rat Face slurped down the last of his coffee and sat back contentedly. "Not bad, buster, not bad." He grinned through broken yellow teeth. "You and me are gonna get along—" he patted the gun that lay alongside his plate—"as long as you behave, see?"

NODDING woodenly, Joe got up and began to carry the dishes over to the sink. His mind was turning it all over dazedly. But thinking didn't seem to help. This was one sweet fix he was in. "You expecting any visitors, buster?" Rat Face demanded suddenly.

"No—" Joe started to say, then tried a quick switch—"Well, yeah; come to think of it, there might be."

"You're cute," Rat Face sneered. "Okay, so you ain't expectin' nobody. So if somebody calls, you get rid of 'em quick, see?" "Or else!" he added with tiresome emphasis.

Joe sighed in resignation and began washing the dishes in silence.

Rat Face was fidgety. "Skip the dishes for now," he rasped. "Get a pack of

cards and we'll play some gin."

Joe dried his hands and reached into a drawer for the cards, but he shook his head apologetically. "I don't play cards," he said. "Just my wife; sometimes, she—"

"Ahh." Rat Face growled in disgust. "So okay, gimme the pack! I'll play solitaire."

Joe handed over the cards. Rat Face began to lay them out. *Frapp—frapp—frapp . . .*

Joe's mind was still working desperately. He wished he *were* expecting visitors. Anyone. Even that slob Gilhooley!

He caught his breath and froze. Rat Face looked up quickly, sensing it. "Yeah?" he said, eyeing Joe suspiciously.

"Nothing," Joe mumbled. "Only—Well, I haven't anything to do with myself."

"So?"

"So I was thinking—" Joe's voice cracked a little, because his mouth had gone very dry, "that I'd get some washing done. I mean, clothes and things—"

"So?" Rat Face's eyes, like black beads, did not waver from Joe's face.

"So I was wondering if I could—" Joe nodded nervously at the washing machine that stood in a corner of the kitchen. "I usually do it Monday nights, when the wife's away."

"Yeah?" Rat Face's lips twisted sardonically. "You're a bright boy, ain'tcha, buster? You wouldn't maybe be figurin' on hanging the wash outside, and maybe be fixin' up some kind of signal, now would you?"

"No, honest," Joe protested. Hastily he reached into a drawer and withdrew a length of cord; then held it up for the gangster's inspection. "See, all I do is string up a line right here in the kitchen . . ." His voice trailed off, and he waited apathetically for the other man's reaction.

For a few intense seconds Rat Face's eyes continued to bore speculatively into Joe's. Then he relaxed and grinned.

"Hey, you're a regular wifey's boy, ain't you, buster?" he tittered. He waved

a hand contemptuously. "Sure, go ahead and wash your undies, only—" he added a final warning—"you try to pull anything funny, and Baby, here, is gonna talk to you, see?"

Joe nodded mutely and almost killed himself trying to look casual as he went over to the machine. He wondered if his pounding heart was showing through his shirt. He attached the rubber hose to the faucet and began to run water into the tub. Then he opened the laundry hamper, withdrew clothes and tossed them into the tub. Next he added soap flakes. Then he breathed a silent prayer and switched on the machine.

With a rumble and a heave, the ancient machine got to work. *Rumba-bub-bub . . . rumba-bub-bub . . . rumba-bub-bub . . .*

Rat Face glanced up from his cards in amazement. "Holy cats!" he exclaimed, "what a bucket of bolts. Sounds like it's ready to take off!"

FOR an agonizing moment Joe thought he was going to be ordered to turn it off. But Rat Face went back to his solitaire and Joe began to breathe again. And he kept praying . . .

"Say, ain't you finished, yet?" Rat Face growled, an hour later. "That Leap-in' Minnie is starting to get on me nerves."

"Almost," Joe said hoarsely, and he'd just about given up hope. "Another minute or two."

"Well, shake it up!" Rat Face suddenly caught the humor of his own remark. "*Shake it up!* Heh-heh, that's good!" he chortled. "Ain't it?" he demanded, searching Joe's strained face.

"Y-yeah, that's f-funny, all right," Joe stammered hastily. "Very funny—"

Abruptly the doorbell shrilled. Joe thought he was going to faint. Rat face jumped up, clawing for the gun.

"Who's that?" he grated, his eyes dangerous.

"I—I don't know," Joe whispered.

"All right," Rat Face waved him to the doorway. "Get out there." He spoke swiftly, and his voice was like the edge

of a knife. "Just remember, buster, in case you get ideas, Baby here is goin' to be aimed right at the back of your head. So don't try nothin'. Just tell whoever it is to beat it. You got it?"

"I got it," Joe whispered. The doorbell sounded again insistently. They went out into the hall, Rat Face padding silently behind Joe like a cat. With the gun he prodded Joe to the door, then stepped out of sight.

Joe's legs were shaking as he opened the door. A very big policeman stood on the landing, holding a pencil and notebook. "I got a complaint—" he started to say.

"Beat it," Joe told him happily, and stuck out his tongue for good measure. The very big policeman blinked and stared. Then he drew a deep breath, his face began to turn red and his jaw began to jut dangerously.

"Oh, yeah?" he said slowly, and reached out a deliberate hand to push Joe inside. That was it. Joe suddenly plunged headlong past him to the stairs. "Inside—" he yelled, almost before he'd landed—"look out!"

Rat Face was so startled, he dropped "Baby." And, by the time he started to belly across the floor to retrieve it, the very big policeman had sensed something illegal and trod on Rat Face's hand with his very big foot . . .

The three of them started down the stairs. Gilhooley watched their descent from his doorway on the lower landing,

his eyes alight with triumph. "I told you, Loomis!" he shrilled. "I told you I was going to call a cop if you turned that *thing* on again."

"One side, mister," said the cop as they reached the landing and continued their march down the stairs.

For the moment, Gilhooley failed to notice either Rat Face or the handcuffs whereby he was secured. He followed them down the stairs, chattering excitedly. "Honest, officer, that's the way it's been for a year now. Every time he turns that *thing* on upstairs, it's like an earthquake. You ought to see my living room—plaster all over the floor. I warned him. I told him if he didn't get rid of that damned machine, I'd—"

"Gilhooley." Joe paused on the last step to gaze beatifically up at that gentleman. "Gilhooley, tomorrow I am going to buy a brand new washer. The quietest make they got."

Gilhooley stared, then quickly retreated up one step as though preparing to ward off an expected blow.

"And Gilhooley," Joe continued, shaking his head reassuringly, "just as soon as I get back from the police station, I am going to buy you a beer. I am going to buy you several beers."

"Come on," called the cop.

"I'm coming," Joe called back. "And Gilhooley," he concluded with much feeling, gazing earnestly into his neighbor's astonished eyes and reaching up to grasp his hand, "Gilhooley, I love you."

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by Carter
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*Archer and his girl friend
face the past—and see the
shadow of the future*



That was no ghost
there on the floor

THE CAR climbed the last hill, rounded the last curve and Randy Archer stepped on the brake, slowing the car while his left hand pointed toward a cluster of stately trees in the valley.

"There," he said, "is home."

Lynn Baker slipped her hand under his arm. "Where? All I see are those trees."

"The house is hidden by them," Archer said. "It's a big place. We won't live there after I get my affairs straightened up. Maybe a month—that's all you'll have to endure, darling. There isn't even a neighbor for a mile or more."

"I don't mind." She looked up at him and Archer never failed to marvel at the

blueness of her eyes. They'd been child-like eyes when he first met her in Paris six months ago, but they had acquired a maturity now. So had her whole body, every beautiful, soft curve of it.

"It will be mighty different from that two-room apartment we had in Paris, Lynn. A lot different, but there'll never be a place I'll like more than those two rooms—and the memory of you sharing them with me."

"They were wonderful weeks," she said with a sigh of bliss. "But maybe the ones we look forward to will be just as good."

"Never," he said staunchly.

"What about—Ruth?" Lynn asked slowly.

"She's part of a past that's been long dead with me," Archer told her. "Let's talk about pleasanter things. Oh, yes—and this isn't pleasant. I talked to Attorney Bill Kirby on the transatlantic phone day before yesterday and I told him we were sailing and to have the house made ready. After seven years it ought to need a mild dusting at least, don't you think?"

"Oh," she said in slight dismay. "I'd forgotten that, too. Mr. Kirby won't be expecting us for a week. But I don't mind, Randy. I still think we were lucky to get those plane seats."

Archer turned off the road onto the long, winding driveway which curved in and around the big trees. Then the house was before them and Lynn gasped.

"It has twenty-two rooms," he told her. "That's a lot of dusting."

"Lead on," she said cheerfully. "I've faced worse things."

HE STOPPED the car in front of the long and wide porch. Nothing seemed to have changed. The Venetian blinds were all down and closed, otherwise the house had a look of having been lived in all along.

"This was never my idea of a home," he said. "Ruth wanted it and what Ruth wanted she got. Oh, I'm sorry, we weren't to talk about her, were we? But perhaps we should—"

"Tell me when we're inside," Lynn said. "It still seems so strange to me. Six months ago I was the loneliest girl in Paris and in Paris that's lonely, Randy. Then we looked

at each other across that little restaurant and my whole life changed."

"You're not sorry?" he asked. "About the apartment we shared, and all?"

She smiled at him. "If you had asked me that seven months ago, I would have been terribly ashamed but—well, I'm not. I'm glad and I'm happy because I've had you and I don't give a damn what the conditions were. Now let's go in and face the past."

They climbed the porch stairs and Archer got keys out of his pocket. He opened the massive front door and then turned to her and reached out his arms.

"Over the threshold," he grinned. "That's the custom."

She backed away a step. "Randy, not now. Not this time. I—I think we ought to wait until we're married."

He nodded. "I'm sorry. Of course, Lynn. Come on in and see what I left behind me so gladly almost seven years ago."

She held onto his arm tightly as they walked slowly down the long, graceful reception hall. He was glad to have her at his side because the moment he had passed beyond the threshold, Ruth seemed to be closing in on him again. He shuddered and Lynn felt it. She held on tighter, knowing, in her womanly mind, just what he was thinking.

"It's like a—tomb," he said in a half whisper. "The living room is this way. Our Paris apartment would fit into one small corner of it."

He threw open the door and Lynn gasped. The room was tremendous, the furniture oversized, lush and worth a fortune. The rug had a piling that felt as if she walked on air, a tremendous mirror directly across the room reflected her and Archer, and seemed to make pygmies of them.

"Randy," she said in a small voice, "that lawyer must have sent an army of cleaners here already. The place is spotless."

"So I see. Good old Kirby. He's a stuffed shirt but efficient. Want to sit down for a few minutes?"

"Yes," she said. "Randy, I'm scared of this place. I—I don't belong here. You're still married to the woman who lived here with you."

He helped her into a davenport which

could have held a dozen of her, and he sat down very close beside her.

"Lynn," he said, "you've got to understand things all over again. Yes, Ruth and I lived here. But that's all we did, live. There wasn't even a whisper of love in this crazy old ark of a place. Ruth liked to shine—to impress others. That was only one minor fault. She was the most demanding woman I've ever known."

"Tell me, Randy, why did you ever marry her?"

He shrugged faintly. "She wasn't like that when we were married. We'd known each other a long time. Maybe I overlooked her real nature, but I don't think so. I think this house did that to her."

"And—what happened almost seven years ago?" Lynn asked.

"I told you. But okay: here it is again. Ruth was jealous, among other things. Insanely jealous! And I had a cute secretary in my office. Ruth accused me of noticing her too much. Of course I noticed her; she was beautiful to look at. But I had no interest in her nor she in me. In fact, the whole thing finally boiled over when I helped her marry the guy she was in love with."

"And that's when Ruth—when your wife—"

"Yes," he interrupted her, "Ruth went crazy. This secretary, her name was Cora Taylor, was having trouble with her parents. They didn't like the fellow she was in love with. She had to meet him secretly, so I'd call her father and tell him she was working overtime. Yeah, I was Cupid's little helper. And after a while, I told Ruth the same thing. The night Cora was to be married, I agreed to drive her over the state line where her boy friend was waiting. Naturally, she swore me to secrecy and I said nothing of this to Ruth. I didn't quite have her figured out then, you see."

LYNN BAKER thought that over for a moment or two before answering.

"And Ruth tried to kill that girl, Randy?" she asked.

"Yes. It seems she had hired some con-
niving private detective to spy on me. When Cora and I drove away, Ruth was following

us. Oh, I suppose it looked funny, but she should have asked questions and been ready to believe the answers. Instead she drove me off the road, walked up to the car and started shooting."

"How awful!" Lynn gasped.

"It was pretty rugged, but things turned out not so bad after all. Cora wasn't badly hit. Ruth, probably under the impression she had killed Cora, drove off. We found where her car had run through a bridge railing. It was hauled out of the river later, but Ruth's body wasn't in it. The police said she had been washed out to sea. Almost all the bodies of people lost in that part of the river were never found."

"And in three more weeks she will be declared legally dead. Randy, I'll be glad for you when it's all over."

He nodded. "From that time until the moment we met, I detested women. I let Ruth poison me against your whole sex. I took over the management of our European branch and left everything in the hands of Kirby. But hang it all, when you and I began living together, I knew we had to come back here. To this country where we belonged!"

"You never tried to divorce Ruth?" Lynn asked.

"No, because I didn't care. Then when I phoned Kirby and said I wanted to get married again, he told me it would be easier and better to wait these few weeks until the legal seven years had passed. It would be quicker, too, and of course he's right. After all, what difference does it make? Just because we have a license to hang on the wall won't make us any the more married than we are right now."

"But I'll be glad when we do have that license, Randy. Let's forget all this. We'll become morbid. Show me the rest of the house."

They toured the first floor and weren't half through it before both of them knew this house hadn't been empty these seven years. There was food in the kitchen. Fresh, wholesome food. Things had been used during those years, even the house showed a certain amount of wear and tear.

Archer said, "If Kirby leased this place without telling me, I'll have his hide."

"Oh, never mind," Lynn said. "I wouldn't want to live here anyway. What difference does it make? Also, I'm very tired. I never sleep on planes worth a hoot. Let's pick out a bedroom."

He grinned. "Now you're talking. Come on! This way."

He avoided the master bedroom which he had once shared with Ruth. There was a smaller and just as comfortable room down the hall. It was as neat as a pin, but they were both too tired to comment. Archer ran downstairs and brought up their bags. While Lynn showered, Archer sat beside a window overlooking the rear of the estate and in the cold moonlight which had already taken the place of day, he thought he had never seen a bleaker spot.

Somewhere a door slammed. Archer jumped to his feet, rushed out into the hall and to the head of the stairs. There was no one below. "Bill," he called out. "Bill Kirby, is that you?"

There was nothing but silence to answer him. He frowned and returned to the bedroom. Lynn was still under the shower and he was grateful for that. He started to close the door and that was when he caught the faint odor of mimosa.

He almost sneezed, just as he always sneezed when Ruth had worn that heavy scent. He closed his eyes, shook his head to clear the cobwebs and told himself he was a fool, but he was glad Lynn hadn't heard that door slam. Perhaps, he told himself, he'd been mistaken and it was just one of those snaps a house makes sometimes.

BUT WHEN he finally put the light out and sank back in his twin bed, he didn't sleep. It seemed impossible. More and more he had a feeling that things were not right here. He kept sensing the presence of Ruth, now long dead. She would have come back to this house, if coming back was possible, he told himself sleepily. The idea made him break out in a cold sweat.

Lynn slept quietly, as she always did. He was happy about that, at least. But with every passing moment he grew wider awake. Without knowing why, he found himself lis-

[Turn page]

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tening. So when he heard the doorknob turn, he was instantly alert. There wasn't much light in the room, for they had drawn the heavy drapes, but his eyes were accustomed to the dark and he watched the door slowly open.

That was all it did, open wide. Nobody stepped inside. Nothing moved. He lay perfectly still, waiting to see what would happen next. He was saturated with sweat, but his mouth was as dry as sand.

Then he saw the shadow. What made it, he didn't know. Perhaps moonlight from some corridor window. At any rate it was there, moving silently, closer and closer toward the door. He saw the shadow's hand come up and there was the silhouette of a gun in it. He saw trousered legs take another step.

Archer silently slipped out of bed and, in his bare feet, tiptoed across the room toward the fireplace. He picked up the heavy poker, finding it by sheer memory, and moved toward the open door.

Suddenly there was a wild, ear-splitting scream and that figure came plunging through the door, gun extended and aimed at Lynn's bed. Archer never hesitated. He brought down that poker as hard as he could swing it. The scream was cut off and the shadowy form collapsed into an indistinguishable shape on the floor.

Lynn was awake and he sprang to her side. "Somebody," he breathed, "with a gun. He may not be unconscious. Get into the corridor. Hurry, Lynn!"

She sped toward the door, veered around the fallen form and vanished. Archer, holding the poker ready, found a light switch and snapped it on. He inhaled sharply. That was no ghost on the floor. It was a very substantial body, but that of a woman wearing slacks. That was why he had thought she was a man.

Her hair had been tightly rolled on top of her head, but it was unloosened now and had fallen into a silken mass beside her head. She was lying face down. Archer moved up to her, noting the gun which she still clutched. Even before he turned her head gently, he knew who she was. It was a ghost—of sorts.

Ruth was back. Ruth behind a gun once more, ready to do murder again. Lynn's

voice floated up from somewhere. He hurried out of the room, called her name and she called back from downstairs. He fled down the stairway and she was waiting for him at the foot of it. He took her in his arms, held her very tightly.

"It's Ruth," he whispered. "She came back."

Lynn struggled in his embrace until he was holding her at arm's length. Suddenly, in the face of danger, she was a practical woman.

"Randy, she's been here all the time. That's why the house is so neat. She never left it."

He nodded in sudden understanding. "She must have faked that suicide," he said. "Perhaps she's mad, perhaps she thinks you're Cora. Darling, this will change our plans—delay things—but please, please wait for me."

"You know I will," she said. "But what about Ruth? Is she—is she—?"

"Dead? I don't think so. I hit her on top of the head, but she always wore her hair piled up and it would have acted like a mattress. Stay here, Lynn. I'll go back up there and see how she is. There may be fireworks when she wakes up, but I don't care. She won't get away with this."

He ran up the stairs, reached the room and saw that Ruth hadn't moved. He also saw something else which filled him with horror. The rug beside her head was slowly soaking up blood. He knelt beside her and almost cried out. Her face already had the waxen color of death.

He picked up one hand, pressed his fingers where the pulse should have been. There was none. He looked closer and knew she was dead.

HE STOOD UP slowly, and backed away in horror. Then he saw something else. The hand which had held the gun was empty. There was no gun anywhere around. He passed a hand over his eyes, told himself sternly that he hadn't been dreaming. He called Lynn upstairs and told her.

"Randy, it's horrible," she said. "What are we to do? She was your wife and you and—I—were here in the same bedroom."

"I don't care what anybody else thinks," Archer said. "Look—you saw the gun in

her hand when you ran out of the room. Think, Lynn! You did see a gun?"

She shook her head slowly. "I didn't see anything, Randy. It was dark, don't you remember?"

He groaned and led her out of the room. He left her in the hall and went back to fetch their clothes. They dressed quickly while Archer talked.

"I didn't kill her, Lynn. There was a gun in her hand and she meant to murder you. But the gun is gone. Somebody must have slipped into the room while I was downstairs and used that poker again and took the gun. There's someone else in this house."

"Randy, do you think we dare—"

"We've got to search the place," he said. "And be careful about it too. Whoever is here has that gun. If anything happens, run like the wind. Run to the car and go get help."

"Like hell I will," she said flatly and in a tight voice Archer had never heard before. "I'm staying with you. Come on, let's look."

They spent half an hour at it, going into every room in the sprawling old house before they gave up. In the living room, Lynn sat huddled in a corner of the divan while Archer paced the floor.

"We've got to do something," he said. "There's an answer to this. Say! Kirby could help us. He'd know the angles. I wonder if the phone works."

He ran out into the hall, picked up the phone and heard the buzz of a live wire. He knew Kirby's home phone from memory, having called him often from Europe. Kirby's wife answered.

"Why, Randy," she said. "We didn't expect you for days."

"We flew," Archer said. "Is Bill home? It's very important."

"He ought to be here soon, Randy," Mrs. Kirby said. "Bill went to a meeting at the Hunt Club, but he usually gets home about this time. Where are you?"

"At the big house. The phone is working. Have him call me the moment he gets in. Please don't forget—it's vital."

He returned to Lynn and paced the floor again. "I'm stumped," he said. "Do you

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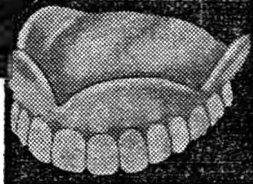
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realize what this looks like, Lynn? Anybody in his sane mind would say it was murder."

"Yes," she said quietly. "That's why the gun was taken, Randy."

"Then you did see it?"

"No. But I believe you, and I'll swear I saw it if I have to. But this is going to be messy, Randy. We can't hold anything back—about ourselves. They'd find out anyway."

He suddenly sat down, feeling a thousand years old. "I was a fool. We should have waited in Paris where we were happy. There were only a few more weeks."

"Don't, Randy," she implored. "I wanted to come back as much as you did. We couldn't foresee this."

"Maybe not," he began, and the phone interrupted him. He ran to it. Kirby was on the wire. Archer gave him a hint of what had happened and Kirby promised he'd be there as soon as possible.

IT WAS forty minutes before his car pulled up and he came running into the house. He shook hands with Lynn, heard Archer out and then went upstairs. Later, in the living room, he voiced his thoughts.

"Randy, there's no gun. You admit slugging her."

"I didn't know it was Ruth. For God's sake, I wouldn't have hit a woman. She was dressed in slacks. In the dark, she looked like a man."

"Do you think the police would believe that, Randy?" Kirby asked bluntly. "Everything is against you. Being in this house with—well, why not be frank—your mistress. I tell you, it looks bad."

"What was Ruth doing here?" Randy demanded. "You must have known she was here."

"I didn't. This is the first time I set foot in this house since you left. Randy, never mind that now. We've got to think of a way out and there is one. It's not nice. I'm violating everything I've been taught to respect as an attorney, but the devil with that. We've got to get rid of her."

"Ruth?" Randy gasped.

"Who else? Listen, she's been believed dead for almost seven years. Let it remain that way. The river—the one into which we

thought she'd been drowned—is only four miles north of here. I say dump her body in there. When it's found, if ever, she won't be identified. It has to be that way."

"But that's—horrible," Lynn put in.

"Nobody asked you," Kirby said roughly. "All you have to do is keep your mouth shut. Randy, can't you see I'm right?"

Archer nodded slowly. "I think so. And it has to be done fast. Bill, I'll put her in the trunk compartment of my car. You go back to town. Make up some excuse to your wife. Forget the whole thing."

"Now you're being smart," Kirby said. "I'll give you a hand."

"You won't touch the body," Archer said. "You'll stay right here with Lynn. I'll take care of everything. If any clues are left, they'll be from me and not you."

Kirby nodded. "Hurry it up then. Thank heavens this place is so isolated. Get going, man."

Five minutes later Lynn turned her head away and covered her eyes. Archer, carrying Ruth's body, came down the steps and proceeded to the front door. He got it open. A little later they heard a trunk lid close and then Archer was back in the house.

"All set," he said. "I'll come back and clean up the blood. Kirby, you go home. Lynn, you'd better come with me. I don't want you to, but I don't want you alone in this house either."

"It'll work," Kirby said excitedly. "It's bound to work. Ruth has been dead for years. Everybody believed that and we'll make it legal soon. The body will be broken and buffeted by the river and the tides when it gets near the ocean. I've seen bodies that came down that river. I know what I'm talking about."

"Yes," Archer said. "Come on. Put out the lights. We've got to work very, very fast. You go first, Kirby. I'll stall somewhere to give you time to get home. Then we'll come back here, Lynn and I. There won't be any signs left."

Kirby nodded and hurried out. Archer gently led Lynn to his car and helped her inside. "Scared?" he asked.

She nodded. "Yes, Randy. Scared and [Turn page]

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full of doubts. You can't hide a thing like this. You're simply taking the easy way out. If you didn't kill her, you shouldn't worry about the future. Can't you see?"

"Yes, Lynn. I see all right and I've been waiting to hear you say that. There's no easy way out for us. We're going to face a lot of unpleasantness but, if you can do it, so can I."

"What are you going to do?"

"First of all, go back into the house for a few moments. Then we're going to take a little drive."

"With—her in the—the trunk?"

ARCHER nodded and, without further explanation, hurried back into the house. He was gone for about fifteen minutes. When he returned, he got behind the wheel and drove the car down the driveway and, finally, onto the road. He headed north.

"Randv," Lynn said, "the river is this way. . . ."

"Yes, it is. Lynn, you've got to trust me. You must!"

She leaned her head against his shoulder and was silent. They drove at a moderate clip for about two and a half miles and then Archer saw the two State Police cars blocking the road. Lynn gave a low moan of despair. He stopped the car and four troopers moved in on him with drawn guns. One of them was a sergeant.

"You Randy Archer?" he demanded.

"Yes," Archer said.

"Get out. The lady, too. Keep your hands away from your pockets. Miss, leave your purse on the car seat. Now walk around to the back of the car. Archer, unlock the trunk."

"Why?" Archer asked.

"You heard me! Unlock it."

Lynn was biting her lips and steeling herself. Archer found the keys, turned the lock and raised the lid. Lynn slowly exhaled a breath that sounded as if she'd held it for days. There was nothing in the trunk compartment. Archer turned to the sergeant.

"Now will you tell me what this is all about?"

"Okay, we're still holding you and the girl. Someone phoned in a tip that you were carrying a murdered woman in this car."

Archer looked at Lynn for a second. "Sergeant, may I talk to you—alone?"

The sergeant nodded and walked with him to one of the police cars. They both got inside. Five minutes later Archer and Lynn were heading back toward the big house. Kirby's car was there and the front door was open.

Lynn said, "Randy, what happened? Where is Ruth's body?"

"You'll have all the answers in about two minutes. Come on, we're going in. And Lynn, follow my lead. Remember that!"

She was at his side when he hurried into the house. Kirby came out of the living room with long, eager strides, but he stopped short when he saw Archer and Lynn. Some of the high color faded out of his face.

"Randy," he said. "I didn't expect you back so soon. You couldn't possibly have—"

"We were stopped," Archer said. "By State Police. Somebody had tipped them that I had a dead woman in the trunk of my car."

"But I—don't understand."

"I think you do. No one else knew I was heading for the river with Ruth's body in the car. You tipped the cops. As soon as we left, you came back and used the phone here."

"But what happened? The body?"

"We got away from the cops," Archer said. "I came back here because I knew I'd find you. Why did you return? To get some of your clothes out of Ruth's room? Paja-

[Turn page]

STATEMENT OF THE OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION REQUIRED BY THE ACT OF CONGRESS OF AUGUST 24, 1912, AS AMENDED BY THE ACTS OF MARCH 3, 1933, AND JULY 2, 1946 (Title 39, United States Code, Section 233), of The Phantom Detective, published quarterly at New York, N. Y., for Oct. 1, 1951. 1. The names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are: Publisher, Standard Magazines, Inc., 10 E. 40th St. New York, N. Y. Editor, Alexander Samalman, 10 E. 40th St., New York, N. Y. Managing Editor, None. Business Manager, Harry Slater, 10 E. 40th St., New York, N. Y. 2. The owner is Standard Magazines, Inc., 10 E. 40th St., New York, N. Y. N. L. Pines, 10 E. 40th St., New York, N. Y. 3. The known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 per cent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: None. 4. Paragraphs 2 and 3 include, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting; also the statements in the two paragraphs show the affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner. Harry Slater, business manager. Sworn to and subscribed before me this 1st day of October, 1951. Eugene Wechsler, Notary Public. (My commission expires March 30, 1952).

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mas, robes—your stuff, Kirby. You were living here with Ruth."

"Randy, what's come over you?" Kirby asked. "Listen, we've got to do something. The police will trace your car and come here."

"Let them," Archer said. "I'm talking about you now. Ruth didn't take her own life almost seven years ago. She simply hid out, got in touch with you later and, after I went abroad, she came here to live and you stayed with her. I phoned your wife and she told me about a club you attended very often. I also phoned the club and they say you show up about twice a year. Club nights you spent here—with Ruth."

KIRBY backed up a couple of steps. "Now see here, Randy—"

"When Lynn and I got here unexpectedly, you and Ruth were in the house. Ruth was beside herself with jealous rage, just as she was that time with Cora. She wanted to kill Lynn, but I stopped her—with a poker. Only she wasn't dead when I left the room. She wasn't dead until you slipped in and finished the job so Ruth could never tell about you."

"You know what she was like," Kirby suddenly shouted. "She was smothering me just as she'd done to you. She never would have let me go. Randy, just get rid of her body, that's all I ask. We'll forget everything else."

"I'm calling the police," Archer said. "There's no telling what kind of a double-cross you'll pull next."

Suddenly Kirby's hand reached for his hip pocket and he half drew a gun before Archer hit him. It was a shoulder blow at the end of a powerful lunge. Kirby went spinning around. Archer wrapped his hands about the man, pulled him down fast and pinned his gun hand to the floor.

"That's the gun Ruth had." He was breathing hard. "The one you took so her



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death would look like murder. I had to make you produce it, Kirby, and you did."

Then there were State Police all around and Kirby was handcuffed and finally taken away. Lynn sat down beside Archer on the divan once more. It seemed as calm as when they'd first entered the big house, but even serener because neither had anything to worry about now.

Lynn said, "I know you found Kirby's clothes when you went upstairs to get Ruth's body. But nobody ever told me what happened to Ruth. I thought you put her in the trunk of your car."

"When I was sure Kirby had killed her and suspected he'd try to frame me for it? Oh no, baby, I stuffed what was left of Ruth into the trunk of Kirby's car. That's where they found it and when Kirby saw it tumble out, he began talking and he never stopped up to the time they took him away."

She snuggled closer to him. "And has all this changed our plans any? In any way at all, Randy?"

"Sure it has," he said. "We don't have to wait weeks to be married now."



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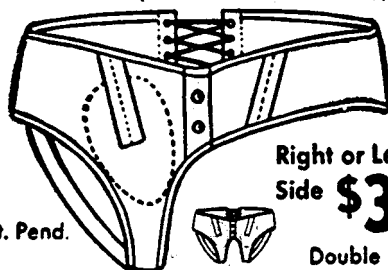
He has a right to criticize who has the heart to help.

—Lincoln

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—Eddie Cantor

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