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THE SILENT CLUE

By WILLIAM G. BOGART

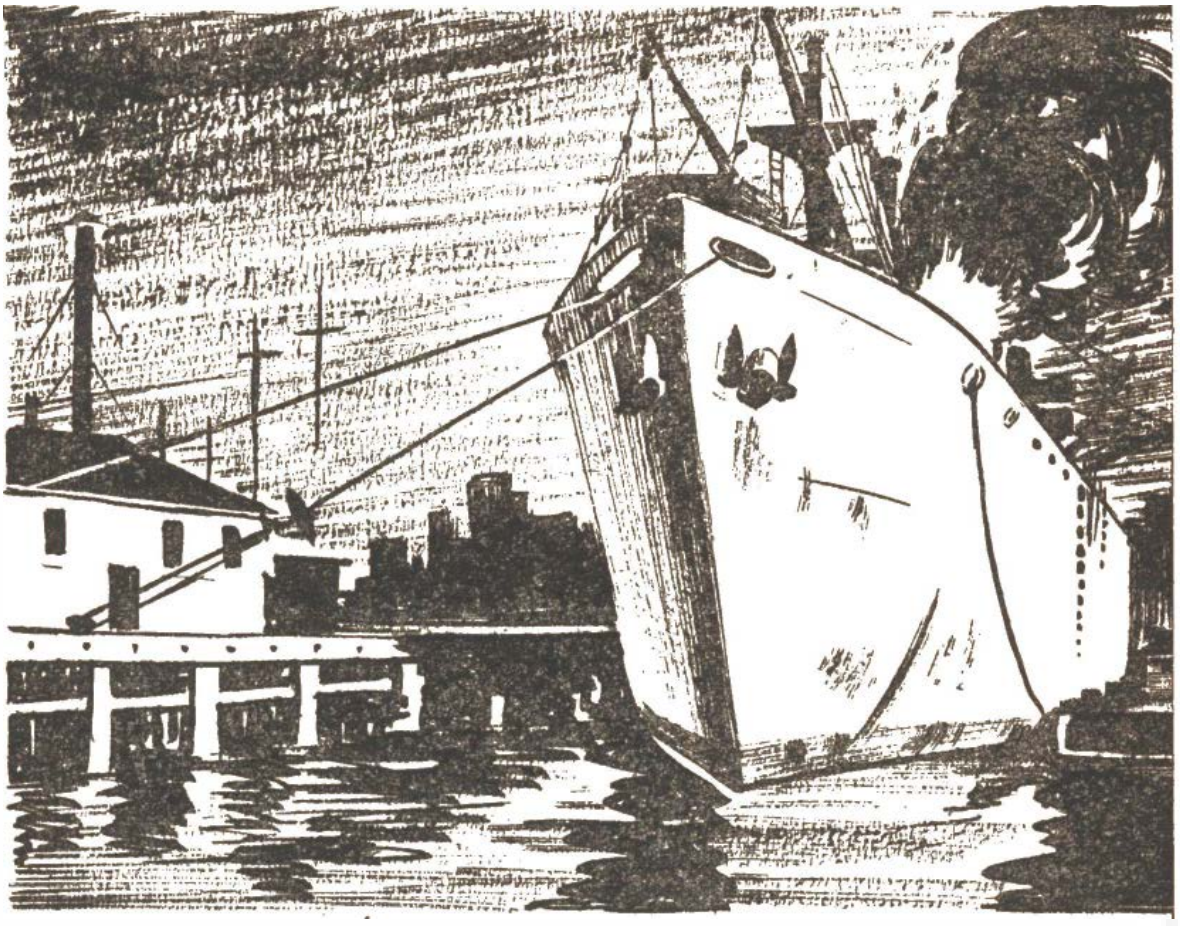
One of the greatest menaces to Allied security during World II was the insidious and always present threat of the saboteur. He represented the terror of the unknown monster—no one could predict where he would strike, with what weapon, or even who he was. In this respect he was more dangerous than the enemy who could be fought on the battle-field.

Only now are the tales of the "sabotage front" beginning to emerge from under the cloud of military security. This story is fictitious, but it describes events as they could have happened an incredibly short while ago.

HELL broke loose all at once that rainy night down along the San Francisco water front. Marty O'Keefe and his partner, young Steve Lannigan, were cruising along in the police coupe when the first flash came over the radio. There was a whistling sputter, then the words of the dispatcher:

"Cars 211, 272, 215 . . . proceed immediately to the Hawaiian Export Pier. Fire . . . Calling cars—"

"That's us!" said Marty sharp-



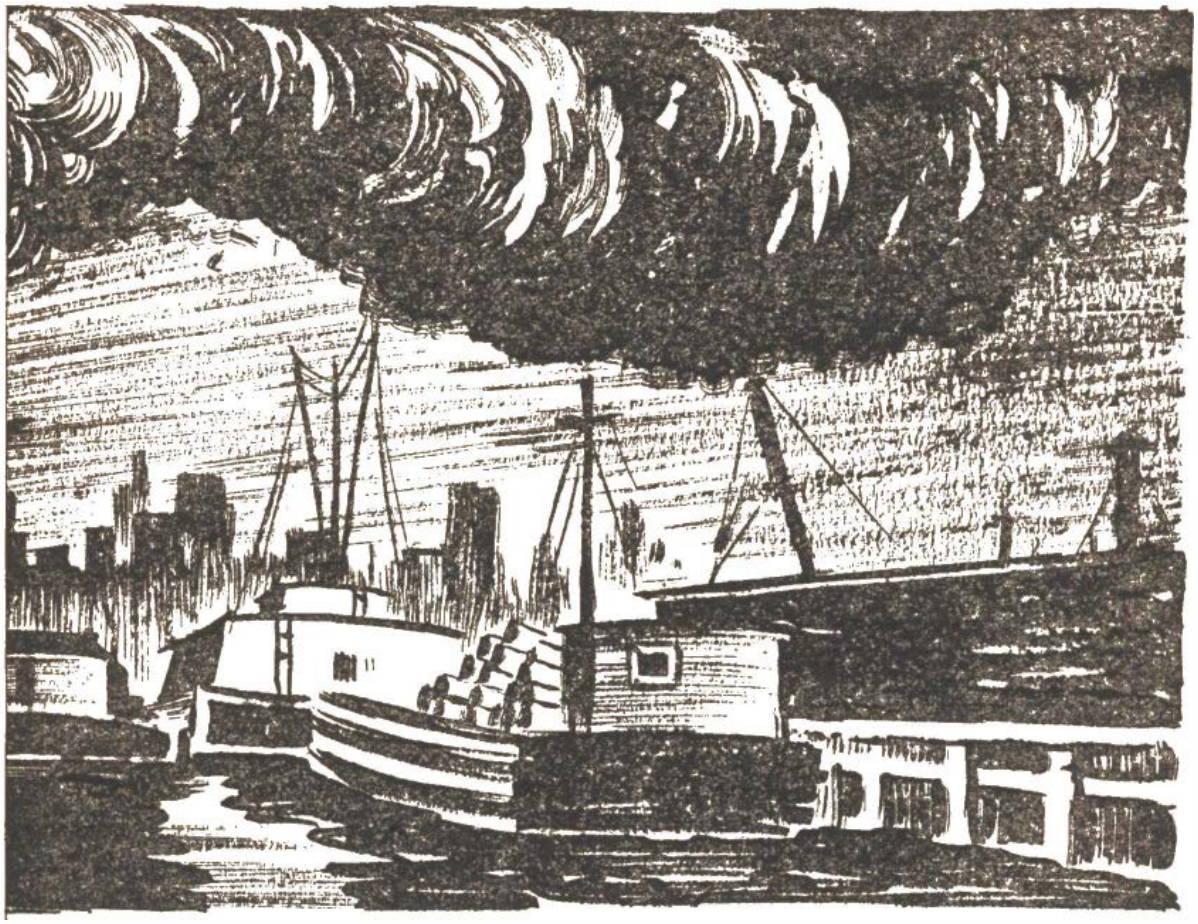
ly. "211" was their number. He nudged his blond-haired partner and added: "The second fire in two nights. And at another one of those docks where they're shipping out military supplies and equipment."

Both men's faces were grim as Marty's partner sent the coupe pounding through the wet, chilly night. Both were remembering the sudden, mystery blaze that had started aboard a freighter near here just twenty-four hours ago, a fire in which half a dozen seamen lost their lives. Sabotage, they said. Well, Marty was thinking tensely, maybe this was the same thing again tonight . . .

The sound of fire sirens penetrated the quiet of the gloomy waterfront. A moment later the revolving, red warning lights showed up behind them as contingents of fire apparatus started converging on the spot.

Then the wide water-front street was soon alive with traffic. Fire trucks. Police cars. An ambulance. Headlamps gleamed balefully in the rainy night. The radio in Marty O'Keefe's coupe sputtered again. The dispatcher's voice said:

"Calling cars 211 and 215 . . . cars 211 and 215 . . . Disregard



The strident sound of fire sirens penetrated the quiet of the gloomy waterfront.

previous orders and proceed immediately to Pier Nine. There has been a reported holdup. That is Pier Nine . . . Cars 211 and 215 . . .

Marty looked at his partner. "That's us!" he ordered. "Swing around, kid!"

They cut back along the wide street. Marty had only a brief glimpse of the pier where fire trucks were lining up. He saw the dark bulking hulk of a freighter; from somewhere amidships black smoke billowed upward into the white glare of probing searchlights.

Marty shook his head. His pale gray eyes were grim in his lean, leathery face. Years before Marty O'Keefe had ever joined the police department, he had followed the sea, and a fire aboard ship always sent a shudder through his tall, wiry frame. He knew there was nothing worse—whether the ship was in port or on the high seas.

He said, "That's going to be a bad one!"

"Yeah," agreed his partner. Lannigan glanced briefly toward the heavy smoke, then glued his

eyes to the road again. Driving was hazardous on the wet streets, and they were clipping better than fifty. Again the radio crackled:

"Cars 37 and 59 . . . proceed immediately to the old ferry-house. There has been an accident . . . "

A growl rose in Marty O'-Keefe's throat. "Accident, hell!" he commented.

Young Lannigan flashed him a look. "What do you mean?"

"Kid," said Marty evenly, "you haven't been on this waterfront beat long enough to know the tricks. Naturally you expect trouble now and then. But not the way it's coming tonight. It's too damn pat."

The expression in young Steve Lannigan's eyes said that he did not understand. Marty explained briefly:

"That ship fire is the real McCoy, sure. But these others . . . sending cars all along the water front. They're probably phony alarms called in by someone—a trick to get the cops off the trail of something hot!"

"In other words—" Lannigan started.

"In other words, something big's going to break tonight." Marty hunched his square shoulders uneasily. "I can feel it. Just like when you're at sea and you know a blow is coming!"

Lanningan had slowed, was swinging the police coupe in a wide circle, to park on the bay side of the street. Docks and long sheds loomed up dark and dismal in the rainy night. Marty swung out of the car, as another prowl coupe rolled up beside them. It was Car 215.

Marty led the way along a stringpiece and located the watchman's office. They found a gray-haired man inside a small office. He was hunched over a newspaper spread out on the table before him with a cup of coffee clutched tightly in his hand. He looked up, startled by Marty O'-Keefe's entrance.

"What's the trouble here?" Marty demanded. He was a tall man, alert-looking. The watchman, amazed, stared up at him.

"Trouble?" he queried. "There hasn't been any trouble."

Marty's head jerked toward the black hulk of the freighter tied up alongside the dock. "What cargo is the *Narcissus* carrying?"

The watchman shook his head. "No cargo at all, officer. She's just in for repairs. She'll be laid up for two weeks."

Marty O'Keefe turned to his young partner, who had appeared behind him. "You see," he said, "it's a gag! There's something else up tonight. Something important!"

"But where?" Lannigan said.

"I wish I knew," Marty mused. He picked up the phone that was on a desk nearby, put through a call to headquarters and re-

ported the false alarm. He waited a moment, then hung up. "We're to cruise around and keep our eyes open," he said.

The two coppers from the second patrol car were standing in the doorway now. Marty, nodding to the phone, suggested, "You better call in too and tell 'em it was a phony."

He and Lannigan then moved back along the dock, toward their parked car. O'Keefe's eyes were restless and bright. "I wish," he muttered, "I could think of something —some place where maybe trouble is going to break."

"You still have that hunch?" Lannigan asked.

"Yeah."

They reached the car. Lannigan swung in behind the wheel, started the motor, said, "Well, we can go back and take a look at that ship fire."

"Sure—" Marty started, then he paused with one foot on the running board. He suddenly tensed. "Sandy Nichols!" he blurted.

"Who?" Lannigan stared at him, puzzled.

"Sandy Nichols is watchman at the Pacific Freighter Lines. And that's where the *Independence* is tied up! That hooker is loaded with magnesium. Right now that would be the biggest prize cargo in San Francisco!"

Lannigan stared. "You mean—if spies got to it?"

Marty jerked his head, slid into the seat. "Yeah! A match would send that ship higher than heaven. Come on!"

As Lannigan got under way, Marty directed, "Swing around. It's Pier 23. Maybe it's just a cock-eyed hunch, but the *Independence,* it seems to me, is the place where spies might strike right now. It is dynamite!"

They slammed through the wet night, and cut onto the thoroughfare bordering the piers. Soon they slowed down before Pier 23. Marty O'Keefe nodded to a darkened parking area beyond, said, "Slide in there."

They rolled to a quiet stop and climbed out. Marty led the way past dark pier shed entranceways, drew up before a closed, high gate at Pier 23. He tried the gate and it swung open, creaking a little. He shot Lannigan a swift look.

"It should be locked!"

Lannigan said: "Then you think—"

"Just keep your eyes open and your gun hand ready," Marty suggested. He loosened his coat

Contrary to the belief of many persons, farming is not the safest occupation in the world. It has a higher accident rate than industry as a whole. In fact, a farmer's chances of being killed on the job are one and a half times greater than those of his fellow workers in the average industry.

and made certain that his Police Positive was working properly in its holster clip as he moved quietly inside the gate. Lannigan followed at his heels.

Marty used a flashlight, followed an aisle through the long pier shed. Cargo was piled high everywhere. Supplies for the South Pacific; stuff that was vital and important. But he was thinking of this other thing that was far more vital.

Magnesium, explosive as dynamite, and needed for war. The *Independence* was loaded to the gunwales with the stuff!

A six-volt storage battery used in secret military operations was so tiny that it could be held in the palm of the hand, but it could deliver sufficient current to light an automobile fog lamp for more than an hour, in spite of its small size.

Marty cut toward a sliding door located along one side of the high, long shed building. He slid it back quietly. Outside, the rain and the cold dampness of the river hit their tense faces. He closed the door behind them, and then they were moving quietly out along the dock. Some distance ahead a light showed dimly in a small office. Above it rose the dark, heavy side plates of the freighter.

They saw no one, heard no movements of anyone on the pier. They reached the office and Marty stepped forward and swung back the door.

"Hello . . . Sandy?" he called.

Someone had been talking inside. Now the voices stopped. Then someone asked, "Who is it?"

Marty and Lannigan stepped inside the office. An old-fashioned roll-top desk blocked from view the man who had answered them. But as they moved around the desk both saw the elderly, seamy-faced man seated on the sagging old cot.

There was the look of the sea in Sandy Nichols' aged features. He had kindly light blue eyes and deeply tanned, leathery skin.

Then Marty saw the second man.

He was sitting on a chair near the cot, hands in his topcoat pockets. He was farily well dressed and did not look like the type of person found around freighter docks.

Old Sandy said, "Oh, hello, Marty." He glanced at the slender dark man seated near him. "This is—ah—a friend of mine, Marty, Mr. Willard."

Marty nodded. The stranger did likewise, making no attempt to stand up. His hands remained in his pockets.

Marty asked, "How goes it, Sandy?"

The elderly watchman looked at the cop. He shrugged. "Pretty good, Marty." Then he asked, "What's up?" He was toying with a short length of string that he held in his gnarled hands.

Marty moved across to the cot, sat down. For just an instant he had the impression that Mr. Willard tensed. The man sat watching him, saying nothing. Marty looked at his old friend.

"Just thought we'd say hello, Sandy," he said. "We're having a little trouble down the line. A fire and some fake emergency calls. Thought I'd see if you were all right here."

The stranger spoke for the first time. "Everything's okay here, officer."

Marty hardly glanced at him. He looked at old Sandy instead.

Sandy said, "Yes, everything's all right."

Lannigan had pushed back his cap and lighted a cigarette. He stood leaning against the roll-top desk, relaxed. The visit here gave him a chance for a smoke.

Sandy said, still toying with the string, "Marty and I are old shipmates. Marty used to be radioman on the *Sandusky* with me. We used to make a run from here to South America."

"Is that right?" said Mr. Willard. The thin, dark man, from the tone of his voice, showed that he was not the least bit interested.

Sandy dropped the piece of string on the cot, looked at Marty. "Yes, sir," he said, "Marty was the best darned wireless man on the line."

Marty laughed. "I was so good they decided to transfer me back to deckhand." He picked up the string, wound it around his finger unconsciously. No one said anything, and he had the feeling that he and Lannigan had intruded on something personal.

Finally, Marty climbed to his feet. "Well," he said, "I guess we'll be going." He unwound the string from his finger, dropped it on the couch. He looked at the slender, dark stranger and said, "Glad to have met you, Willard," and held out his hand.

The man jerked to his feet, taking his hand from his pocket.

Marty hit him.

The blow carried the fellow backward across the room. He crashed into young Steve Lannigan who, amazed, tried to regain his balance. He started to gulp, "What the—"

Marty O'Keefe was watching Willard. He dived for the man as Willard's fingers fumbled, frantically trying to yank something from his topcoat pocket.

This time Marty caught the man squarely alongside the jaw. Willard crumpled. Marty O'Keefe caught him, flung the limp figure into Lannigan's arms and said, "Tie him up! And I think there's a gun in his pocket!"

He spun toward the elderly watchman. "What's up, Sandy?"

The leathery-faced watchman was tense now. Worry lined his face. "Three of them!" he gasped. "This one was guarding me. Two others are aboard the *Independence*." He motioned nervously

toward the door. "They've been aboard sometime. I'm afraid it might be too late—"

Marty jerked toward the door. He snapped an order at his young partner. "Call headquarters!"

"Listen—" Lannigan started to say, but Marty O'Keefe was gone.

The lean, tall copper padded along the dock, located a gangplank in the wet gloom. He gripped the side rail and worked his way up the slippery planking. His right hand slid beneath his coat and removed his .38. He heard no movement from the deck above.

He gained the deck, stepped silently toward one of the hatches. He dared not use a light, because somewhere aboard this boat were two men lurking. Two who would have no compunctions about killing. Death and sabotage was their business!

He felt along, located a hatch. It was securely battened down.

Marty moved on to the next. This, too, was closed up tightly.

He reached a third. It was open! And the instant he paused near the deck opening an odor hit his nostrils. The smell of gasoline!

Marty jerked taut. Someone had poured gasoline into the hold. Now the slightest contact of a match—

Movement whispered behind him. He spun around and made out a vague form closing in on him. Diving sideways, he started to level his gun at the shadow.

Something crashed into him. He was knocked sprawling on the wet, slippery deck. Instantly the figure leaped after him.

Marty's foot shot up, tripped the man up. The fellow pitched forward over Marty's outstretched leg. He landed in the gloom somewhere near the scuppers. Marty was on his knees, his eyes trying to pierce the gloom and the misty rain.

The man he was trying to locate let out a yell.

"Tony!"

Then he fired.

A slug whined past Marty's head and lost itself somewhere out over the river. Another followed, closer this time, because it thunked into a bulkhead beside him.

Marty ducked sidewise, gained the protection of the bulkhead and started inching forward. The rain got in his heavy eyelashes and distorted his vision. He whipped his left arm across his face and tried to spot his assailant. He waited for the next flash of the fellow's gun.

It came—and instantly Marty returned the fire. He heard lead spang into metal. Somewhere across the deck the man was protected by protruding deck machinery, perhaps a winch. There was only one way to get the gunman—and that was to go after him.

In a low crouch, Marty left

the protection of the bulkhead and moved swiftly across the deck.. He caught a glimpse of a shadowy form diving to the left.

He fired.

There was a scream. The man's gun clattered on the steel deck. There was a thudding fall as the fellow went down, moaning.

Marty turned at the sound of padding feet behind him. He was too late.

The second figure had been leaping forward silently with some sort of heavy object upraised in his hand. He was already swinging it downward as Marty whirled.

It was a short length of iron pinchbar. It caught Marty O'Keefe a glancing blow across the head, landed on his left shoulder and drove him downward to the hard deck. The attacker cursed with satisfaction, dropped the bar and leaped back. He took it for granted that the blow had crushed the copper's skull.

With a flame in his hand, he started moving toward the open hatch.

Marty, however, was not quite unconscious. He lay flat on the deck, striving vainly to push himself up with his big hands. Blood oozed down over his ear and trickled into his collar. He knew that in a moment he was going to pass out.

He saw the maniacal expression of glee that was written on the man's face, revealed by a faint glow — the light from a small cigarette lighter that the fellow held clutched in his hand!

Marty stared through clouding eyes. The man, with the lighter held ready, was close to the open hatch. Disconnected thoughts pounded through Marty's numbing brain. Lighter . . . flame . . , magnesium . . . gasoline.

Then Marty realized that he was still clutching his Police Positive.

With superhuman effort, he got an elbow braced against the deck. He tried to take aim, but his eyes were blearing. He fired more by instinct rather than anything else.

The gun crashed before his very face. There was a cry of terror. He dimly saw the man sway, jerk taut and pitch backward. And he saw the flaming cigarette lighter fly from the man's hands.

For an awful moment Marty held his breath. He fought off nausea and unconsciousness, watching the descending arc of the lighter. If the thing ever landed in the open hold—

But it struck the deck, slid to-

June came as the fourth month of the year, in the old Latin calendar, and tradition says it had originally 30 days. Some time or other June lost a day, because when Julius Caesar fixed up the calendar June had only 29 days, and Julius added another, which June has kept ever since.

ward the scuppers and came to a stop in a small puddle of water. It flickered out.

That was the last thing Marty O'Keefe remembered.

* * *

The next thing he knew someone was tugging at his head. He was seated in a chair and someone was fooling around his head. Angered, Marty came to his feet and his fists started swinging.

Then firm hands pushed him back into the chair and a voice said, "Take it easy, boy, take it easy! You've been hurt!"

His vision cleared and he saw the blue-coated figures grouped around him. He saw Lannigan and gray-haired Sandy and the thin, dark man, manacled now.

Marty said, "Hurry! The ship . . . fire . . . "

Someone said, "It's okay, Marty. We found you and those two guys up on the deck. We reached the pier just as you were blasting away at each other. One of them's dead. The other's so close to it he might as well be!"

There was another tug at Marty's head. An ambulance doctor appeared from behind Marty. He smiled and said, "There! You had a close shave, copper!"

Old Sandy Nichols pushed forward and touched Marty's arm. His pale eyes were almost misted. He said, "That was fine thinking, Marty! I was afraid you might not understand—"

Marty grinned. "But I did." He took the piece of string that Sandy held in his still trembling hands. "You see, as bad as I was, I haven't forgotten!"

Lannigan looked puzzled. He stared at Marty O'Keefe, and he said, "Listen, I know Sandy tipped you off somehow. But I still don't get it." He jerked his head toward the manacled captive. "When you lit into this guy—"

Marty held up the length of string and indicated the knots that had been tied in it. He explained, "When Sandy and I were shipmates together, I thought I'd like to be a wireless operator. I wasn't so good—you've got to have a nimble wrist to work a wireless key. But there was one thing I did learn. So when Sandy tipped me off by repeating how *good* I was as a wireless operator, I got wise."

"Wise to what?" asked Lannigan.

Marty showed him the length of string. "These knots," he said. "Three knots close together, three far apart, three close together. Sandy's way of using the Morse Code. Three dots . . . three dashes . . . three dots. SOS. Get it?"

Lannigan stared. "It means—*save our ship!*"

"Exactly."

Marty pressed the piece of string back into old Sandy's hand, closed his own fist over the oldster's fingers. "Let's keep it," he said quietly, "for luck!"

A Bridle For Her Tongue

By ANNA NASH YARBROUGH

Why was an ancient instrument of torture clamped on the tongue of the Professor's beautiful wife?

AS the icy needles of air tinkled against the car I thought that I had never seen such a cold March day. No expression troubled the calm of Jim's lean, pleasant face as he held the small car in the snowy ruts, and squinted his eyes to see through the blur of misty ice that piled against the windshield wiper.

My thoughts ran ahead of the car up the hill to Skyline House. It was hard to think of Irene Lathan as dead, murdered. It was easier to think of her as I had seen her last Tuesday: alive, laughing, and with an outlandish hair-do. Her hair was a silver blonde; she enjoyed wearing it in absurd modes that only a beautiful woman could affect.

Last Tuesday evening I'd gone to Skyline House to get some manuscripts that the Professor wanted me to type—along with being Jim's secretary for twenty-five years, I'm our town's only public stenographer. As I walked down the long hall, I heard Irene Lathan and her husband quarrelling.

Irene was saying: "If you think that I'm going to stay contented in this moss-covered old pile of stones, you're crazy!"

The Professor's voice was level, too level, "But, Irene . . . "

His wife cut in on him, "I in-

tend to find your reason for giving up your position at the University. I have ears, and I have heard a few things," her voice rose angrily, "I have a tongue, too."

Professor Lathan's voice was low as he said, "Be quiet, Irene, you talk too much."

When I walked into the library, Irene laughed and said, "Hello, Miss Martha. Did you hear me getting in my husband's whiskers?"

"No." I lied politely, and managed a smile.

I glanced to my left at the wall completely filled with hundreds of ancient torture instruments. I suppressed a shudder. I could almost hear the screams of the poor wretches, who had long ago suffered their fingers broken by the tiny iron thumb screws, their bodies crushed on the huge, wooden, blood-darkened rack. I wondered at the quirk in the Professor's suave graciousness that turned him to these symbols of agony for a hobby.

That had happened last Tuesday, and here I was on Saturday morning hurrying up the hill to help Jim investigate Irene Lathan's murder. I wondered if she had talked too much.

"I saw Mrs. Lathan with young Winters, under the magnolia tree. I could tell he didn't have an overcoat on, but his face was turned away from me."

Jim's voice broke in on my thoughts, "Martha, kids sure have guts. Those young folks up there took it like thoroughbreds. I rushed up the hill as soon as the Professor called me, and I found them as calm as folks at a public execution."

I watched Jim chew on the stem of his big bowled pipe for a second, then I said, "Jim, young folks can have some warped ideas of justice."

Lines fanned out from Jim's eyes, "Now, Martha, don't start hopping at conclusions."

"I'm not!" I denied, and was still for a while, then I began again, "Of course, not one of those three college kids would do such a thing, but . . . " I broke off, then added, "but, Bettie will inherit a great deal of her aunt's fortune, I'm sure . . . " then I added hastily, "but the very idea of little Bettie doing a thing like murder is silly."

As Jim didn't offer any comment, I began considering Eugene, Professor Lathan's nephew. Eugene was handsome and knew it. He habitually wore dark suits to accent his dark beauty. "Jim," I asked, "do you think Eugene resented his uncle's marrying a young woman?"

Jim shook his head, "No, I do not think he did."

"Jim, isn't that young boy visiting them over the week end, the same University student who visited them last summer?"

Jim nodded, "Yes, Malcolm Winters."

"Do you suppose he was in love with Irene?"

Jim took his pipe from his mouth, and pointed the stem at me, and laughed, "Now, Martha, supposing won't get the job done."

The car skidded. I grabbed Jim's arm and cried out, "Jim, watch the road!"

He plowed through the snow to the middle of the road, then asked, "What do you think about Mrs. Downing?"

I laughed. "That old woman hasn't the nerve to kill anything larger than a chicken. She's perfectly reliable; she's been at Skyline House for as long back as I can remember."

Jim talked through his teeth clenched on his pipe stem. "Mrs. Downing's dander was up when Irene added cooking to Mrs. Downing's other duties."

I shook my head vigorously. "That's not enough for murder."

Jim shoved the gear in second as we neared the top of the hill, then he asked, "How about the Professor's father?"

Giving him one of my don't-be-foolish glares, I answered, "That old man's completely out. He can not get around without help."

Abruptly Jim asked, "What do you think of Irene's husband as the murderer?"

I thought of the trip to Skyline House last Tuesday; I answered,

"If I were a gambling woman, I'd place my bets on the Professor."

As the car groaned along, Jim said more to himself than to me, "Looks as if killing a pretty woman would have been enough without putting one of those fool bridles on her."

"Jim," I cried out, "A horse bridle?"

We went through the big front gate, and started up the gravel drive before Jim answered me, "No, Martha, it wasn't a horse bridle. It was one of the Professor's torture instruments; he called it a branks."

With goose flesh rising up on me, I asked, "Was Irene killed by torture?"

"No, Martha. The murderer couldn't have had Irene yelling with the house full of folks. The killer knocked her unconscious with a heavy iron inkwell; it was left lying on the desk with blood and blond hair sticking to it. Then after Irent was out, the murderer fastened the branks on her, and choked her until she was dead."

"But, Jim, why did he use the branks?"

As Jim's small car shuddered to a stop, he said, "I don't know. Perhaps, to create an atmosphere of horror so that the true clues would be overlooked, or to warn someone to keep his tongue quiet or get a bridle on it."

The law should be loved a little because it is felt to be just; feared a little because it is severe; hated a little because it is to a certain degree out of sympathy with the prevalent temper of the day; and respected because it is felt to be a necessity.

—EMILE FOURGET

Skyline House, massive and elegant, withstood the flurries of snow with grim dignity. The giant columns reaching up to the second story were like solemn ghosts guarding the front entrance. I wondered if the murderer were peeping at us from one of the side windows, and perhaps laughing at the complacency of tall, lean, Marshall Jim, and his little, dumpy secretary.

Mrs. Downing answered the door. I regarded this tall, angular housekeeper in a new light, and wondered about the thoughts that lay behind her high forehead, and keen black eyes.

She twisted her thin lips into one of those sickly smiles folk use when there has been a death in the house. "Come in, Miss Manners, and Mr. Ettaberry," she said to Jim and me. Then she added, "The family is in the back living room."

Jim removed his pipe from his teeth, and took off his wide-brim hat before he spoke. "Mrs. Downing, I want Martha to see the body before the coroner gets here."

Our coroner has to come from our county seat.

As we walked down the long hall, I shivered. At the library door Jim took my arm and said, "Get a grip on yourself, Martha. It ain't a pretty sight."

"Pshaw!" I lied, "I'm as calm as clabber."

The second that I stepped into that library, my eyes turned to the wall filled with torture instruments; quickly, I turned then toward the other wall that was filled with books, then to the back of the room where tall windows were draped with rich blue damask . . .

Then I saw Irene!

She was sprawled across the top of a wide desk that stood in the circular alcove between the windows. Her long, blue dress was tightly twisted about her legs; her arms were flung wide apart as if she were reaching for help.

Jim held my arm as we walked across the deeply piled carpet toward the desk; I was glad, for my knees were kind of weak.

With a long, lean finger, Jim pointed at the bands of iron on Irene Lathan's head. "Ain't that a crazy contraption?"

It took me a second to realize that this was the branks that Jim had been telling me about. Irene's head was inclosed in hoops of iron with hinges at the side. Stooping down, I could see the back of the thing; it was fastened with a staple through a small iron hoop, and this was held in place by a leather band. I straightened up, walked around the desk to see Irene's face; an iron plate, fastened to the grisly bridle, was forced into her mouth; sharp metal prongs had pierced her tongue. The collar of her blue dress was stiff with dried blood.

I turned away and grabbed Jim's arm, babbling, "Jim, last Tuesday, I heard . . . "

A cough from the doorway caused me to jerk myself around.

Professor Lathan, Irene's husband, was standing inside the library door. His dark, arrogant eyes were on me, as he twisted his long, thin fingers in a dry wash.

Jim said calmly, "Professor, I believe you called that thing a branks. Have you any more branks?"

"Yes, I do." The Professor, a tall man with sleek black hair and a small mustache, walked across the room, and placed his hand on a shelf saying, "That branks is from my English collection; I have one more, right here." He reached his hand in the shelf, and held up another branks. "This one is called the Witch's Bridle of Forfair, and is one of the cruelest of the branks. It works this way . . . " He turned the branks over and tugged at the fastener, then gave a little exclamation of pain.

I saw twin spots of blood rise up on his right thumb. He wiped them away saying, "Every time I try to open this branks, I hurt

my thumb, but the other one was easier to open."

I wondered when was the last time that he had opened the other one.

The Professor was saying, "If there is nothing else, Mr. Ettaberry, Bettie is asking to see Miss Manners."

My heart was thumping as I followed Jim and the Professor toward the back living room. I was wondering about the rumors that I had heard as to Professor Lawrence Lathan's reason for leaving the University last spring right after the mysterious death of a girl student on the campus. The Professor said that he had come home to write a book on his hobby, but talk's easy.

The back living room, as the family called it, was a charming, livable room with low book shelves and magazine racks in easy reach of big, comfortable chairs; the tall windows were gay with chintz.

Bettie, coming across the floor to meet us, looked almost frail in her blue flannel sport dress. Her skin, a translucent white, added to the beauty of her copper hair which fell in a shimmering sheet to her shoulders, ending in a soft roll.

"Oh, Miss Martha," she was saying, "Isn't it awful about aunt Irene?"

I sympathetically agreed with her as we walked toward a low divan.

Eugene Lathan, as tall and slender as his uncle but without the small mustache, came across to us with his arm linked with that of a pale, blond young man. Eugene said, "Miss Martha, this is Malcolm Winters." He bit for a second on his long upper lip then he added, "This is Bettie's fiance."

That surely gave me a jolt because Bettie and Eugene had been sweethearts for years.

"Well," I said trying to gather my wits, "I suppose congratulations are in order."

Bettie put her pretty head against my brown coat, and began to weep silently. Congratulations do sound inane when there has been a death in the family.

Mrs. Downing stuck her bleak head in the door. "Your father wants to come down, Professor Lathan. He says he has something that he wants to tell the marshall."

The Professor began to twist his hands again in a dry wash as he said, "Of course, Mrs. Downing, let father come down if he wishes."

Malcolm Winters said to me, "Miss Martha, why do you think the branks was used?"

"Well . . . " I hedged.

Eugene cut in impatiently, "Miss Martha wouldn't know. Why talk about Irene? It upsets Bettie."

Malcolm wasn't to be hushed. He said to me, "I think the branks

was used to warn someone to keep his tongue still."

Bettie lifted her head. "Uncle Lawrence," she said to the Professor, "Wasn't the branks originally used to stop people's tongues?"

The Professor stopped twisting his hands, and answered, "Yes, Bettie." He turned his head to one side as if thinking, and said, "The branks was used to stop the tongues of nagging women." He looked at Malcolm Winters and then, he went on: "Also, the branks was used on immoral women. The last written record that we have of the branks being used in England was in 1856 at Bolton-le-moor in Lancashire. One record tells of an immoral woman having a branks on her head while she was led from the steps of the church across town to the foot of a cross, and then back."

"Oh, Uncle Lawrence," Bettie shuddered, "You know such awful things."

Eugene said, "Uncle Lawrence knows too much."

I saw the Professor cut his eye at Malcolm Winters, and I looked, too. The boy was paper-white and his lips were blue.

There was a commotion in the hall. Old man Lathan's reedy voice rasped out, "Let me alone, woman. You have coddled me for twenty-five years. I have more backbone than most folks."

The old man tottered into the room with Mrs. Dowing, upset and uneasy, holding his thin, old arm.

"James," the old man said when his bleary old eyes focused on Jim, "I killed my daughter - in - law, Irene Lathan!"

Eugene ran to his grandfather demanding, "Grandfather, why did you say that?" Eugene then whirled around facing his uncle and cried out, "Uncle Lawrence, why did grandfather do that?"

The Professor's long face was grey. "I do not know."

Malcolm Winters' blue eyes were blazing. He stepped in front of the Professor, and said, "Oh, yes, you do know. You know your father thinks that you killed Irene. You are planning to crawl out of this as you did when Pauline was murdered."

I heard Bettie gasp, "Pauline! Pauline Day!"

Then I remembered that Pauline Day was the name of the girl whose death gossip linked with the Professor's leaving the University.

The highest temperature ever observed in the United States was 134 degrees Fahrenheit at Death Valley, California, in July, 1913. The cold record is held by Wyoming. On February 9, 1933, the mercury fell to minus 66 degrees at Yellowstone National Park.

Malcolm Winters was still talking: "Irene suspected you knew more about Pauline's death than you told. Irene is dead with a branks on her tongue."

Old man Lathan staggered toward Jim, wheezing out, "I killed Irene! She was making Lawrence unhappy by having an affair with young Winters. I caught them whispering in a corner of the library last night."

The blue veins on Malcolm's white forehead stood out, "That's not true," he said.

The old man shook a trembling fist at Malcolm. "Do you deny that I saw you whispering? Your back was to me, but I recognized your light grey suit."

Young Winters admitted, "We were whispering."

Eugene went up to Malcolm and put his arm around his friend's shoulders, "Take it easy," he said. "We are all rather unnerved. Don't think that Jim Ettaberry isn't taking in every word that we are saying. I'll bet that he could repeat each and every one, and not leave a dot off an i or a cross off a t."

Jim seemed to be paying no attention to Eugene; Jim was saying to old man Lathan, "How did you kill your daughter-in-law, Mr. Lathan?"

The old man answered eagerly, "I grabbed her by the neck; choked her; when she was dead, I put the branks on her."

Jim's smile was gentle. "She wasn't killed that way, Mr. Lathan."

The elder Mr. Lathan crumpled down in a chair and dry sobs shook his frail, old body.

After we left Skyline House and were slipping and sliding down the hill, I asked Jim, "What did you make of the confession? I think Malcolm Winters was about right."

Jim busied himself with keeping the car in the road. Then he said, "I think the murderer told on himself, but I haven't any proof yet."

"When, Jim?" I was powdering my nose and almost dropped my compact.

Jim's teeth clamped on his pipe stem, he said, "You heard every word that I did, Martha."

It was lunch time when Jim let me out at my little white cottage. My sister, Lutie, was waiting for me on the front porch. When Lutie was ten years old, she fell off a ladder; through all the years, she has stayed a child, frail, sweet, lovable, and the reason that I have been saying "No", to Jim for twenty-five years.

When I got to the office, about two o'clock, Mrs. Downing was seated in the reception room, her stiff brown turban settled over one dark eye, her long black coat tightly buttoned.

In that bleak voice of hers, she said, "I've come to see Mr. Ettaberry."

When Jim came in, she eyed

me and said to Jim, "I want to talk to you alone."

Jim opened the door to his inner office saying, "I must have Martha to take notes. I might forget, Mrs. Downing."

I smiled to myself. Jim's memory is like a radio question-answerer's. He even remembers the expressions on people's faces and their exact words.

Mrs. Downing shrugged her angular shoulders, and dourly followed Jim into the "sanctum," as I call it. I picked up my notebook and followed.

After she was seated in a straight-back chair directly in front of Jim's desk, she cast a frightened glance around the room. Then she leaned toward Jim and said, "I know who killed Mrs. Lathan."

I had to pucker my lips to keep from crying out, "Aw."

Jim calmly asked, "Who?"

Mrs. Downing said, "The Professor killed his wife because he was jealous of young Winters."

Jim leaned back in his chair; with his eyes half closed, he began pulling on his pipe.

Her voice rising to a wail, Mrs. Downing pleaded, "You must believe me! The Professor will kill me next."

Jim sat up and took his pipe out of his mouth. "Give us your reasons for thinking this, Mrs. Downing."

Some of the tension went out of her face as she talked. "I saw Mrs. Lathan with young Winters courting under the Magnolia tree last night . . . "

Jim pointed his pipe stem at her, "Do you *know* it was Malcolm Winters?"

A frown creased Mrs. Downing's shining, white forehead, "I saw him outlined sharply against the snow when I turned my flashlight on them. I could even tell that he didn't have an overcoat on, but his face was turned away from me, and he slipped behind the tree quicker'n a humming bird's wing . . . "

Jim's grey eyes were stern. "You wouldn't swear it was Malcalm Winters?"

Mrs. Downing squirmed in her chair, "Well, no, I couldn't exactly swear it, but I know it was him."

Jim put his pipe back in his mouth, and said, "All right, go ahead, Mrs. Downing."

Mrs. Downing cleared her throat, and began again, "I went on out to the chicken yard and fastened up my biddies; then, when I was coming back to the house, Mrs. Lathan, the brazen hussy, run and caught up with me . . . " she hesitated and asked, "Do you want me to tell what Mrs. Lathan said to me?"

Jim nodded. "Her exact words, please, Mrs. Downing."

She twisted her mouth distastefully, "Mrs. Lathan said, 'Oh, Mrs. Downing, you saved my life. I'm leaving in the morning. It's

too hot here for me.' Wasn't that silly talk? My nose right then was numb with cold."

Jim leaned forward and cut her short, "You hated Irene Lathan, didn't you, Mrs. Downing?"

Mrs. Downing's mouth dropped open. Her black eyes were like cornered rats'. She said, "Irene Lathan was a hateful woman: always lording over people with her money, and having affairs with college boys. I'm sure the Professor knew she was necking with Malcolm Winters under the Magnolia Tree last night."

"Why?" Jim was watching her carefully.

"Later, I heard the Professor and Mrs. Lathan having a fuss in the library, and the Professor caught me . . . "

"Caught you?" Jim leaned forward.

Mrs. Downing nodded. "I was kneeling down in the hall with my ear to the key-hole, he opened the door and I fell into the library. Mrs. Lathan laughed, but the Professor got real mad at me. He said, 'Mrs. Downing, tell me every word that you heard.' I told him I didn't hear nothing, but I could tell that he didn't believe me." She glanced furtively over her shoulder, and whispered, "This morning the Professor threatened my life, and I . . . "

I saw surprise light up Jim's face. He asked, "What were the Professor's exact words?"

"He says to me this morning right after we found Mrs. Lathan's body, 'Mrs. Downing, your life is in danger if you repeat a word that you heard last night.' "

Jim's grey eyes bored into Mrs. Downing. He demanded, "Mrs. Downing, were you lying to him about not hearing anything?"

Mrs. Downing squirmed, "Well, not exactly. I heard Mrs. Lathan say, 'I found out tonight . . . ', and then her voice grew muffled as if a hand had been placed over her lips, then the Professor's voice said, 'For God's sake, Irene, keep quiet.' It was then he snatched the door open and I fell into the room."

After she was gone, I plumped myself down in the chair that Mrs. Downing had vacated, and asked, "What do you think of that, Jim?"

Jim pulled steadily on his pipe, and studied a rain spot on the ceiling; I waited, fidgetted.

The telephone rang, and I almost jumped out of the chair. It was a report on the fingerprints that had been taken in the library: the branks was wiped clean; there were no prints on the ink-

Oysters can be induced to produce eggs in winter, just as greenhouse flowers can be brought to bloom out of season, simply by warming them up to the proper temperature, Dr. Victor L. Loosanoff of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service laboratory has discovered.

well; the furniture contained the prints of all the family's fingers and Mrs. Downing's.

The door bell to the reception room rang. It was a boy with a note.

Jim slowly opened the envelope while I stood behind his chair and crewed on a finger nail. It was a typewritten message, signed with a pen, from Professor Lathan asking Jim to come to Skyline House at eight o'clock. It stated that the Professor had a confession to make.

I lifted my brows and said, "What do you make of that?"

Jim looked out the side window. "I'll be damned!"

I laughed in a slightly superior manner.

Whirling his chair around so abruptly that I cut my laugh short, Jim asked, "Martha, did you know that messenger boy?"

"Of course, it was that little Joadie Oots."

"Get him back in here."

When the kid came back into the sanctum, he was grinning, for not every day does one get a rush call from the town marshall after a murder has been committed.

Jim asked, "Who gave you that note, son?"

Joadie flushed a brick-red and the freckles faded away. "I did not know him for sure, Mr. Jim, but I think it was that boy visiting the Lathans; I know all the Lathans and Miss Bettie Hamilton."

"Tall, blond with pale skin?" I asked.

Joadie's eyes lighted up, "Yes, Miss Martha, that's him. Is he the murderer?"

After we got rid of Joadie, I wanted to go straght up to Skyline House, but Jim over-ruled me to wait until the designated eight o'clock.

That evening I ran to my door a dozen times watching for Jim's car. I had hurried Lutie off to bed, telling her a bedtime story which she had to correct for me. My mind was up at Skyline House.

At last Jim came, and we were plowing through the snow, slipping in and out of ruts, up the hill.

I saw the glow of the open door wehn we turned in off the drive. Mrs. Downing was standing on the porch, wringing her bony hands.

Jim took the steps two at a time, and I was close behind him.

Mrs. Downing was saying, "The Professor has been killed with one of them bridle things."

Just inside the library door, Bettie and Eugene were huddled together like frightened sheep. Malcolm Winters was leaning over the desk where the Professor's body was lying in almost the same position as Irene's body had been lying earlier in the day. A branks was buckled on his proud, dark head.

Bettie caught my arm, "Oh,

Miss Martha," she said, "I found Uncle Lawrence." Then her pretty face hardened and she turned to Jim. "Mr. Ettaberry, I think it is my duty to tell you that I heard Malcolm and Uncle Lawrence having heated words this afternoon, then I saw Malcolm come from the library with a note and call a messenger boy."

Mrs. Downing pushed herself forward, "I heard them, too. Later, I heard the Professor typing, then more fuss."

Eugene put his left arm around Bettie's shoulders, and said to Malcolm Winters, "You hated Uncle Lawrence. I think you came down here to kill him. When Irene suspected your plan, you killed her first."

I noticed that Eugene's right hand was in his coat pocket, and I wondered if he had decided he needed a gun for protection.

Malcolm Winters said nothing.

After we were gathered, again, in the back living room, Jim said quietly, "Winters, I want the truth." Jim waved his long, lean hand toward a chair directly in front of the large fireplace, and young Winters sat down. Jim walked around him and stood with his back toward the fire, facing Malcolm Winters.

Bettie and I were seated again on the low divan; Eugene was standing behind us, close to Bettie.

Malcolm Winters looked up at Jim and his lips set stubbornly. "Suppose I don't want to tell the truth."

Jim pointed his finger at the boy, "Then you'll force me to go up to the University and investigate Pauline Day's death . . . "

"I'll tell all I know." The boy lifted his hand wearily and brushed back his blond hair. He sighed, "But, it's too late now."

"Go ahead." Jim urged.

Malcolm began: "Pauline Day was my half-sister. When she was murdered, I suspected Professor Lathan because I had seen Pauline coming out of his office one day, crying."

Jim's eyes were mere slits. "Did you tell anyone?"

"Yes, I went to the President of the University. When he asked Professor Lathan for an explanation, the Professor resigned, and left the University."

Malcolm Winters hesitated, he glanced at Bettie, then went on talking: "Hoping to get some proof on the Professor I started dating Bettie. When I found that Irene, also, suspected her husband, I told her all I knew about Pauline . . . "

Jim asked, "When did you tell Irene that?"

"That's what we were whisperin about in the library last night."

Jim's grey eyes drilled into the boy as he asked, "How did you force the Professor to write that note to me?"

"I went to the library this afternoon, and tried to bluff the

Professor: I told him that Pauline had told me everything. I was scared stiff when he grabbed me and said, 'My God, tell me every word that she told you'. I pulled away from him, and said, 'Unless you confess, I'll tell Mr. Ettaberry everything that she told me.' It was then he agreed to write the note."

"Why did he ask me to wait until eight o'clock?"

Malcolm Winters smiled as if he hardly expected Jim to believe him. He said, "The Professor said that he had a friend that was going on a long journey, but after he bade his friend farewell this afternoon, he would confess to you tonight."

I saw Jim's thumb slip around inside his belt until his right hand was close to his gun. Malcolm Winters was watching Jim's hand, too, and the smile slowly died from his lips.

Jim said, "Winters, I want to make a truth test. Let me see your palms."

The boy extended his palms without taking his eyes from Jim's right hand.

Jim hurriedly looked at the boy's hands, then let his eyes travel slowly over the room.

Bettie was trembling against me, as Eugene cleared his throat.

Mrs. Downing came into the room twisting a corner of her white organdy apron.

Jim asked, "Mrs. Downing, do you know of anyone of the family who planned to leave this afternoon?"

"Well, no, Mr. Ettabery," she said. "The Professor told me to pack Mr. Eugene's bag, but Mr. Eugene told me not to bother about it."

Jim turned to Bettie and asked, "Bettie didn't you stop caring for Eugene when you found that he was slipping around and dating Pauline?"

Bettie jumped up from the divan, saying, "Oh, Mr. Ettaberry, I never really knew anything definite; I just suspected . . . "

Jim cut in, "That is what I wanted to know." With his gun in his hand, Jim came over to Eugene, and said, "You killed the girl, Pauline."

"Why, you old fool!" Eugene's handsome, dark face was livid with anger, "you haven't a thing on me."

"Very well," Jim said, "I'll try my truth test. Let me see your palms."

Eugene gave a low laugh of ridicule, but he hesitated. Jim's gun, now, was pointing straight

The record for big feet for normal adults is 12.4 inches (for a Negro man) and for the smallest feet is 7.6 inches (for an Indian woman). The average foot length for the white man is 10.3 inches, while the average white woman trots around on feet 9.3 inches long.

at Eugene. When Jim took a step forward, Eugene snatched his hands out of his pockets and thrust his hands out with the palms up.

Jim nodded at Eugene's right hand, "You pierced your thumb when you opened the branks this evening, didn't you?"

Eugene jerked his hands away, and slammed them back into his pockets, but not before I saw twin wounds on his right thumb, identically like the ones I had seen on the Professor's thumb. I remembered the Professor's saying, "Every time I try to open this branks, I hurt my thumb."

Jim's voice had an edge of tempered steel: "Eugene Lathan, I arrest you for the murder of Irene and Lawrence Lathan and the girl, Pauline Day. You killed the girl when you got her in trouble. You tried to kill Irene last night under the Magnolia tree when you found out that she had begun to suspect you instead of the Professor." Then he added as if an after-thought, "At least, that's what she told Mrs. Downing."

Eugene screamed out, "Irene didin't tell Mrs. Downing! She said she didn't!"

"No, she didn't," Jim said calmly, "But you have just admitted that you tried to kill her last night under the Magnolia tree and that Irene told you that she didn't tell Mrs. Downing about it."

Eugene's right hand came out of his pocket and to his mouth. He gulped, then began to take on a dumb expression. For about two minutes — while we rushed about trying to do something for him — Eugene lay on the divan writhing, then he grew still—perfectly still.

Jim straightened up, and wiped the sweat from his brow. Then he put his handkerchief back in his pocket. His eyes were full of pity as he looked at me and said, "Poison."

Again Jim and I were slipping in and out of the ruts down the steep hill.

I asked, "Jim when did you first suspect Eugene?"

Jim talked through his teeth clamped on his pipe stem, "When he was so surprised at his grandfather's confession."

"But, Jim,' I laughed, "That surprised me, too . . . "

"Yes," Jim agreed, "But you didn't lose control of yourself. Right then, I first suspected Eugene was guilty, and the Professor was shielding him; then, when Winters told of seeing the girl, Pauline, come from the Professor's office in tears, it strengthened my suspicion. Another thing that pointed to Eugene was Mrs. Downing's saying that she saw the man under the Magnolia tree *sharply* outlined against the snow." Jim smiled, and the lines fanned out from his eyes. "I suppose you caught that, Martha?"

I shook my head without replying, and he continued: "Old man

Lathan said that Malcolm was wearing a light grey suit last night. A light grey suit wouldn't outline sharply against the snow, but Eugene wears dark suits . . . "

"But, Jim," I cut in, "Why did Eugene kill his uncle?"

Jim wriggled his pipe stem to a more comfortable position, "Eugene didn't want to leave the country. He wanted to marry Bettie and stay where Irene's money would make them comfortable. The only person who had any proof against him, he thought, was his uncle; so, expecting to lay the blame on Malcolm Winters, he killed his uncle. He thought that he would get rid of a rival and hush his uncle's tongue with one stroke."

I shuddered, "Hush his uncle's tongue with a branks."

Jim nodded.

According to the Mosaic law, it was lawful to kill a thief if he came by night. But if he came by day, he was only to make restitution and if he had nothing he was to be sold for his theft. The forfeiture was greater as the property was more exposed; that is, for a sheep or an ox, four or five fold should be restored, and for robbing a house, double.

Psychiatrists connected with courts and prisons have found that a decrease in the normal amount of sugar in the blood has been associated with such anti-social acts as disorderly conduct, assault and battery, attempted suicide and homicide, cruelty against children and in marital relationship and many others.

STRANGE BURGLARY

By PETER LEVINS

The Long Beach mystery baffled a host of investigators—until the clues began to pour in.

THE time was a blustery evening in late February, 1919. The scene was Long Beach, a community situated on a strip of sand and salt marsh on the south shore of Long Island, N. Y. The chief characters were Dr. Walter Keene Wilkins, 67, and his wife, Julia, 55.

On Feb. 27, 1919, Dr. and Mrs. Wilkins spent the day in New York, where Mrs. Wilkins, the moneyed member of the team, owned several rooming houses. They returned to Long Beach on a train arriving at 9:30 P. M., and proceeded to their domicile on Olive Street.

Dr. Wilkins, a benevolent looking gentleman with mutton-chop whiskers, was wearing his customary outfit: cutaway coat, striped trousers, dark overcoat and derby. He was also carrying his small bag, which contained, in addition to his infrequently-used medical kit, various edibles.

Mrs. Wilkins greeted Police Sergeant Schneider, then seized her husband's arm and stepped

briskly off in the direction of home. Officer Schneider strolled back to his station remarking to himself that nothing exciting ever happened in Long Beach. Then, at 9:53, he learned of violence on Olive Street.

He found Mrs. Wilkins unconscious on a driveway leading to the Wilkins garage. Dr. Wilkins was bathing her battered head.

"We ran into burglars," the doctor said. "I've already telephoned for an ambulance."

Officer Schneider saw that Wilkins' derby was smashed, and that the left side of his collar had been partly torn away from his neck. Moreover, his tie was hanging down from his collar, as though someone had grabbed it in a struggle.

"There were three of them," Wilkins said. "They attacked me, then one hit my wife."

It developed that Mrs. Wilkins had been struck 17 times, which is rather excessive for a burglar.

She died in a hospital at 11:45 P. M.

Dr. Wilkins, reciting the tragic events, said that he and Julia approached their home from the rear, and that he entered first. He said that as he went inside he saw a figure "move behind the portiere." Accordingly, he stepped back, remarking, "Julia, there is somebody in here. You'd better stay outside. We may need help."

With that he received a severe blow on the head and fell to the floor. Julia, meanwhile was screaming. One of the robbers, Wilkins continued, ordered an accomplice to "attend to that."

Very soon, Mrs. Wilkins' outbursts ceased.

He said they took his watch, a stickpin set with diamonds, and a wallet containing $40, and gave only a vague description of the intruders.

After the ambulance had re-

He found Mrs. Wilkins unconscious on a driveway leading to the garage. Her head was battered from many blows of a heavy blunt instrument.

moved Mrs. Wilkins, the doctor had fed her pet monkey and parrot, and had taken their two collies for a walk. The comestibles in his bag were explained by the fact that it had become the custom for him, and not Mrs. Wilkins, to do the marketing.

Detectives made a specially careful inspection of the small breakfast room where Wilkins had been struck down. On a table in one corner stood a brandy bottle, nearly empty, three glasses and two soiled teacups. The floor was littered with cigarette butts, matches and a cigar stub. Three chairs were drawn up to the table. Upstairs, bureau drawers had been ransacked.

Several valuable clues were discovered outside in the yard. One was a piece of half-inch lead pipe, wrapped in sacking, which was presumed to be the weapon with which Wilkins had been attacked. Mrs. Wilkins had apparently been struck with a machinist's hammer, found near her in the driveway. This had been wrapped in a piece of newspaper and tied with cord.

The hammer handle had been repaired with wire.

The investigation proving sluggish, Long Beach residents held an indignation meeting. District Attorney Frederick Weeks hired the William J. Burns Detective Agency. Long Beach Estates called in the Schindler Detective Agency.

Meanwhile, Dr. Wilkins divided his time between a house which Julia owned on West 65th Street, Manhattan, and the dwelling in Long Beach, where he searched for a recent will. Julia, one of the heiresses to a cheese fortune, had written a will in 1903, but that was before she knew Dr. Wilkins, so naturally he hadn't been mentioned. The 1903 will, drawn when she was married to Otto Krauss, an agent for a whiskey company, left her $100,000 estate chiefly to charity. She had married Wilkins in 1906.

On March 21, the body was exhumed, and the following day a New York newspaper quoted Dr. Wilkins as confiding that he was being suspected of the murder. This, he asserted, was nonsensical.

"My wife's death was the worst thing that could have happened to me," he said. "She was the person from whom I got my money. Under her will—at least under the terms of the only will found thus far—I am left practically penniless. At the age of 67, I will have to go back into active practice."

On March 14, District Attorney Weeks, County Detective Carmen Plant, Police Chief Patrick Travey, William J. Burns and Raymond Schindler all announced that they had the case solved. None cared to disclose his findings at the moment, but Burns did say he had found traces of

green paint on the mechanic's hammer used to bludgeon Mrs. Wilkins. The Wilkins fence had recently been painted green.

"How do you explain the blood-stains on the underside of Dr. Wilkins' hat brim?" a reporter asked Weeks.

"That's just the point," he replied.

With investigators cluttering the place, each assumed that somebody else was keeping an eye on Dr. Wilkins. All were distressed, therefore, to learn on Sunday, March 16, that he had vanished, taking along his black bag.

The months of July and August are known as the "dog days," but this is no allusion to the state of the weather, even if it seems so. The star Sirius, the "dog star," rises during these summer months, hence, dog days.

No trace of him developed on Monday or Tuesday. Then it came out that he had turned over to Louis Freiss, Julia's attorney, a "second will" which he had supposedly found in the attic of the Olive Street house. Dated 1915, this testament—unwitnessed and therefore invalid—resembled the 1903 will except that it left Wilkins the Long Beach property, the house on 65th Street, and all Mrs. Wilkins' personal belongings except some jewelry. The will also set up a $5,000 fund to care for the monkey, parrot and two collies.

Lawyer Freiss had advised Wilkins to deliver the document to Weeks. Accordingly, Wilkins had made an appointment to be at the D. A.'s office on Sunday. Instead he had skipped town.

Weeks released to the press information indicating that those 17 blows Mrs. Wilkins sustained had not been administered by a burglar.

These points were brought out:

1. Detectives had discovered that the newspaper in which the hammer had been wrapped was one to which Dr. Wilkins subscribed and which he had been reading on the train.

2. The wire binding the broken handle of the hammer corresponded with some picture wire found in a desk drawer in the Olive Street house.

3. The string around the hammer had been traced to a butcher shop where Wilkins traded.

4. A mechanic who had done some work in the Wilkins home reported that he had seen the hammer in Wilkins' tool chest, and could identify it by a streak of green paint on the handle.

5. Some minute particles of glass, found in the driveway, proved to be from the crystal of a watch Wilkins said had been snatched from him. The watch, wrapped in a bloody towel, had been found in recesses of a couch in the living room.

6. Mrs. Wilkins' hat, undam-

aged, her gloves and false teeth were found inside the house.

Weeks also said that the three glasses in the breakfast room had dust inside of them and showed no fingerprints.

Newpapers began to unveil details of Wilkins' past. He had first married at the age of 35, when he was selling carpet sweepers in the Napa Valley in California, but he had lost his wife, the former Grace Mansfield, via the fatal effects of a bee sting. Next he had married a widow named Suzanen Kirkland, who, at the time of the wedding, owned two theatrical boarding houses on West 38th Street, Manhattan.

He had lost this wife in a rather unusual manner, too. She had fallen down a flight of stairs, and had become nervous and depressed. Wilkins, a medical man by this time, advised her to take a cold bath each morning. One day he solicitously drew the bath himself, adding several large chunks of ice. Suzanne had stepped into the tub and dropped dead. This had been a plain case of apoplexy, the physician decided, although he later admitted that a diagnosis was difficult since the body already had been embalmed.

Then came Julia Krauss, the cheese heiress.

"I am of the firm opinion," Weeks concluded, "that Wilkins killed his wife. I believe that he struck her down while she was airing the dogs in the backyard, and that he then fabricated evidence to indicate burglary."

Two days after the doctor's disappearance from the jurisdiction of Nassau County, Weeks received a telegram sent from Baltimore and signed by Wilkins. It stated that the suspect had just read certain stories in the newspapers and was, consequently, returning to give himself up.

He was true to his word. He returned, minus his mutton chops, and was lodged in Cell 9, Tier 3, of the jail in Mineola, which was considered a choice location. Wilkins began to grow a new crop of whiskers, while Freiss, not a criminal lawyer himself, retained Charles Wysong of Port Washington to defend him. The trial was set for early June.

Wilkins, admitting nothing, charged that he was being framed by the various investigators. What's more, he sued the Eden Musee in Coney Island for $25,000 for staging a wax tableau depicting him bending in an incriminating manner over the prostrate body of his wife, nurse and good companion. Due to certain eventualities, this suit never reached court.

The trial opened before Justice David F. Manning on June 5. The state brought out two new bits of evidence: 1. That Wilkins' "stolen" stickpin had been found in his overcoat pocket; and 2. that his fingerprints had been found on the hammer and on the

piece of lead pipe. Wysong insisted that his client had had no motive and that he had been framed.

The jury deliberated 22 hours and 23 minutes, then decided that Walter Wilkins was guilty of murder in the first degree.

On the day after his conviction, to the embarrassment of the authorities, he hanged himself in the jail bathroom. He did not use a belt or a necktie or strips of sheeting, but a brand-new rope. the source of which remained a mystery. Hastily the sheriff suspended the jail warden and two keepers who had been "watching" Wilkins. Later Gov. Al Smith fired the sheriff.

Dr. Wilkins left a note stating he wished to be cremated. His request was carried out and his ashes found a prosaic resting place in a filing cabinet at Lawyer Wysong's office.

Courtesy American Weekly

A baby born in Knoxville, Tennessee, was reported in Science of November 16, 1928, to have been born with a tail 7 inches long. This was not a record. The record was held by a 12-year-old boy in French Indo-China who had a tail 9 inches long. Sometime during gestation we all have tails at least a sixth as long as our bodies.

There are two kinds of discontent in this world: the discontent that works, and the discontent that wrings its hands. The first gets what it wants, and the second loses what it has. There is no cure for the first but success; and there is no cure at all for the second.

—Gordon Graham

Ring for Murder

By ELLIS K. BALDWIN

It required a clever science professor to check-mate the scientific dealers-in-death.

MITCHELL NORTON turned the key in the door of the physics laboratory. On the steps of the science building he breathed deeply of the warm night air. Across the campus the fraternity houses loomed like a row of mausoleums. The college lay embalmed in the dreary interval between summer session and the autumn opening.

A tall girl stood on the steps beside him. She was his daughter.

"How many pass this time?" she asked, glancing at his brief case.

Examinations over at noon, the students, many of them recently discharged service men, had packed and hurriedly departed, but Norton corrected the papers steadily until after dark.

"A good class," he told her as they moved off into the shadows.

He was thinking of many of the returned service men with scientific backgrounds who were planning to go into industrial plants. He stopped short on the campus walk. A blurred jingling was coming from the science building.

"Hear that?" he asked.

Back in his office the voice on

the wire said, "That you Mitch? This is Bob Bogan."

"Nice of you to call and wish Martha and me good luck on the trip," Norton grinned into the mouthpiece.

"Are you all set?"

"Ten more examination papers to correct. That's all that stands between us and a spot in the Adirondacks where they inhale the fly, leader and all."

"Fine."

"What's on your mind?"

"Thought you'd like to know before you left that Douglas Huntington who was supposed to deliver the dedication speech at the new gymnasium this fall won't be able to make it."

"Why not?"

"He's dead."

"Listen, Bob, what's the gag?"

"No gag at all. Couldn't be any deader if he'd laid in Tut's tomb for centuries."

"Natural causes?"

"Highly unnatural. Almost supernatural. In fact we don't know what on earth could have caused it."

"Call in a spiritualist then, I'm a physicist."

"Come on down to headquarters and quit stalling. I need your help."

Norton put the telephone back in its cradle and looked up sheepishly.

"Well, Martha," he said, "here goes your daddy. Mind?"

Martha, who had taken care of her father for six years now ever since her mother's death, emitted a soft musical chuckle.

"Mitch Norton," she laughed, "It will be better for you than wading through icy pools and catching a drizzle puss cold to start the new semester with."

Driving into town the physicist mulled over Huntington's record. He'd been a trustee at the college for a number of years. Even before that he'd been busy promoting school projects. He'd headed the drive for the new gymnasium and his buoyant enthusiasm had brought money pouring in. Everybody liked Doug Huntington.

"Here's the picture," Inspector Bogan started as soon as the physicist closed the door of his office, "Huntington is eating alone tonight at the Marsden Plaza sitting about center of the dining room. He'd waved to a number of friends who walked by in the lobby. Then Doctor Ferber who just came in decided to sit with him. Doc says Huntington grinned at him, motioned to him to sit down, and that while he walked toward him he saw Huntington's head jerk back like he might be dodging some sort of fly or bug.

Mitchell Norton formed his lips in a little circle. Then the grayish smoke rings floated across the study.

Doc gets to the table and Huntington is dead."

"Heart attack?"

"No. Doc Ferber said it could not be that. He'd just examined Doug this afternoon for insurance. He was in wonderful shape."

"What then?"

"The coroner ordered an immediate autopsy. There's the report. He died from a whiff of some kind of poison gas."

"Suicide then?"

"No. He didn't have any container on him and he had not used any dishes or cutlery on the table. We've had the stuff examined."

"How about Doc Ferber. What would prevent him?"

"We have checked Ferber's story. He wasn't near enough to Doug."

"Then he's covering up for him. Probably picked up the container."

"No. We searched him immediately."

"He could have hid the bottle or whatever it was."

"That's possible. But suicide doesn't seem to be the answer. You knew him better than I. What do you think?"

Norton shook his head. The completion of the gymnasium was the paramount achievement in Huntington's life.

"I saw him yesterday and he seemed plenty happy," Norton said.

"That's what they all say," Bogan commented. "He'd got his gym. Last year the airport deal netted him plenty. Everybody says he and his little woman still spill the honeymoon chatter just like they was hitched last week instead of back in the days of bathtub gin."

"How about possible enemies?"

"That's the trouble. If Huntington lived in Hollywood he would have been handed an armful of Oscars. Everybody liked the guy."

Norton lit a cigarette, inhaled deeply and blew a smoke ring across Bogan's desk.

"I have often wondered," he mused, "how a man could be that popular without incurring the enmity of someone, somewhere."

He bade Bogan goodnight.

Stepping to his car at the curb he suddenly heard the receding tattoo of feet down the dark alley beside the gloomy station. Quickly he found the flashlight in the car door pocket. Running to the black opening, he switched the flash on. Darkness folded away on each side of the powerful light. He swept the distance to where the alley opened on the next street. There was no one there.

Homeward bound, he parked

Freshwater sharks, sawfish, tarpon and other salt-water fish, are found in an oval 100-mile lake in Nicaragua. The lake was probably once a bay of the Pacific Ocean but its waters, now landlocked, have been freshened by years of rain water.

at Joe's news and candy store. He wanted the bulldog edition of *The Post*. Leaving the motor running, he jogged into the store.

"Got a new skill game professor," Joe said. "Hockey players this time."

"Not now, my good friend. You know you've got that thing fixed."

Joe grinned. He knew that Mitch Norton played the marble rolling machines nearly as often as his students.

Back in the street Mitch saw the avenue was nearly deserted. An odd sensation crept into his bones as he walked to the car. His fingers were on the door handle when it seemed to him that someone was tugging at his leg, holding him back. He looked down to see Joe's huge black cat rubbing against his shins.

Then a thundering head-splitting detonation rocked the stillness. Mitch felt himself thrown brutally to the pavement. Before him he saw a blinding flash. The top of the car sailed skyward. In back of him a shower of plate glass clattered to the sidewalk.

"What in God's name?" Joe was asking as he picked him up.

What remained of the car was blazing furiously. Mitch heard the wail of a fire siren in the distance.

"I'll drive you home," Joe said, "if you're all right."

Going up college hill Mitch recalled the tattoo of feet in the alley. He was not sure whether the police would find pieces of the time bomb smouldering in the wreckage, the demolition was so complete. But he knew for a certainty whoever put the bomb there was determined that he should not find out who killed Doug Huntington.

The next day he put himself into circulation. He smoked a great many cigars. He was in the bank. He dropped over to the city room of the *Dispatch*. He lingered at the Post Office. He went among the tables at the Kiwanis luncheon.

Everywhere his parting remark was the same. He got bored mouthing it, but always he wound up with: "To think that Doug apparently didn't have an enemy in the world."

That night his cliche brought him the first new answer. He was in the kitchen of the Marsden Plaza chatting with the steward.

"Enemy, did you say, Professor Norton?" The steward wheezed and pushed aside his account slips.

"Yes."

"Then you don't know Heinrich Henkel?"

"No."

"Heinrich could have cut out Huntington's heart, ground it up and fed it to his dog. He's often said so."

"Why's that?"

"It was the airport deal. Heinrich had one of the biggest truck farms on that muck land adjoin-

ing the port. Huntington bought up the land around the port for very little before the farmers knew what was happening. You remember what he got from the government."

Norton remembered. It was more than he'd earn teaching the rest of his life. Now the old airport was greatly enlarged. Hundreds were employed there. It was being made into a proving ground for a great aircraft company.

"Huntington didn't buy all of Henkel's farm. He's got enough left to raise vegetables for this hotel. He delivered some last night."

"Still hating Huntington?"

"I told him a friend of his was in the dining room. He nodded and growled: 'Dat robber. I see him'. The alley he comes in, you see, goes right by the dining room."

"Say anything more?"

The fat steward shook his head.

Norton started to leave. Then he came back. He thought he might have a look at the alley, he said.

"Sure," the steward answered. "Door leads right out here."

There was a drizzling rain. Norton make a quick inspection. Back with the steward, he asked, "You keep this door closed most of the time?"

"Only when it's raining."

"Then you could see Henkel when he went past the dining room windows last night. Did he do anything unusual?"

"No. Other times when Huntington was in there he'd just shake his fist. Last night he shook a box of candy in his hand."

"Candy?"

"One of those circular tin boxes you buy over at Joe's newsstand. Henkel likes candy almost as much as he hated Huntington."

Back in his study Mitch Norton began correcting the rest of his examination papers. The rain had made the house damp. Martha lit kindling in the fireplace. The chimney was not drawing properly and the room began to fill with smoke.

Choking, Mitch jumped up.

"Let's air this place out," he called to Martha who was making tea in the kitchen.

Opening the French doors, he stepped out on the long side porch. Across the lawn toward the campus he saw something sway beside the bordering hedge. Cautiously he moved back into the shadow. Someone was out there creeping slowly along.

"I can't go back through that door," Mitch thought quickly, "My silhouette would be too good a target."

He sank to his hands and knees. He was crawling now to the door at the other end of the porch. Then, running through the house, he emerged swiftly at the back. From here he could see the black figure inching toward the porch.

Now he could rush the man from behind. His toes dug into the soft lawn. Racing forward he covered the distance and leaped.

They thudded to the ground. Mitch's momentum sent them rolling. They stopped in the muck of the flower bed. Mitch was on top but his hands were wet and muddy. The man heaved and slipped like an eel from beneath him. He was up and running down the driveway before Mitch regained his feet.

From the back the running man looked like Joe. But Mitch dismissed that thought promptly. It couldn't be Joe, who sold him papers every day. Joe was his friend.

Martha burst out laughing when Mitch came back into the kitchen.

"Mr. Bones, this is your number," she giggled.

"What's that?" Mitch asked, not understanding.

"Look in the mirror," she said. "Your face is covered with mud."

Then she gasped and her face went white.

"And blood," she added. "Oh, Dad!"

After a shower Martha put adhesive tape on his cut cheek and sat on the arm of his easy chair. Mitch remembered that the man caught him with his heel when he struggled to get away.

"For both our sakes," she pleaded, "Won't you give up this case?"

"I can't very well now. I've started to make progress."

"What progress?"

"The coroner's report shows that Huntington breathed his last because he got a whiff of a cyanide gas derivative with nobody near him. In fact, there wasn't any one within fifteen feet."

"How do you call that progress?"

"Wait. I've learned of a vegetable farmer who hated Huntington and whose secret in sin is bon-bons. The whole set-up intrigues me very much indeed."

"Does it intrigue you to have someone blow up your car and then come prowling here waiting to do Lord knows what?"

Norton's forehead slowly developed a deep wrinkle. Martha's cool hand reached over to smooth it out.

"I should have insisted that we go up in the Adirondacks," she said. "You might have caught cold, but what's a cold compared with this?"

She reached over to the walnut box where he kept his Havana cigars.

When modern man says he is "robbing Peter to pay Paul," he is unknowingly quoting English history. Back in the reign of Edward VI the church lands of Saint Peter's at Westminster were sold to raise money to repair Saint Paul's Cathedral in London.

"Here, blow me a smoke ring, Daddy," she said, "Like you used to do when I was smaller. Let's forget Huntington."

The sticks in the fireplace crackled. Mithell Norton formed his lips in a little circle. The room was a jumble of dancing shadows when the first grayish white ring floated lazily across the study and disintegrated in the darkness.

Another ring was taking shape when Norton leaped to his feet.

"Dad, what is it?" Martha cried in alarm.

"I've got it," he told her triumphantly.

"Got what?"

"It's the principle of the vortex ring."

Suddenly he laughed a hollow derisive laugh and sat down.

"That's impossible," he sighed. "What would a truck farmer know about such things?"

But early in the morning Martha was driving her father in her roadster toward the air depot. She would buy fresh vegetables. Her father would pass the time of day with Heinrich.

Nearby, the depot seethed with activity. Norton thought of the great ant hills he had seen when he toured Africa. Men, numerous as insects, were swarming in and out of unfinished buildings. But the long runways, where it was rumored that a new giant ship for Universal Aircraft was to be tried out later in the week, had been completed days ago.

Henkel was not in the habit of selling his vegetables directly to the customers.

"But as a favor to us," Martha urged. "Father and I have eaten your radishes and lettuce at the hotel. We have tasted nothing finer."

Grudgingly Henkel moved off into the field. Martha followed him. She wanted to see just how he cultivated them, she said.

Norton waited until they were around the corner of the little house. Then quickly he opened the door, moving stealthily inside.

As they had driven up he had noticed that one section of the roof was fitted with a large skylight. He wondered if at some time an artist had occupied the home. Now that Henkel was in the field he would look around.

The place was spotlessly clean. Its simple appointments were arranged with neatness. It was almost as if some woman were caring for the house. Then instantly he saw what he was after. Across the room on the shelf over the table was a circular tin container.

Three long strides and he was beside it. His fingers itched to examine the thing. What it contained would either substantiate his suspicion or show he had let his mind loose on another theoretical rampage. Now he almost hesitated to examine the container. His hand was reaching up.

Suddenly a voice with deep gutteral intonation called: "Heinrich, come here."

The command came from the adjoining room, the one under the skylight.

Norton took a quick step toward the outer door. Then he stopped abruptly.

"Henrich, come here instantly," the voice was louder.

It was evident the man wanted help with something.

"Nothing like sticking your chin out all the way," Norton was thinking.

Aloud he called: "Hello. This isn't Heinrich, but can I help?"

The inner door swung open and shut so fast Norton knew only a photo-finish film could catch its movement. A stockily built man, automatic in hand, advanced toward him.

"What you doing here?" he asked bluntly.

Not waiting for an answer he growled, "You'd better get out."

The man looked a great deal like Henkel. He wore rough farm clothes. His cheekbones were high. His eyes were flinty and blue.

"Just a minute," Norton said, "Heinrich Henkel is out getting vegetables for my daughter. I came in because I want to see the studio room. Thought I might like to rent it."

"Impossible. I have that room."

"Was there something in there I could help you with?"

"No. Heinrich will do that. Here he comes."

Martha and Heinrich came in. The farmer put the vegetables on the table. Norton's gaze returned to the circular container on the shelf above. It was too late to take it now.

"You meet my brudder, I see," Heinrich said. "He giffs me a hand mit da farm. He vas very lucky."

"These people would not be interested in my case," the brother said. "There have been so many like it."

Heinrich wrapped the vegetables in newspapers he took from the shelf beside the round container.

"Ya. Just same," he insisted, "You vas lucky to get oudt. Some day perhaps he tell you about da concentration camp und all da rest."

Heinrich was reaching for the container now. Slowly he took off the cover.

"Candy," he said. "Vont you haf some?"

Norton bit savagely into a chocolate-coated caramel. This smashed his theory of the vortex ring to bits. The German farmer simply liked caramels which came in a container shaped like the circular box he used in his laboratory to send off vortex rings.

As Martha drove past the air depot back to the campus, she said: "That head lettuce will make a wonderful salad, Dad."

But Mitch Norton didn't answer. He watched one of the larger planes circle lazily above the air depot. He was thinking that he would have to start this thing all over again. Could there be someone working with Joe? He hated to build that theory. He liked Joe. Joe's boy would be an honor senior this year on the hill. Yet his car was parked in front of Joe's when it blew up. He would talk to the steward again. Maybe someone at the hotel . . .

In reading, our eyes concentrate on the tops of printed words. If the bottom part of a line of type is covered with a piece of paper, the words can be read fairly easily. If the top of the printing is covered up, the words usually cannot be deciphered.

The airline truck bore down on them from a side lane. It should have stopped, for they were on the main highway, but it kept coming straight on. Martha's foot jammed the brakes. They squealed lustily.

"Glory, that was close," she gulped excitedly. The mountain of metal turned deliberately. It was heading its nose directly into their roadster on Mitch Norton's side.

Simultaneously, the truck driver leaped and Mitch shoved his foot over on the accelerator. The little roadster shot forward, avoiding a direct impact, but the truck took off the rear bumper, spinning the light car like a top. It sent it bounding off into the ditch where it rolled jerkily to a stop.

Mitch slumped down in his seat. He heard Martha screaming. Down the side lane he saw the retreating truck driver jump into a sedan which roared away under full speed.

They were sliding him into the ambulance now. A State Trooper was saying: "That hit - and - run driver stole the truck from the air depot."

In the white room at the hospital he was not surprised to hear Martha quietly tell the physician, "I'd rather have Dad laid up for a while with a slight concussion and this leg fracture and be out of harm's way. When he leaves here the Huntington case will probably be solved and he won't be in any danger."

Martha felt uneasy in the Norton home without her father. Before she went to bed she looked down across the campus. Suddenly a cold chill seized her. A dim light flickered in the windows of the physics laboratory.

Into the mouthpiece of the telephone she fought to be calm. She asked headquarters: "Could you send Inspector Bogan out here immediately?"

"He's out there now, ain't he lady?" the voice at the other end said.

"Oh," she said, and hung up. Bob Bogan was taking over

where her father left off. He was probably after some apparatus in the lab. She knew he had a key. Now a wave of loneliness engulfed her and she hurried across to the campus and to the science building to join Bob.

In the cool depths of the laboratory Martha stood dumbfounded. She looked up and saw her father.

He was saying: "Hold that candle a little higher, Bob."

"But, Dad," she broke in, "I thought you were in the hospital."

"To all intents and purposes I am," he answered. "It's better that certain people think I'm there with injuries I luckily didn't get. I'm a fugitive from a day and night nurse. I slipped away using the freight elevator and the rear entrance. Now, Bob, that candle."

She watched Inspector Bogan standing like a sentinel beside the long demonstration table. Her father at the opposite end grasped a circular metal box in one hand. In the other he held a small hammer

He was sighting over the edge. He struck one side of the disc-like contraption a quick tap. In a split second the blazing candle in Bogan's hand popped out.

"What did that" Bogan asked.

"The vortex ring," Norton explained. "This simple contraption sends out an air ring similar to a smoke ring.

"But it could be used to send out gas, too?" queried Bogan.

"Right."

Norton put down the apparatus. He had told Bogan about the visit to Henkel's farm.

Bogan reached impatiently for his hat.

"Well," he cried, "What are we waiting for?"

"Not right now."

"Because Henkel served you candy from a round container? What would prevent him from changing it to the vortex ring apparatus of the same size when he visited the hotel? Let's get going."

"Wait. I want to be sure."

"And in the meantime, the Henkels take a powder!"

"I rather think not. Why don't you come over to the house now for a bottle and sandwich?"

Martha went ahead to fix the sandwiches.

"We'll be along shortly," her father said.

Mitch turned around from locking the science building entrance to join Bogan who came out with him. He began to speak.

"Don't you see, Bob. this case has other angles?"

Then, with a tightening in his throat, he saw he was addressing thin air. Bogan had vanished completely.

"Come on, Bob," he said, "Let's quit gagging."

Now Mitch heard someone breathing heavily behind him. Before he could turn, the blow

descended. Pain shot through his head like a hot electric current. He braced himself to fight but the pain was racing down his spine. His legs felt like they had been shot away below the knees.

The air around him smelled sickishly sweet when Mitch came to. He didn't know where he was. It was so dark he couldn't see. He was sitting on what felt like concrete and his back was up against a wall. His wrists and ankles ached. Blood chugged like mad through his temples. It seemed as if someone was near him but he couldn't see. The gag across his mouth was hurting his jaw.

A few feet away he heard a low moan. If he could only loosen the ropes on his wrists and ankles, he'd feel a lot more comfortable.

Looking up, he saw some distance above, a small patch of sky. The stars were shining.

"What is this? A deep well gone dry?" he wondered. The sweetish smell was making him feel sick.

His eyes were becoming accustomed to the gloom. He could see the other man not five feet away. He was snoring. It was Bogan. Hitching himself down to a prone position, Mitch rolled over toward Bob. His bumping along the floor loosened the gag. He pushed his head against Bob's shoulder. The tightness of the cloth relaxed. He could talk now.

"Hey, Bob!" he said, "Wake up."

Bogan tried to say something but his own gag muffled his words.

Mitch was biting at Bogan's gag when he heard a rooster crowing in the distance.

When he got the cloth loosened, Bogan asked: "Where the hell are we, do you have any idea?"

"Judgingfromthis smell and the rooster's bugle call, we are in somebody's empty silo. This stuff we smell is ensilage they feed to cows."

"Shanghaied as a remedy to the farm labor shortage, are we?" asked Bogan in a grim tone.

"Not here. Judging from the emptiness of the silo this farm has been abandoned.

Shuddering in the dampness, Bogan said: "Before I was bopped on the head the second time I distinctly heard Heinrich Henkel's voice speak to another man. What would they want to dump us here for?"

"Now, I'll ask you one," Mitch came back, "When are they going to try out Universal's giant plane at the airport?"

A person can be smell-blind as well as color-blind. The deficiency is inherited as a dominant, non-sex-linked characteristic. That means that if either of your parents are smell-blind, you have a good chance of inheriting it, regardless of your sex.

"It's been moved up to tomorrow morning. But say, by now, it is tomorrow morning."

We've got to get out of here," Mitch suddenly cried, his words echoing hollowly against the cylindrical walls.

"Fat chance," Bogan was derisive. But his experienced hands were already free and he was working at the rope around his ankles.

"If we don't, they'll wreck that plane that's cost millions in experimentation."

Mitch was free of his own bonds now, feeling along the walls of the circular prison.

"It's no use," Bogan said. "There's never a ladder on the inside of a silo."

They both were gazing at the slit in the side more than twenty feet above.

"That narrow opening has little doors about four feet high all the way up and down the silo," Mitch was saying. "Henkel and his brother shoved us in here and then locked the first five or six of those doors from the outside."

"So up we fly?" Bogan was sarcastic now.

"We can knot together these ropes they tied us with."

"So we do. Then what? The rope won't be long enough and if it is, how are we going to fasten it up there?"

But both Bogan and Mitch began feverishly knotting the short strands together.

Mitch pulled the knots tight.

"I can't tell you just what those two fiends are up to," he grunted, finishing the strand, "but they have enough scientific knowledge to do some tremendous damage."

Bob took the strand from Mitch. He fashioned a noose at the end of the rope.

"Perhaps it will catch on something outside." He said it halfheartedly.

It didn't. It wasn't even long enough to reach the opening.

"What now?" Bob asked.

"Time to do a strip tease," Mitch cried earnestly, removing his trousers. Bob followed suit. Then they were peeling off their shirts.

"Now that it's long enough," Bob complained, "It's too heavy to throw up."

He stepped back to make a toss, groaned and crumpled over on the floor.

"Holy hell-cats, but that hurt!" he called to Mitch. "Turned my ankle on this pitchfork."

"Fine!" Mitch exclaimed.

"Fine? What do you mean? I get it. Don't tell me. I'll do it."

Swiftly Bob tied the pitchfork to the lightest end of the strand. On the second toss he made it. The fork and handle went right through the narrow opening. When he pulled back it settled against the wall outside, making a perfect brace.

Bogan went up hand over hand. He threw open the little doors

from the outside as he moved down the outside ladder. Then Mitch stepped out.

It was half a mile to the nearest farm. The farmer had a telephone, but it was a party line.

"No good," Bogan decreed. "Too many listening in."

"I'll call Martha," Mitch said. "I can talk in terms of 'lettuce and tomatoes' and she'll know what to do."

When Mitch and Bogan drove up to the airport in the farmer's car the company officials stood at the edge of the runway watching the massive plane with its giant wingspread being wheeled out of the hangar.

Bogan's assistant leaned on the doorjam of the Henkel farmhouse not far from the field.

"Got 'em both," he informed the inspector who came up on the run with Mitch. Martha was standing there too.

"Perhaps you had better stay outside and watch the flight," Mitch told his daughter.

"Say, Dad, who made the final arrangements for this vegetable party anyway?" she asked, her eyes sparkling.

Then she moved in ahead of her father.

Inside, Henkel and his brother stood handcuffed together in the center of the darkened kitchen.

"You blundering over-anxious *dumkopf*," the brother was snarling at Heinrich. His face was livid. The muscles on his neck contracted.

"To think my own brother," he growled. Then he choked on his own words and stood there trembling in white hot anger.

Mitchell Norton pushed on past the two brothers.

"Come on, Bob," he said, "Let's look into the next room."

He flung open the door. They filed in. There under the skylight erected on a neat pivoting device shining in its newness, stood a giant duplication of Norton's own vortex ring apparatus. Above the mechanism the skylight had been drawn back.

From outside came the roar of motors as the air depot attendants began to warm up the great ship for its test flight.

"I don't get it," Inspector Bogan said slowly.

"I didn't at first," Professor Norton was talking rapidly now. "In fact this is the first one I've even seen, but you know what that little disc in my laboratory can do. Now in comparison, look at this!"

"You mean Henkel's brother

A "burning spring" in lands owned by George Washington was mentioned by him in his will. The burning spring was not the metaphysical phenomenon it sounds; it was merely seepage oil and gas from underground petroleum deposits.

planned . . . " Bogan said in utter amazement.

"Exactly," Norton pressed on. "With a disc of this diameter he can generate a vortex ring with enough strength to demolish a brick wall, let alone crumple the wing of a great airship."

"Seems incredible," Martha exclaimed.

"But there it is," her father pointed to the apparatus. "If Henkel had put it into operation this new great airlines company would have been out millions of dollars in experimentation. I'm sure if these officials will check further they will find that this man is employed by one of the rival foreign countries."

"*Dumkopf! Dumkopf!*" the man in the next room was roaring at Heinrich.

Bogan said, "He seems to be angrier at Heinrich than he is at the offiicers for arresting him."

Just then Bogan's assistant brought in from the next room a small disc which might have been mistaken for a candy container. Norton examined it gingerly. He nodded and pointed to the hole designed to emit the vortex rings, air shaped like smoke rings capable of developing tremendous power.

Then Norton asked, "Why shouldn't he be angier at his brother? He must have explained to Heinrich the theory of this thing. Heinrich couldn't wait for him to complete his mission. He had to try it out first with this little model, to work his own petty private revenge on Doug Huntington for buying up his precious acres for a song."

NOTE:— *The theory on which this story is based has been demonstrated as workable by research men in one of the larger industrial plants.*

Life work of John McIlroy is erasing mustaches from faces of New York City subway advertisements. Doodlers pencil them on—he rubs them off. He has been at it for 30 years for the subway advertising company.

Glib talkers may give the impression of braininess, but the impression is very likely misleading. What one says, rather than how profusely he says it, is a surer sign of brain power. Do not envy people who talk easily—that may be about all they can do.

POISONED MONEY

By SCOTT ELLSWORTH

He found himself alone with a murdered woman, enmeshed in a web of circumstantial evidence.

AS the interurban z o o m e d along through the night, I saw that it was raining. The telephone poles glistened and puddles were beginning to shimmer, down at the foot of the road bed.

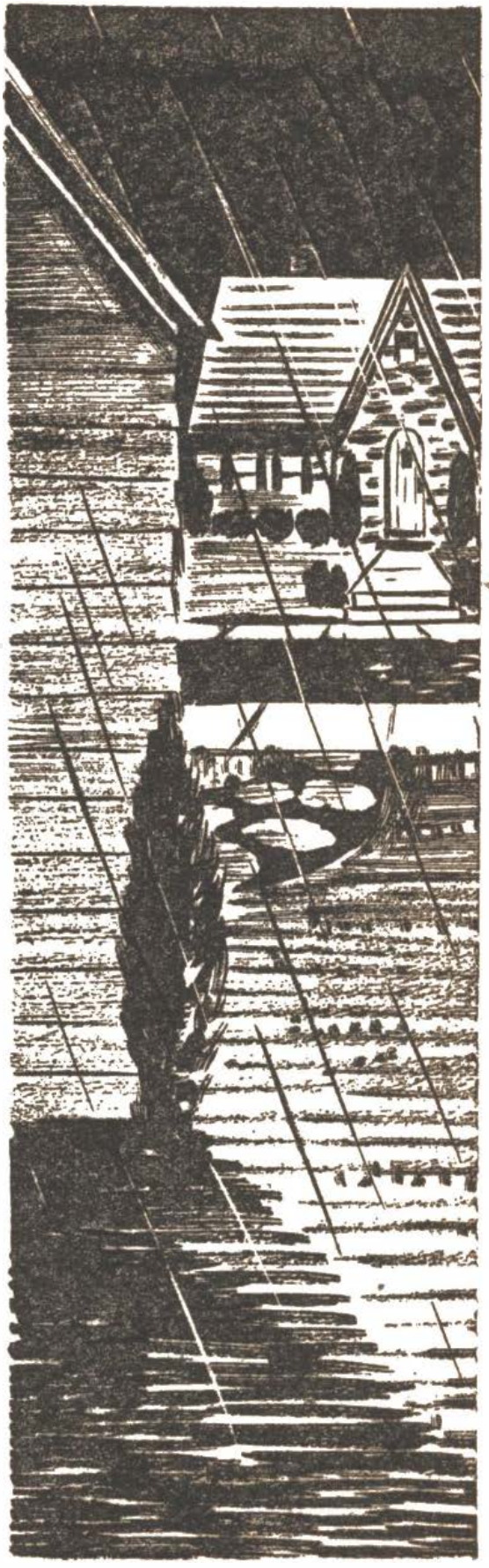
I thought of the shoddy suit I was wearing, and of the cheap shoes—both made in prison industrial shops. I had five dollars in my pocket. That and my clothes were all the property I owned in the world. And as far as I knew, I didn't have a friend. The Boss certainly wouldn't have any use for a man with a prison record, and Zach Bindley, his

righthand man, had always hated me.

Then I thought of Miriam. She was my step-sister. The closer we came to the city, the more I thought about the one face above ground that might, on this first night out, give me a friendly look.

I landed at the interurban terminal and stood looking helplessly about. Rain was pelting down by this time. Cars drove up and happy faces looked out expectantly. The only p e o p l e that looked at me shied away, gave me a sharp second look, and seemed to read the hall-mark of the big house in my bleached face. So what? So I had to take it, and there was no use in standing here miserably, like a scared hen, getting wetter and colder by the minute.

I caught an Oak Street car. I got off at the old corner, turned my collar up, and sloshed along in my soaked shoes. It hadn't taken that split goosehide leather long to turn wet and to begin to stretch out of shape. I went up the wooden steps to Miriam's flat building, and as I pushed the front door open, a tall, suspicious looking woman came out of a little office and stood looking at me.



Whoever lived here was away from home. I looked up and down the path, then I pried up the window.

"I want to see Miss Miriam Keith," I said.

She looked hard at me and pinched her lips together. Then she opened them about wide enough to slip the thick edge of a knife blade between and said, "Two-nine, young man—and I don't like your looks!"

There was an automatic elevator but I was used to doing things the hard way and I went up the stairs. I walked back to Miriam's door and rang. I heard her coming—quick, nervous steps—then the door slid open just a crack. I could see a chain holding it, inside.

Miriam looked scared when she saw me. She started to shut the door, then let it stay open that crack.

"Whitey!" she said, sucking the word in with a gasp.

"Sure," I said. "Can I come in?"

"I don't think—" Miriam began.

Then she unsnapped the door chain and opened the door. She stood aside and I saw she was the same pale, tense, nervous girl—only she wasn't really a girl any longer—she had been when I went up the bay.

She'd fixed her place up a lot. She had new living room furniture and a good rug and a radio that had cost money. That surprised me because I thought Miriam and Zach Bindley had busted up.

I held my soggy cap in my hand and looked around. Miriam got a newspaper and covered the seat and back of an easy chair.

"Sit down, Whitey," she said.

She got another newspaper and put it under my shoes, then sat down on the edge of a chair across from me.

"Look here, sis," I said, "I want to get something straight right to begin with. I haven't come back to get even with anyone. I'm not gunning for the Boss, or for Zach, or for the guy that hid those bindles of narcotics in the lining of my overcoat just before I was harpooned by the cops. When I first went inside I swore I'd come out and get even, but I've learned to play the piano — and it's changed my mind."

"The piano?" Miriam whispered.

"You sit up in front of a loom and weave jute into burlap," I said. "You've got to work like Satan, and you're breathing in oil vapor and jute. Pretty soon you forget about getting out some day and burning down the judge, or anybody else. All you want is to get away somewhere, and get a job you can live by, and be let alone."

Miriam looked scared. "They have broken your will," she said.

"Sure, that's what they were supposed to do. So I'm not gunning for anyone. I want you to tell the boss that. Tell him all I want is to make a little get-

away money—on the up and up—and scram out of here."

Miriam was about to say something when the buzzer sounded.

Someone was punching out a signal. Two shorts—two longs—a short.

Miriam stood up. Her hands were clenched into bloodless fists, she stared at me like I was a ghost. Then she whirled.

"Come on," she whispered. "Hurry!"

My step-sister took me back through her bedroom and pushed me into a closet. She closed the door and I was in the dark. I couldn't hear anything except, after a moment, the closing of another door. That would be the one leading into the living room.

I stood in the dark and quiet. After a time I got restless. I had had enough of that kind of thing for one life-time. I reached for the door. There was just a little nubbin of a knob on my side, not enough to get hold of and turn.

I stood listening. Once I thought I heard something bang against a wall or maybe against the floor. I was getting the fidgets.

There were some clothes hanging in the closet. I groped and found an empty wire hanger. Then I went to work on that little stub end of door knob. There was a hole clear through it and I got the end of the hanger-hook through and twisted. The door swung out before me.

Everything was quiet in the front of the flat. I saw a chink of light under the door that led into the living room but there were no voices. Whoever had called had evidently gone away. Maybe Miriam had gone with him—if it was a him.

I tiptoed across and stood with my ear pressed to the living room door. Still I couldn't hear anything. I twisted the knob and pushed the door open.

Miriam was lying in front of the radio. Her face was toward the frosted dome light in the ceiling and her pale brown hair was shining and dark, over a patch as big as a saucer, with blood.

I stood with my eyes stretched as wide as they would go — out on my feet. Then my mind began to shimmy. My teeth chattered and I ran past Miriam toward the reception hall.

I stopped and made myself walk back, one stiff step at a time. I got down on my knees, stared into her eyes—dead eyes I saw—and put my hand on her chest. Not a tick.

I was up again, and in the hall. Something near the door stopped

Raw cabbage juice has bactericidal action, some varieties have more than others; Cato, the Roman philosopher, was right when more than 2000 years ago he recommended the use of mashed cabbage for the treatment of bruises.

me, in spite of my need to hurry.

It was a little crumpled green packet. I picked it up.

Two century notes—two hundred dollars! Someone—most likely the guy who had killed my step-sister—had dropped them as he scrammed. I unfolded them and inside was a white card, with some numbers and letters on it.

The numbers were serials, one under the other—it looked like a memo on a numbers game. Opposite each serial number were three initials.

I folded the packet and stuck it into my pocket. I'd been trying to figure some way of earning getaway money, and now here I had it.

It may seem heartless for me to have sneaked out of Miriam's flat and out of the building without calling a doctor or the police. But even with my brains doing a devil dance and my hands cold and sweaty I knew I was in for it if I was caught near the death room. It would look like I'd come here, quarreled with Miriam, and slugged her to death. I was willing to gamble my left eye against a glass marble that the guy who had killed her hadn't been seen—for instance by that hatchet-faced landlady, who had seen *me*.

And I got out of the building without being spotted. Everything was quiet in the street, except for the hiss of rain on the sidewalk and pavement. When those big drops hit, they exploded in spray. I could feel water soaking cold against my skin.

The thing for me to do was to get to the nearest bus depot and get onto the first bus that came along.

Who, me? In a prison-made suit—dripping water—probably as pale as death? Every human being I came near would stare at me and remember me.

No, what I had to do was to get some clothes. I'd head for Third Street, where the hock shops would be open—

Who, me? The gimlet eyed lads in charge would spot me for a loser. Anyone of them would charge me plenty for what I purchased—and I'd have to use one of those century notes. Then he would call the precinct house before I was clear of his door. Those second hand dealers aren't looking for any trouble with the law. He'd tell the desk sergeant about me and my big bill, and a radio car would pick me up before I

In a child the spinal column is composed of 33 separate verterbrae. An adult has only 26 because the lowest 9 fuse to form two single bones.

The milk of the water buffalo found in India is slightly bluish. It is exceptionally rich and high in butterfat content. Millions of these animals are used in India for milk, meat and work.

got more than two blocks away.

I shuffled as fast as I could away from the flat-building. But now I knew that I wasn't really going anywhere. I was hemmed in.

Rain had driven people from the street. It was a quiet street, with plenty of vacant lots and a scattering of detached houses. I was just passing one of them when a gleam of white from the porch caught my eyes.

Rolled up newspapers—six of of them, lying right in front of the screen door! That meant that whoever lived in this neat, shingled cottage was away from home. I looked up and down the street. No one in sight. I pivoted and went in along a path, along it to the rear of the cottage.

Everything was neat and trim and when I got a window pried up and slid into the kitchen, that was neat and sweet smelling. It *smelled* clean.

I walked through to the room beyond the living room. A side window let in light from the street lamp and I saw it was a comfortable little place, with everything — floor and furniture — shining and neat. There was a door over on the right. I headed for it. Next moment I was flying through the air, to land on my shoulder and arm. A rug had gone out from under my feet, on that waxed, glassy floor. I got up slowly and pussy-footed on for the closed door. I was used to concrete, and this slick footing was so tricky.

The room I pushed into was a bedroom. In a closet I found clothing—a man's serge suit and some shoes and a rain coat. Luck had turned my way at last.

I changed, hung my wet things on the hanger the serge suit had been on, put on the shoes, slid into the rain coat. I tried on a snap brim felt hat but it fell down on top of my ears. I'd have to stick to my soggy cloth cap. But I would look human now, and I began to feel warm and dry.

I went back into that spic and span living room. Some couple without children must live here. Probably they were away on a vacation.

I walked toward the lowboy radio. Beside it stood a comfortable chair with a red leather cushion. I dropped down and drew in a deep breath of weariness. Then I snapped on the radio. It was tuned low, and I leaned back and closed my eyes. Dreamy dance music. I could picture men and women in fine clothing and with excited, happy faces, in some swell ball room, gliding about. . . .

The music stopped and a studio gong rang three times. Then a voice said, "We interrupt our program of dance music to bring a news bulletin. The body of a woman identified as Miriam Keith, dice girl at the Bijou Tavern, has just been found in a flat at two-nine Oak Street. Miss

Keith has been beaten to death and robbed of five hundred dollars, paid her as a bonus by her employer, Mr. Ben Cope, who operates the Bijou. The money was in hundred dollar bills. We are about to give the serial numbers of these bills. All business men are asked to jot down the numbers . . . "

I hadn't moved my head from the back of the chair. I couldn't. Sure, my luck had changed—changed for the worst.

Life came back into me, grudgingly, as if it thought, "Oh, what is the use?" I fumbled in my pocket, found the poisoned money and slid the packet under the leather cushion of the chair I was sitting in.

The drag-net would be out. Right at this moment cars with lynx-eyed policemen in them would be going up and down the rainy streets. They'd have every bus depot and every railroad station and every road leading out of the city covered.

Then I thought of something else. The cops would go over this neighborhood, not far from Miriam's flat-building, with a fine toothed comb. They'd see those newspapers, out on the front porch, just as I had. . .

I jumped up and nearly fell again. I went cautiously across the polished floor, found the hall, tiptoed to the front door. There was an imitation lace curtain across the glass upper half. I pushed it aside and peered out.

A car with a spot light came creeping down the street. It swerved to the walk in front of the cottage and two huskies in plain clothes jumped out and came in on the trot.

Well, I made it to the kitchen—nearly spilling myself again but catching my balance and racing on. I unlocked the back door and slid out. I closed the door softly and the next moment was in the back yard.

I reached an alley fence, swarmed over it, turned to my left, and went racing away, through puddles, through the rainy night.

At every street intersection I stopped to listen and peer. I got half a dozen blocks away from the cottage. The cops would find the back door unlocked, and maybe they would go through the rooms. If they did, they'd find my discarded prison clothing—dripping wet.

I used to play football, back before I began training with Boss Cope's outfit and quit high school. There comes a time in some football games—along in the last two minutes of play—when a side that is outscored takes to the air. It sends in its best passers and tries for a miracle.

This was the last quarter with Whitey Linford. It was the last sixty seconds to play.

I took to the air.

The front of the Bijou Tavern

looked bright and cheerful, with its white lights blazing. I stared at it, saw men and women drifting in, then turned into a side street and into an alley. I reached the back of Boss Cope's place, felt my way to the rear door, pushed into the storeroom at the rear. I turned to the right and went up the narrow stairs that led to the second floor.

In front of Cope's office door I hesitated. He wouldn't help me —not with a murder rap out against me. But I thought of the two century notes—two, not five —and of his business card wrapped in them. That meant something, and maybe — just maybe—I could find a way to cash in on what it meant.

American industrial chemists in 1945 produced, by the juggling of molecules, enough synthetic rubber to have made a two-inch solid rubber cable that would reach to the moon and have sufficient left over to circle the earth at the equator.

Two men sat in the luxuriously furnished private office. With the door closed behind my back, I faced them. One was Ben Cope, big and hairy and dark skinned, the other was Zach Bindley, tall but thin as a lath and almost blue-white as to skin. They sat, the boss behind his desk, Bindley over on the side. They looked at me and for a moment I could see they didn't recognize me.

Then Bindley shot to his feet. "You dirty little punk—you got your nerve coming in here—after killing your sister!" he snarled. He came across and there was a gun in his hand. "For two cents," he said through his teeth, "I'd let you have it—and save the state the expense of frying you!"

He jerked me farther into the room and stood against the door. I looked at Cope.

"Okay, kid," he said, "what did you come here for?"

"Listen," Bindley grated, "call the police, boss! He'll have the money on him—"

I looked at Zach Bindley. "Not likely," I said. "And listen: there wasn't five hundred in that wad. There were just two century notes. But there was one other thing — Mr. Benjamin Cope's business card, with some numbers and initials on it!"

Zach stared, and his lips were jerking. The gun began to creep up.

"Wait a minute, Zach," the swarthy man behind the desk said gently. "What's this about two hundred dollars, kid? And my card? Are you trying to mix things up?"

I looked straight into his somber black eyes. "I'm giving you the truth, as I hope to escape frying," I said.

There was silence. I could hear faint music from downstairs. Cope looked at his right hand man.

"Sure you didn't peel a little hide off that orange, before you gave it to Miriam?" he asked in his purring voice.

Zach said, "This punk was always as crooked as a gimlet! Frisk him, boss."

Bindley kept his gun on my middle. Ben Cope got up. He moved as softly as a cat. He came over and went through my pockets. I had changed my five dollar bill over to one of them and that was all he found. It was all I had in the world.

"Where's the two hundred bucks—you admit you took that," he said, looking down at me with eyes that were beginning to get red fire in them.

I hadn't thought of that. I could tell the truth—but I had a hunch and I played it. I wanted some slack in my rope so that I could dicker.

"I left the money in Miriam's flat—that and your card," I said. "I hid it."

Ben Cope pushed me into a chair. "Watch him," he said to Bindley.

Zach Bindley stood beside me, his gun out of my reach, pointing now at my chest. His blue face had little porcelain-white dents in it.

Cope sat down at his desk and picked up the French phone. He called for police headquarters, asked for Lieutenant Rafferty.

"Cope speaking, lieutenant," the boss said. "Any trace of that killer yet? No—well, you'll spear him before long. He can't have gotten far. Listen, lieutenant, was any money found in the girl's flat? Only that? No trace of the big bills? No, I was just checking up. The punk has them, of course. Everything finished up there? Sure, tell the undertaker I'll pay for everything. I'll see about the flowers. Okay, lieutenant."

He hung up and swiveled to face me. He stood up.

"Kid," he said. "You tell a funny story and I'll go along with it—as far as Miriam Keith's flat. But if you're lying, I'll turn you in and come up to the big house to watch while they cook you!"

He took a homburg and raincoat off a hall tree and nodded to Zach Bindley.

"Stay here," he said.

There wasn't a chance in the world of my giving Boss Cope the slip. He was always on the job, whatever he was doing, but tonight he was keyed up higher than ever. His big black eyes burned like coals in the wind. He took me down, shoved me into his sedan—parked in the alley—and we drove out to Oak Street.

Cope had a key to the front door, which by this time was locked. He had a key to Miriam's flat. I learned later that Miriam had given him a set of duplicates, but this was the first time Cope

had used them. He didn't fall easily for women.

He opened the door and pushed me in. He came in and closed the door and switched on the lights.

On Miriam's new rug there was a round dull spot where her head had lain. The bedroom door was partly open and the place felt empty.

Cope looked smolderingly around. "What did you kill her for, kid?" he asked.

"I didn't."

I tried to tell what had happened, but Cope wasn't listening. He kept looking at the red, wet spot on the rug and shaking his head.

"It's a cold, wet night to have to die," Ben Cope muttered. "Now, kid, where is the money? I heard your step-sister was back on her instalments on this furniture, and she's always been a good kid, and I sent it to her. Where is it?"

I could see I had been a fool to bring him here, instead of taking him to the cottage where the money was hidden. I guess I'd figured on Bindley going with me —and I knew things about that cottage.

I stared at Cope, and his lips twisted into a dangerous smile.

"So," he said softly, "it was just a bed-time story? Then—"

"Listen, boss," I broke in hastily, "most of what I told you was the truth. There *were* just two century notes, and your card was in them. I can get the kale for you and the card too. It'll show you—and listen, I remember some of the initials opposite the numbers: the top set was P. F. L., and under that was E. V. G. and under that—"

Cope's face looked funny. "Kid," he said, "I've been a fool —for a long time That Judas— but I haven't always been straight myself, have I? I let them fix things so you'd take the rap instead of Bindley. Now he's trying to frame—"

I heard a sound—from Miriam's bedroom. Cope heard it too, and his hand went in a flash toward the gun parked under his left shoulder.

A gun roared—from the bedroom. Cope jerked as if someone had slapped him. There was a bullet hole in his forehead. His eyes opened and shut, his feet shuffled, and he went down sidewise. I had whirled toward the bedroom. Something came flashing through the air. It struck the floor, and slid to my feet. It was a revolver.

I stooped to grab it—and jerked back as if I'd been about to pick up a rattlesnake. That was the gun that had just killed Boss Cope! All it needed was my finger prints to make it a certain one-way ticket to the room with the little green door.

I was as dazed as a sleep-walker that has been waked up on the brink of a high building.

I stared down at Cope. His head rested close to the red spot on the rug.

Then something inside me said, "Run!" and I headed into the bedroom.

I could hear doors banging open, could hear voices shouting, could hear running feet. The window was open from the bottom. I reached it, stuck my head out, and saw a dark figure running away from the bottom of the fire escape.

I swung my legs out and headed down. Every moment I expected a shot from below to drill me. But I let go and hit the ground and began running.

Something jabbed me in the back. A voice said, "All right, punk—I have captured you! I hope you haven't been burning someone else down!"

It was Bindley. And as clear as trees seen in a lightning flash — wire-edged, burning into my eyes—I saw how he would work things. He would say he had come here to guard Boss Cope. He had stayed below while Cope and I had gone up to Miriam's room. Then he had heard a shot and I had come down the fire escape. . . .

He had me by the arm, leading me around toward the street. The rain sploshed into my face. I thought of the death room and of the big, clumsy chair where condemned killers took their last seat. I could see the heavy straps. . . .

"Listen, Bindley," I said. "Cope didn't get that money. You'd better grab it. This business will bust things wide open—and you may need scram money!"

His fingers bit in and he pushed me ahead. Then he stopped and held me. Zach Bindley always did have itching fingers—and the thought of that two hundred dollars was working. It must have hurt him to leave it there in Miriam's room, but that had been part of his scheme to make someone else take the rap for the murder. He had figured that I would find the poisoned money and try to use it and that would nail me. Bindley would have kept the three bills he'd peeled off the roll until they were not hot any more.

He breathed hard. "If you didn't hide the kale up there, where is it?" he asked roughly.

"It's near here."

I told him about the cottage. I told him about the papers on the front porch, and the rear window I had got through, and about the chair with the red leather cushion. Bindley listened. The way I told it, with all the details, made him see it, and see

Helium, the non-explosive balloon gas, is used in the treatment of asthma, tuberculosis and other respiratory diseases, to extinguish magnesium fires, and in magnesium welding as a shield to prevent the molten metal from oxidizing.

that I was telling him the truth.

"Come on," he said. "Is there an alley?"

"I came out by the alley," I told him.

As we headed through the darkness and the rain, I thought of Boss Cope, lying dead in the flat. By this time the cops would be there. Soon they'd be swarming like ants over the neighborhood. Bindley must know that, too—but he figured on getting the kale and turning me in. He'd have to change his story, just a little. . . .

At the kitchen window he held me and we listened. Everything was still inside.

Once he must have changed his mind. He turned and began to haul me off the porch.

Then he whirled back. Zach was thinking of those two century notes. He said, "If you're lying, I'll shoot you through the guts and you'll die of peritonitis!"

With him prodding me with his gun, I got the window open. Evidently the cops had again locked the back door. He held my arm while I slid inside, then climbed in himself.

We stood listening. Everything was as still as death—as still as Miriam, and Boss Cope.

We moved across to the door that led into the living room. I twisted the knob and shoved it open. Everything was the way I had left it.

I pointed to the easy chair beside the radio. "Right under that red leather cushion," I said then.

"Oh, yes? Well, walk over there and lift it out. And if you got a gun parked there, you'll die with it in your mitt!"

He came along behind me. I kept track of my footing. I stepped across a little rug and stooped. Twisting my eyes I could see Zach Bindley's legs, right behind me. His gun was pressed against my spine. . . .

I swung my arm and knocked the gun aside. I rared back and struck him with my body. The rug went skidding sidewise, with his feet on it.

We both went down, but I was expecting it and Bindley wasn't.

He struck his head against the radio and the gun flew out of his hand. I jumped up, then came down on his middle. He screamed and drew up his knees, then rolled to his side and lay groaning.

I headed for the gun but as I was about to pick it up, my hand again jerked back. I didn't want to touch any guns.

I saw that Bindley was throwing up. He made a horrible sound. I sprinted through the front hall, got the door unbolted and began to shout.

"Help—help—murder!"

I left the door open and ran back. Zach Bindley was on his hands and knees, trying to crawl over to his gun.

"Lie down on your back or I'll kick your ribs in!" I told him.

He rolled over and again began

to retch. Then I heard men shouting in the street, and feet came pounding into the cottage.

Zach Bindley lay on his back, staring through bloodshot eyes up at the three uniformed policemen who stood over him. One of them had a *jiu jitsui* hold on my right arm.

"He killed Cope—I trailed him here and he ambushed me!" Zach Bindley gasped.

I looked at the cop that was holding him. "Smell his hand—then smell mine," I said.

The cops caught the idea. Lucky for me I hadn't touched any guns.

"This guy hasn't fired a gat for some time—and Bindley has," a big guy with sergeant's stripes on his sleeve said. "Okay, Bindley—what was the pay-off?"

But Zach Bindley wasn't ready to talk—not quite yet. I told the policemen about the two bills and the card under the chair cushion and one of them fished out the packet. They unfolded the bills, but it was the card that interested them.

"Looks like a numbers racket," I said.

The big sergeant looked at me. "Numbers, hell," he growled. "Bindley has been peddling counterfeit war bonds. He knew the net was closing in on him and he figured if he could implicate Ben Cope, he'd have a high-priced mouthpiece to defend him!"

One of the cops reached down and took hold of Bindley's collar. He hauled him to his feet and held him.

"What did you kill the dame for?" he asked.

Zach Bindley hadn't got over the chugging in the middle I had given him. And there was a powder-stain on his right hand that demoralized him. He kept staring at it and trying to rub it off.

He looked at me—with red-eyed hate.

"You dirty little punk," he said, "you should be taking this rap, not me! Cope got wind of my pushing some phony bonds, on the side. He was patriotic as hell and he began to nose around. First I figured on just making it look like he was in on it, then I saw he was using the girl to watch me, and maybe frame me.

"She helped frame this punk—" he said to the cop— "it was Miriam Keith that planted the narcotics in your benny, before you were lagged, punk! She was a Delilah and when I went there tonight and saw wet newspapers in a chair and on the floor—where some guy without an umbrella had sat dripping—and remembered that this loser was out and most likely was in the city—and right there in her place—it looked like a push-over.

"I had used a code, when I punched the buzzer—an old one she would remember. That was so she could clear the room or

head me off if someone was there I shouldn't run into. But she had hid her punk step-brother, and I meant he should be for it. Now you got it all—and for God's sake don't try to beat nothing out of me!"

He began to gag again.

I was booked as a material witness. The night captain asked me what I planned to do after the trial.

"Get a job somewhere—away from here," I said.

He smiled. "That'll be easy, son," he said. "Things have sure changed since you went up the bay. There's a job waiting for you—for all of us—plenty of them. There's work to be done. You got a dirty deal, but some good steady job will help you to forget it, and we'll help to clear your record."

Who shall put his finger on the work of justice and say, "It is there"? Justice is like the kingdom of God's; it is not without us as a facet; it is within us as a great yearning.

—*George Eliot*

The war against war is going to be no holiday excursion or camping party. The military feelings are too deeply grounded to abdicate their place among our ideals until better substitutes are offered than the glory and shame that come to nations as well as individuals from the ups and downs of politics and vicissitudes of trade.

—*William James*

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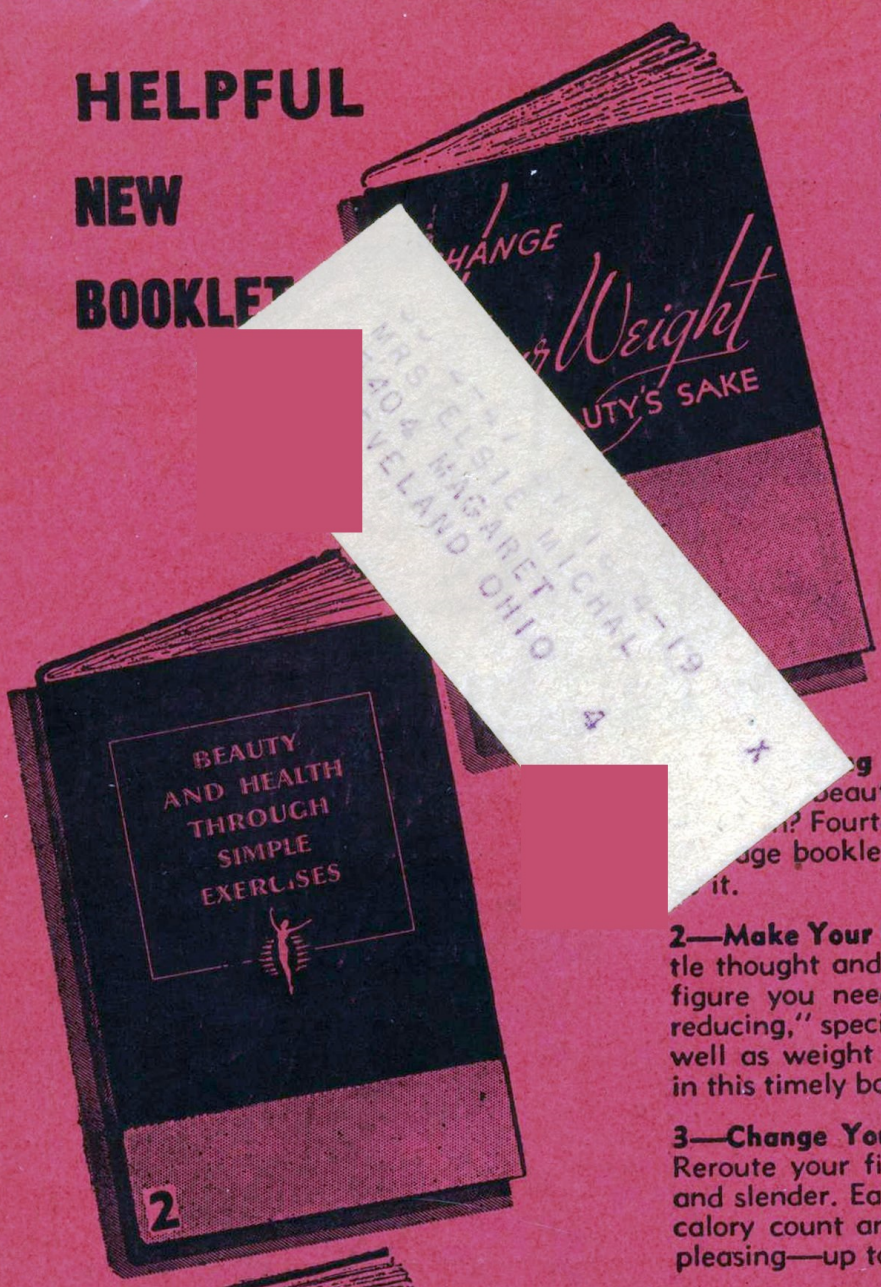

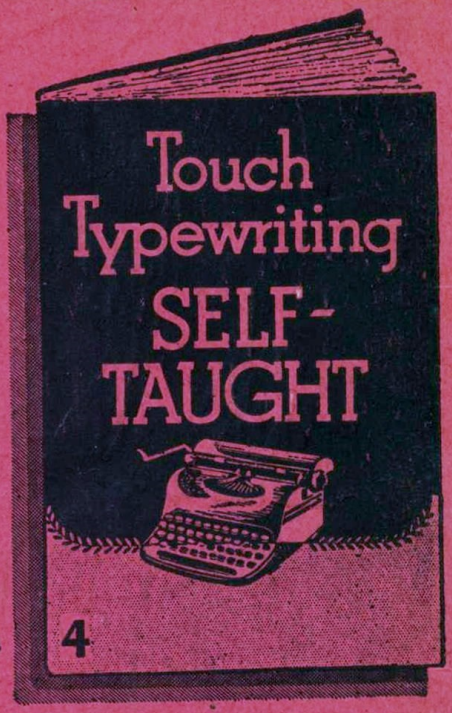

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