

THE

# GHOST

FIRST  
ISSUE

## SUPER-DETECTIVE

10¢

JAN.



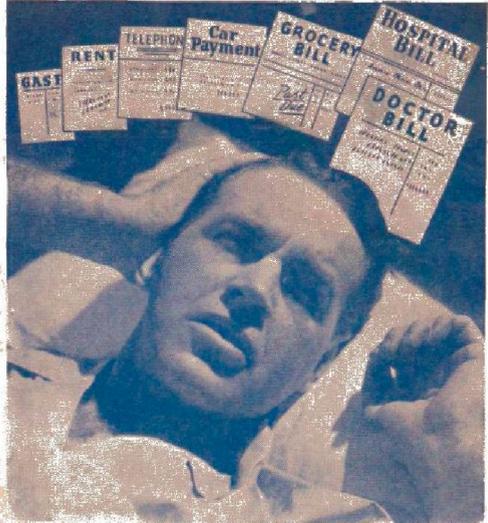
**CALLING THE GHOST**  
 A Complete Novel Featuring  
 the Mystifying Exploits of  
 the Magician Sleuth

A THRILLING  
PUBLICATION

If This Were You—  
Laid Up By  
**SICKNESS**  
**OR ACCIDENT—**

What Would It Mean  
To YOU To Get Up To

**\$150.00**  
**A MONTHS**



*Amazing New Policy*

**COSTS ONLY 3¢ A DAY\***

If sickness or accident should strike YOU—lay you up, disabled—stop your income, perhaps for months—don't face the additional worry of money for bills and expenses! Protect yourself and your loved ones with the remarkable low cost Sterling Sickness and Accident Policy! For only 3¢ a day this amazing policy provides ACTUAL CASH—to help pay bills and expenses! Pays you up to \$150.00 a month for sickness, including Hospital Benefits; \$100.00 a month for accident; pays as much as \$2,500.00 for loss of limbs, sight, or accidental death, plus many other liberal benefits, as provided in policy.

***Pays Cash For Common Sicknesses***  
***And All Types Of Accidents***

This policy covers sicknesses common to men and women, covers all types of accidents as happen every day in or by automobiles or trucks, on street, at home, on the farm, in factory, while at work, etc. Benefits payable from FIRST DAY, as explained in policy.

**MORE THAN**  
**\$500,000.00 PAID**

Young and old—men, women, children, ages 15 to 64 without Doctor's Examination—are eligible for this liberal insurance. More than \$500,000.00 Cash Benefits already paid on Sterling Policies! Big, responsible, Legal Reserve Stock Company. \$100,000.00 on deposit with State of Illinois Insurance Department for protection of all policy-holders.

**EASY MONTHLY TERMS**

Because we deal direct with you and have no agents, your cost of this insurance is amazingly low. Only 3¢ a day, in easy monthly payments, brings you all these protection features: No dues—no assessments.

**10 DAYS FREE INSPECTION**  
**SEND NO MONEY!**

Here's our special offer: Write, giving your age, and the name and relationship of your beneficiary. We will mail you Actual Policy on 10-days' FREE INSPECTION. No obligation whatever. Act now.

**STERLING INSURANCE CO.**

5641 Jackson-Franklin Bldg.

Chicago, Ill.

**Liberal Benefits At**  
**Amazing Low Cost**

AS MUCH AS

**\$2,500.00**

paid to you IN CASH for Accidental Death or Loss of Limbs or Eyesight.

**UP TO \$150.00**

a month for sickness including Hospital Benefits.

**UP TO \$100.00**

a month for disability due to accident.

**\$100.00**

Cash paid as Emergency Aid or Identification Benefit.

**OTHER LIBERAL BENEFITS**

Doctor's bill for non disabling injuries — 10% increase in benefits for 5 years at no extra cost.

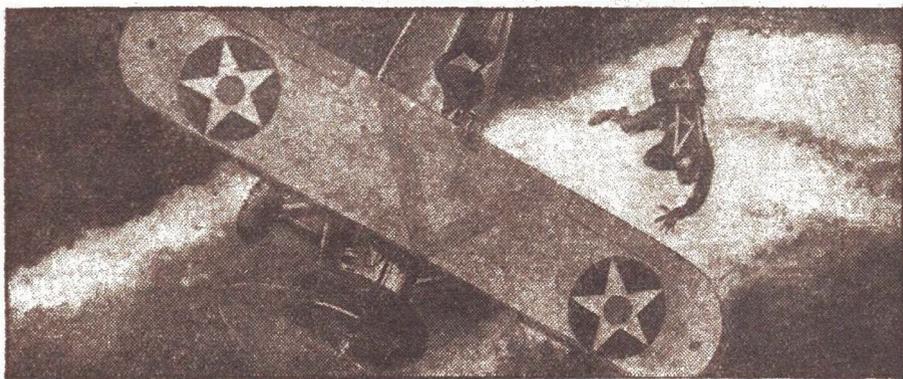
**All Benefits as described on Policy**



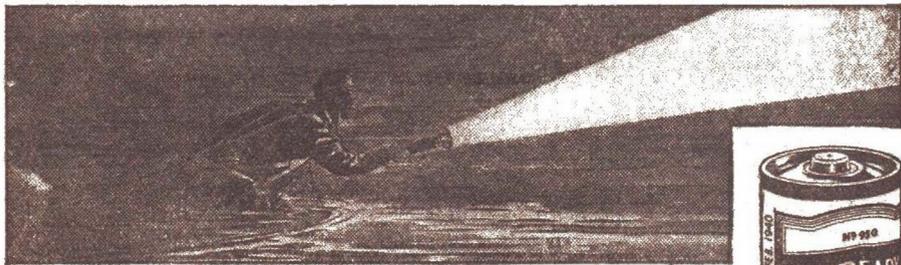
# "I HAD TO BAIL OUT IN A PEA SOUP FOG!"

Aviation Cadet  
Bristol, W. Va.

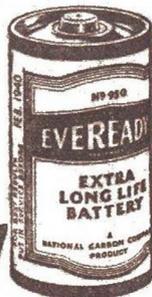
① "I took off from Pensacola on a night training flight in my single-seater fighting plane," writes Cadet Harbert. "Later, as I started home-ward, a heavy fog rolled in. The landing field was blotted out!



② "It was too dangerous—for myself and those below—to attempt a landing. I had to bail out in that pea soup fog! Heading for open country, I circled at 5,000 feet until the gasoline gauge showed empty, then jammed the stick forward and catapulted into space!



③ "I landed waist-deep in the wide mouth of a river. Marooned by deep water on all sides, I grabbed my flashlight, and—despite the soaking—it worked! Guided by its beam, two fishermen eventually found and rescued me—thanks to 'Eveready' fresh DATED batteries—which (Signed) *C. Harbert*"



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NATIONAL CARBON COMPANY, INC., 30 EAST 42nd STREET, NEW YORK, N. Y.  
Unit of Union Carbide **UDC** and Carbon Corporation

# THE GHOST

SUPER-DETECTIVE

Vol. 1, No. 1

JANUARY, 1940

Price 10c

FEATURING THE MAGICIAN-DETECTIVE

IN

## CALLING THE GHOST

A Complete Book-Length Mystery Novel

By GEORGE CHANCE



*The Super-Detective Tackles the Puzzling Problem of the Lispering Man Murders—and Opens His Mystifying Bag of Tricks to Baffle Vicious Criminals and Bring Them to Book! . . . . . 12*

### OTHER GRIPPING STORIES

- PAYOFF IN LEAD. . . . . John S. Endicott 97  
*Three Hundred Grand la Worth Fighting for, but—*
- GUNS DON'T LIE. . . . . Owen Fox Jerome 102  
*A Bullet-Reader Traces a Death Weapon to an Unexpected Source.*

AND

- THE MAGICIAN-DETECTIVE MAKES HIS BOW! . . . . Editorial 11
- INTRODUCING—THE GHOST. . . . . Biographical Sketch 17

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# I WILL SEND MY FIRST LESSON FREE



**J. E. SMITH, President**  
National Radio Institute  
Established 23 years  
He has directed the training of more men for the Radio Industry than anyone else.

*It Shows How I Train You  
at Home in Your Spare Time for a*

## GOOD JOB IN RADIO

Clip the coupon and mail it. I'm certain I can train you at home in your spare time to be a Radio Technician. I will send you my first lesson free. Examine it, read it, see how clear and easy it is to understand. Judge for yourself whether my course is planned to help you get a good job in Radio, a young growing field with a future. You don't need to give up your present job, or spend a lot of money to become a Radio Technician. I train you at home in your spare time.

### Jobs Like These Go to Men Who Know Radio

Radio broadcasting stations employ engineers, operators, station managers and pay well for trained men. Radio manufacturers employ testers, inspectors, foremen, servicemen in good pay jobs with opportunities for advancement. Radio jobbers and dealers employ installation and servicemen. Many Radio Technicians open their own Radio sales and repair businesses and make \$30, \$40, \$50 a week. Others hold their regular jobs and make \$5 to \$10 a week fixing Radios in spare time. Automobile, police, aviation, commercial Radio; loudspeaker systems, electronic devices, are newer fields offering good opportunities to qualified men. And my Course includes Television, which promises to open many good jobs soon.



### I TRAINED THESE MEN



**Service Manager for Four Stores**

"I was working in a garage when I enrolled with N.R.I. In a few months I made enough to pay for the course three or four times. I am now Radio service manager for the M. Furniture Co. for their four stores."—**JAMES E. RYAN**, 1843 Slide St., Fall River, Mass.

**Owens Shop,  
Makes \$3,000 a Year**



"Before taking your Course I earned about 17½ cents per hour as a truck driver. When I had completed 19 lessons I started service work. During the last year I have made about \$3,000 in Radio."—**KARL KELLY**, 308 W. Calhoun St., Magnolia, Ark.



**\$10 to \$20 a Week in Spare Time**

"I repaired many Radio sets when I was on my tenth lesson and I have made enough money to pay for my Radio course and also my instruments. I really don't see how you can give so much for such a small amount of money. I made \$600 in a year and a half, and I have made an average of \$10 to \$20 a week—just spare time."—**JOHN BERRY**, 1328 Arapahoe St., Denver, Colo.

### Why Many Radio Technicians Make \$30, \$40, \$50 a Week

Radio is already one of the country's large industries even though it is still young and growing. The arrival of Television, the use of Radio principles in industry, and but a few of many recent Radio developments. More than 28,000,000 homes have one or more Radios. There are more Radios than telephones. Every year millions of Radios get out of date and are replaced. Millions more need new tubes, repairs, etc. Over 5,000,000 auto Radios are in use and thousands more are being sold every day. In every branch Radio is offering more opportunities—opportunities for which I give you the required knowledge of Radio at home in your spare time. Yes, the few hundred \$30, \$40, \$50 a week jobs of 20 years ago have grown to thousands.

### Many Extra \$5 to \$10 a Week Extra in Spare Time While Learning

The day you enroll, in addition to my regular course, I start sending you Extra Money Job Sheets which start showing you how to do actual Radio repair jobs. Throughout your training, I send plans and directions which have helped many make from \$200 to \$500 a year in spare time while learning.

### You Get Practical Experience While Learning

I send you special Radio equipment, show you how to conduct experiments, build circuits illustrating important principles used in modern Radio and Television

receivers, broadcasting station and loudspeaker installations. My 50-50 method of training gives you both printed instruction and actual work with Radio parts—makes learning at home interesting, fascinating, practical. I ALSO GIVE YOU A MODERN, PROFESSIONAL, ALL-WAVE RADIO SET SERVICING INSTRUMENT to help you make more money fixing Radio sets while learning and to equip you with a professional instrument for full time work after you graduate.

### Find Out What Radio Offers You

Act today. Mail the coupon for Sample Lesson and my 64-page Book, "Rich Rewards in Radio." They point out Radio's spare time and full time opportunities and those coming in Television; tell about my course in Radio and Television; show letters from men I have trained telling what they are doing and earning. Read my money back agreement. Find out what Radio offers YOU! MAIL COUPON in an envelope, or paste on a postcard—NOW!

**J. E. SMITH, PRESIDENT, DEPT. 9N09  
NATIONAL RADIO INSTITUTE,  
WASHINGTON, D. C.**

**MAIL COUPON NOW!**



## GOOD FOR BOTH 64 PAGE BOOK FREE

**J. E. SMITH, President, Dept. 9N09,  
National Radio Institute, Washington, D. C.**

Dear Mr. Smith: Send me FREE, without obligation, your Sample Lesson and 64-page book "Rich Rewards in Radio" which tells about Radio's spare time and full-time opportunities and explains your 50-50 method of training men at home to be Radio Technicians. (Write Plainly.)

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ AGE \_\_\_\_\_  
ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_  
CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

**A Tested Way to BETTER PAY**

**NOW!** Anyone without experience can do a thousand and one **REPAIR JOBS!**

**WELDING** **BRAZING**  
**SOLDERING**

**QUICKLY PERFECTLY EASILY** with the **NEWLY INVENTED 3 IN 1 Electric TORCH**



Complete with Power Unit—Works Off 110 Volt AC or DC Light Circuit

Here at last is a portable machine that does real welding, brazing and soldering, yet is priced within the reach of all. The 3 in 1 comes to you complete with goggles, carbons, various types of welding rod and all accessories needed to do various repair jobs. It is all ready to plug in a light socket—nothing extra to buy. Simple instructions make it possible for you to do first class work easily without any previous experience or mechanical skill. The 3 in 1 instantly creates a terrific flame by just touching the carbons together.

**REPAIRS FENDERS, AUTO BODIES, TANKS, BICYCLES, RADIOS, ETC.**

The 3 in 1 is ideal for auto body repairs and fender weld jobs and steam fitters, plumbers, sheet metal shops, engineers, maintenance men and janitors will find it indispensable. By following simple instructions, heavy work for the countless jobs around a home or farm. WORKS ON ALUMINUM, BRASS, COPPER, IRON, STEEL AND OTHER METALS.

**AGENTS!** You will find quick easy sales waiting for you in repair shops, garages, factories, sheet metal, radio and bicycle repair shops, and many other places. Write at once for free particulars and learn how you can get your own 3 in 1 Electric Torch absolutely free for demonstration purposes by helping to introduce it to others.

**ELECTRO-TORCH CO., 2613-FB Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill.**

**WANTED**

**MEN AND WOMEN TO MAKE UP TO \$200 A WEEK**

Introducing Hose Guaranteed 4 to 8 Months. Earnings start at once! Brand new Ford given producers. Every body buys hose. Guaranteed to wear from 4 to 8 months (depending on number of pairs) without holes, rips or runs or replaced FREE. Big repeat sales. Doris Jensen, Ill., earned \$11 in 6 1/2 hrs. received 2 new cars; Charles Mills, Minn., earned \$120. In 1 week and received 2 new cars, as extra bonuses. Your own hose given as bonus, send hose size. Rush name on penny card for sample outside details. Act Now. **WILKNIT HOSE CO., Midway 5-48, Greenfield, O.**



Send No Money

**HOSE FOR YOUR PERSONAL USE SENT WITH OUTFIT**

**LEARN CHEMISTRY AT HOME**

40 complete lessons, 800 pages. Original price \$145.00. Slightly soiled complete course **ONLY \$10.00**. Full money-back-guarantee. **FREE** literature on request. **F. F. Lewis Co., 128 E. 23rd St., New York, U. S. A.**

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*Meet the West's Most Famous Pioneers*

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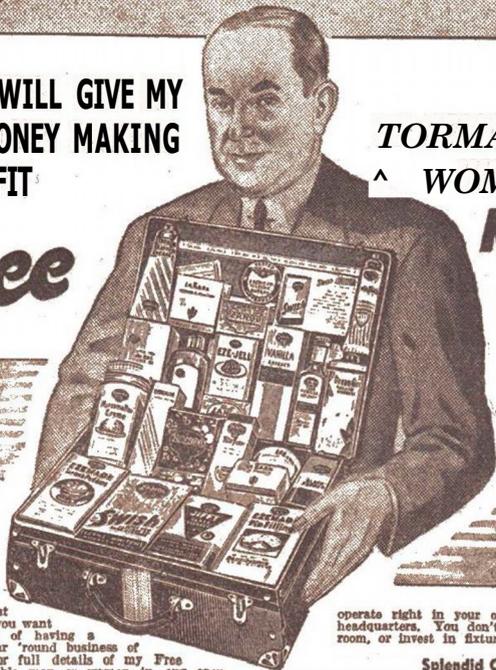
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**WESTERN**

Now on Sale, 10c at All Stands

# Important Announcement!

**I WILL GIVE MY  
COMPLETE MONEY MAKING  
DISPLAY OUTFIT**

**Free**



**TORMABIt MM AND  
^ WOMEN WHO  
NEED  
CASH!**

If you are in earnest about wanting to make money—if you want to enjoy the independence of having a pleasant, profitable, all year 'round business of your own—write at once for full details of my Free Offer! To an honest, reliable man or woman in any open locality I will give the big, valuable outfit pictured here absolutely FREE. You don't send me a penny. There are no "ifs," "ands" or "buts" about this offer. It is a straight business proposition—and a fine one—for reliable men and women who are willing to devote full time or part time.

With the splendid outfit I give you, you can start at once in a fine-paying home-owned business as Local Food Distributor. Don't think you can't, because you positively do not need experience to start. Under my simple, sure-fire plan you distribute coffee, teas, delicious food products and many other fast selling, quick repeating, daily necessities, direct to the home. You make regular calls, take orders, make deliveries and pocket a big profit. In fact, your average gross profit is from 30 to 40 cents on every dollar you take in.

**I Send Everything You Need To Start Right Out**

With the complete Free Outfit, containing a large assortment of regular full size packages, I also give you a proven, successful plan which anyone can follow. I give you advertising material, trial-size samples to give away, and everything else you need to start earning your very first day. And you can save money as well as make money—because you can get any or all of these household necessities for yourself at wholesale prices.

I am certain that you will find this a most fascinating business once you start. You'll be your own boss, free to come and go as you please, free to set your own hours. You'll get to meet interesting people who will become your friends; they'll welcome you into their homes and will give you steady orders. Unless you take advantage of my Free Offer you may be missing the very money-making opportunity you have been looking for!

**You Handle Only Quality Products And Are Proud of Them**

I wouldn't want to go into any business handling cheap merchandise, and I don't ask anyone else to do so. We maintain absolute control over the quality of our products. Each and every product in the line is tested and approved, for purity and uniform high quality, in our own pure-food kitchens and laboratories. Every package is backed by our powerful guarantee of satisfaction or money back.

**Necessities That Every Home Must Buy**

Another reason why my Plan has proved so successful for hundreds of men and women is that my products are household necessities—fast sellers and quick repeaters. Besides tempting foods, I have over one hundred other daily household necessities—and you can handle them all. Besides this—under my liberal credit plan—you can operate on my capital. You can

operate right in your own locality. Your home is your headquarters. You don't have to rent an office or storeroom, or invest in fixtures or big stocks of goods.

**Splendid Cash Profits**

You owe it to yourself to write and see what wonderful success so many others have enjoyed with this tested and proven money-making Plan. Let me mail you full particulars—then you can judge whether you want to start in making money at once. You can devote your full time or part time.

**Certainly This Is An Opportunity  
Worth Inquiring About NOW**

This is a sincere, bonafide offer made to you by the President of a big, reliable, old-established company operating from Coast to Coast. Under my plan, you run your own business. You don't have to be out of work, without money. You can be independent. You can have money. You can build up a sound profitable business. You can handle all the cash and keep a liberal share for yourself. I give you FREE the big valuable Outfit containing everything you need to start. That's how much faith I have in the success of my time-tested money-making Plan. Now don't put this matter off. I don't want you to send me a penny. But I earnestly urge you to mail the coupon today and get the whole interesting story.

**E. J. MILLS, President, 8050 Monmouth Ave., Cincinnati, O.**

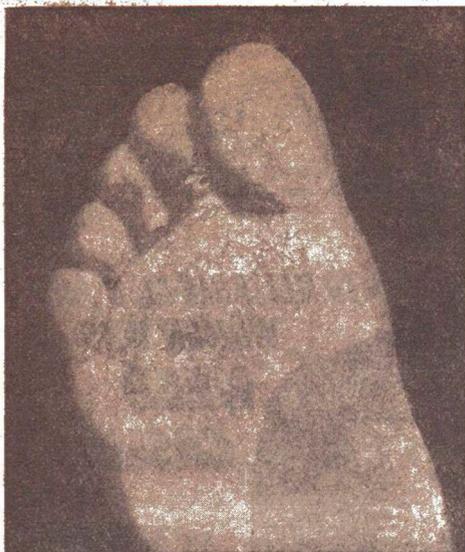
**RUSH COUPON  
FOR FREE OFFER!**

**E. J. MILLS, President**  
8050 Monmouth Ave., Cincinnati, Ohio  
Without the slightest obligation on my part, please mail me full particulars about your offer of a Complete Free Outfit, and tell me how I can start making money at once as a Local Food Distributor for your nationally famous products.

Name .....

Address .....

(Please Print or Write Plainly)



# FOOT ITCH

ATHLETE'S FOOT

*Send Coupon  
Don't Pay Until Relieved*

According to the Government Health Bulletin No. E-28, at least 50% of the adult population of the United States are being attacked by the disease known as Athlete's Foot.

Usually the disease starts between the toes. Little watery blisters form, and the skin cracks and peels. After a while, the itching becomes intense, and you feel as though you would like to scratch off all the skin.

## BEWARE OF IT SPREADING

Often the disease travels all over the bottom of the feet. The soles of your feet become red and swollen. The skin also cracks and peels, and the itching becomes worse and worse.

Get relief from this disease as quickly as possible, because it is very contagious, and it may go to your hands or even to the under arm or crotch of the legs.

## HERE'S HOW TO RELIEVE IT

The germ that causes the disease is known as Tinea Trichophyton. It buries itself deep in the tissues of the skin and is very hard to kill. A test made shows it takes 15 minutes of boiling to kill the germ; so you can see why Athlete's Foot is so hard to relieve.

H. F. was developed solely for the purpose of relieving Athlete's Foot. It is a liquid that penetrates and dries quickly. You just paint the affected parts. It peels off the tissue of the skin where the germ breeds.

## ITCHING STOPS QUICKLY

When you apply H. F. you may find that the itching is quickly relieved. You should paint the infected parts with H. F. night and morning until your feet are better. Usually this takes from three to ten days, although in severe cases be sure to consult a specialist.

H. F. should leave the skin soft and smooth. You may marvel at the quick way it brings you relief.

## H. F. SENT ON FREE TRIAL

Sign and mail the coupon, and a bottle of H. F. will be mailed you immediately. Don't send any money and don't pay the postman any money; don't pay anything any time unless H. F. is helping you. If it does help you, we know you will be glad to send us \$1 for the bottle at the end of ten days. That's how much faith we have in H. F. Read, sign and mail the coupon today.



**GORE PRODUCTS, INC. T. F.**

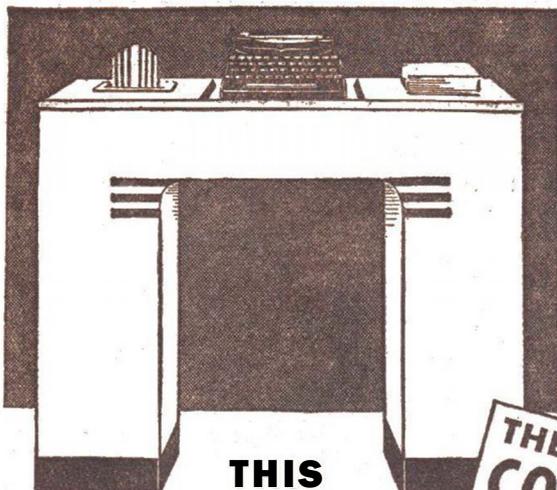
849 Perdido St., New Orleans, La.

Please send me immediately a complete supply for foot trouble as described above. I agree to use it according to directions. If at the end of 10 days my feet are getting better, I will send you \$1. If I am not entirely satisfied, I will return the unused portion of the bottle to you within 15 days from the time I receive it.

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

CITY..... STATE.....



**ACT NOW!**  
ON THIS BARGAIN OFFER.

**THIS BEAUTIFUL DESK FOR ONLY \$1.00**

**THE COMBINATION FOR AS LITTLE AS 10c A DAY**  
How easy it is to pay for this combination. Just imagine! A small good will deposit and terms as low as 10c a day to get this combination at once. You will never miss 10c a day. Become immediately the possessor of this combination. You assume no obligation by sending the coupon.

**WITH ANY REMINGTON PORTABLE TYPEWRITER**

A beautiful desk in a neutral blue-green—trimmed in black and silver—made of sturdy fibre board—now available for only one dollar (\$1.00) to purchasers of a Remington Deluxe Noiseless Portable Typewriter. The desk is so light that it can be moved anywhere without trouble. It will hold six hundred (600) pounds. This combination gives you a miniature office at home. Mail the coupon today.

**THESE EXTRAS FOR YOU LEARN TYPING FREE**

To help you even further, you get Free with this special offer a 24-page booklet, prepared by experts, to teach you quickly how to typewrite by the touch method. When you buy a Noiseless you get this free Remington Rand gift that increases the pleasure of using your Remington Deluxe Noiseless Portable. Remember, the touch typing book is sent Free while this offer holds.

**SPECIAL CARRYING CASE**

The Remington Deluxe Noiseless Portable is light in weight, easily carried about. With this offer Remington supplies a beautiful carrying case sturdily built of 3-ply wood bound with a special Dupont Fabric.



**SPECIFICATIONS**

**ALL ESSENTIAL FEATURES** of large standard office machines appear in the Noiseless Deluxe Portable—standard 4-row keyboard; back spacer; margin stops and margin release; double shift key; two color ribbon and automatic reverse; variable line spacer; paper fingers; makes as many as seven carbons; takes paper 9.5" wide; writes lines 8.2" wide, black key cards and white letters, rubber cushioned feet.

**SEND COUPON. NOW!**

Remington Rand Inc. Dept 169-12  
465 Washington St., Buffalo, N. Y.

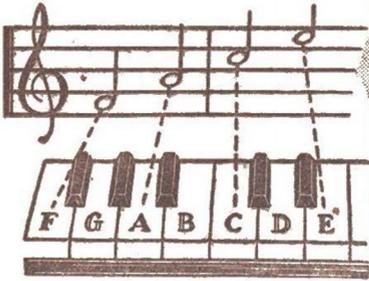
Tell me, without obligation, how to get a Free Trial of a new Remington Noiseless Deluxe Portable, including Carrying Case and Free Typing Booklet, for as little as 10c a day. Send Catalogue.

Name.....  
Address.....  
City.....State.....

**MONEY BACK GUARANTEE**

The Remington Noiseless Deluxe Portable Typewriter is sold on a trial basis with a money-back guarantee. If, after ten days trial, you are not entirely satisfied, we will take it back, paying all shipping charges and refunding your good will deposit at once. You take no risk.

# To those who think LEARNING MUSIC is hard...



PERHAPS you think that taking music lessons is like taking a dose of medicine. It isn't any longer!

As far as you're concerned, the old days of long practice hours with their scales and hard-work exercises and expensive personal teacher fees are over and done with.

For, through a method that removes the boredom and extravagance from music lessons, you can now learn to play your favorite instrument entirely at home—without a private teacher—in an amazingly short time—at a fraction of the usual cost.

Just imagine . . . a method that has made the reading and playing of music so downright simple that you don't have to know one note from another to begin. Do you wonder that this remarkable way of learning music has already been vouchered for by over 700,000 people in all parts of the world?

## EASY AS CAN BE!

The lessons come to you by mail from the famous U. S. School of Music. They consist of complete printed instructions, diagrams, and all the music you need. It's actually fun to learn this simple way. One week you are learning a dreamy waltz—the next you are mastering a stirring march. As the lessons continue they prove easier and easier. For instead of just scales you are always learning to play by actual notes the classic favorites and the latest synopses that formerly you only listened to. And you're never in hot water. First, you are told how a thing is done. Then a picture shows you how, then you do it yourself and hear it. No private teacher could make it clearer or easier.

## NEW FRIENDS—BETTER TIMES

Soon, when your friends say "please play something," you can surprise and entertain them with pleasing melodies on your favorite instrument. You'll find yourself in the spotlight—popular everywhere.

If you're tired of just looking-on at parties—if you've been envious of others entertaining your friends and family—if learning music has always been one of those never-to-come-true dreams, let the time-proven and tested home-study method of the U. S. School of Music come to your rescue.

Don't be afraid to begin your lessons at once. Over 700,000 people have studied music this modern way—and found it easy as A.B.C. Forget that old-fashioned idea that you need special "talent." And bear in mind no matter which instrument you choose, the cost in each case will average the same—just a few cents a day. No matter whether you are a mere beginner or already a good performer you will be interested in learning about this newly perfected method.

Our wonderful Illustrated Free Book and our Free Demonstration Lesson explain all about this remarkable method. They show just how anyone can learn to play his favorite instrument by notes in a short time and for just a fraction of what old slow methods cost.

Read the list of instruments below, decide which one you want to learn to play. Act NOW. Clip and mail this coupon today, and the fascinating Free Book and Free Demonstration Lesson will be sent to you at once. No obligation. Instruments supplied when needed, cash or credit. U. S. School of Music, 29412 Brunswick Bldg., New York City.

## FREE DEMONSTRATION LESSON & BOOKLET

U. S. SCHOOL OF MUSIC, 29412 Brunswick Bldg., New York City  
Please send me your free book "How You Can Learn Music in Your Own Home," with inspiring message by Dr. Frank Crane, Free Demonstration Lesson and particulars of your easy payment plan. I am interested in the following course:

Piano	Cello	Trombone	Ukulele	Organ
Violin	Hawaiian	Coronet	Flute	Modern Elementary
Guitar	Guitar	Trumpet	Piccolo	Harmony
Accordion	Banjo	Harp	Drums and	Voice culture
Saxophone	Mandolin	Oclarinet	Traps	

.....Have you Instr. f.....

Name .....

Address .....

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

# The Magician-Detective Makes His Bow!



**M**EET George Chance! Meet—the Ghost!

They're one and the same—and make their bow in this, America's newest and finest detective magazine—THE GHOST.

Mystery and magic—thrills and excitement—legerdemain and suspense—you'll find them all in the Ghost's repertoire.

Follow the mystifying exploits of the most extraordinary man-hunter the world has ever known! Roar through the pages of this super-detective's startling memoirs—appearing exclusively in THE GHOST!

**Meet the Ghost's aides-de-camp in his war on crime—**

Glenn Saunders, the Double; Tiny Tim, the Midget\* Joe Harper, the Man About Town; Merry White, the glamour girl who has brains and courage, too; Ned Standish, the Commissioner of Police; Robert Demarest, the sharp-tongued Medical Examiner.

Seldom has such a galaxy of characters been gathered within the covers of one magazine. Step up and meet them all—and above all get to know the Ghost himself.

You may not have believed in "ghosts" up to now. YouH have faith in this one.

Please drop me a line and tell me how you like this first issue!

—THE EDITOR.

A Book-Length  
Mystery Novel

# CALLING



*/ caught the masked man's wrist  
(Chapter XXIII)*

## CHAPTER I

### *The Lisper*

**I**T wasn't a nice night that served as a prologue to the first act of a series of baffling mysteries revolving about the man who lisped. A clammy mist of the sort called Scotch

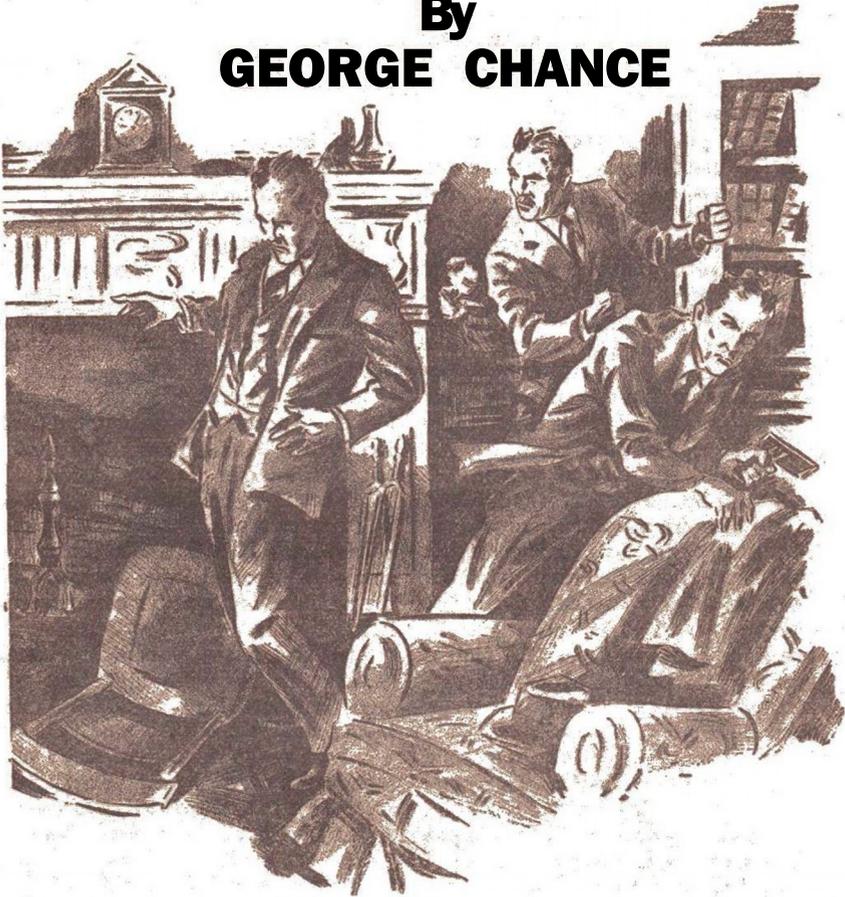
mantled Manhattan's towers and stooped to drape my brownstone house on East Fifty-Fourth Street.

I find, looking back, that not the least amazing feature about the thing was that I was in on a multiple murder case literally before I knew it—a feature which the gods of coincidence will have to explain, for I cannot. Inciden-

## The Super-Detective Tackles the Puzzling

# THE GHOST

By  
**GEORGE CHANCE**



tally, what promises to be rather amusing to the reader of this memoir is the chance to cotton to certain clues before I did. For, you see, I didn't know they were clues when I first saw them, and I'm wondering if the reader will have any better success.

I was in my second floor study. Joe Harper was with me. Joe Harper, I

might add, is always with me and has been ever since that night some years ago when he appropriated my guest room as a good place to have a hang-over.

If you've spent much time on Broadway, you'll remember Joe—checkered suit, piped vest, snap-brim hat which is always offensively green regardless

**Problem of the Lisping Man Murders!**

# The Ghost Opens His Bag of Tricks to

of what fashion prescribes. Joe, lean and wolfish, with black-beetle eyes connected with an agile brain, thin lips and thin nose, the sort of chin that would break a fist.

If you were a hick on Broadway, maybe the pitchman who tried to sell you a lifetime fountain pen for two bits was Joe Harper. Or if you liked the ponies, maybe Joe was the bookmaker you wanted to shoot after the race. Or if you were a glamour girl in your home town, trying to crash Broadway, you might have met Joe sitting behind the desk in a booking agency. Anyway, it's certain that Joe knew you before you knew Joe. He'd make your business his, and he'd have done pretty well for himself at the same time.

As I said, Joe Harper was in the study with me. His lean legs bridged the gap between a leather lounge chair and the top of my desk. His green hat rested on a plane determined by the tips of his close-set ears and the bridge of his nose. Except for the hat I might have thought him asleep. He almost never goes to bed with his hat on.

I was working, getting down on paper the complicated moves of a trick with giant cards which had brought me considerable fame when I was traveling with vaudeville circuits. It was an invention of my own, and if I could put it down on paper comprehensively I intended to pass it on to my students at the School of Magic. Since the working of it was considerably easier than the explanation of the method, I had got no farther than the title: "The George Chance Card Monte," when Joe Harper spoke to me, his parted lips scarcely moving.

"It was a swell day for a funeral."

**I** GAVE him an amused glance and caught the glint of his beady eyes watching me like little black beetles from the shadowy nook formed by the brim of his hat. Experience told me

I was about to be touched. I have met some artistic chiselers in my life, but Joe Harper is the only one who has a thousand different approaches to asking for a loan.

"Oh, you went to a funeral today," I said, being conversational. "An old friend?"

"Max Gerrich," he said. "Just a ham actor. I didn't know him very well. He tried everything from male juveniles to heavies. Ended up doing walking parts with a split-week company. His funeral was the only thing he ever had the lead in. Incidentally, he bumped himself off."

Joe's voice was crisp and a little nasal, not an unpleasant sound against the mushy stirring of cars and pedestrians in the damp street outside.

"What for?" I asked.

It has been said that the reasons for suicide can all be included under two heads, money and love, but there are many variations, and I was interested in the subject.

Joe shrugged. "Dunno, but his interment marked the first time you could have stuck up an S. R. O. sign in the same block with Max. Funny, too, because he must have had a little money once. And now what? Scattered flowers and sand in his face—"

"And," I cut in, knowing where the touch was coming, "he couldn't take his money with him, could he?"

"That's it." Joe took his feet off my desk, pushing up his hat, regarded me unblinkingly for a moment. "George, you and I got the same philosophy about money. Enjoy it, is my motto."

"Enjoy somebody else's is your motto," I corrected. "How much?"

Joe looked offended, but not much. "This isn't a touch. This is a chance to make some money, George. After funerals, I always get hunches. I think I could take a hundred bucks and run it up to a grand tonight at Snooky's. We can split the take."

## Baffle Criminals and Bring Them to Book!

I took my wallet from a drawer in the desk and counted out five twenties. "Aha!" said Joe Harper. And raked the bills into his palpi, rolled them, stuck them into the tight slit of his trouser pocket.

It was then that the glass insert on the top of my desk glowed and I knew I was about to have a visitor.

Through the medium of mirrors arranged for a periscopic effect, I am

thick shoulder.

"Who's the guy in the iron hat?" he asked. "AH he needs is a bunch of orchids to look like a stage door godfather."

"The guy," I said, is "Taylor Owens, active in several civic organizations and at the present time chairman of a benefit party entertainment program. He wants me to put on an act for the show. Let him in as you go out."



*Joe pivoted as he heard a voice say—"Thick up your handth!" (Chapter XVII)*

able to see, from my desk on the second floor, whoever approaches the front door. On this glass screen, which is an integral part of my desk top, I could see a man of medium height, dressed in a pearl gray top coat, gray gloves, a black derby hat. A system of electric eyes on either side of the door turns on the light illuminating the periscope.

Joe Harper placed a forefinger bluntly on the reflection of the visitor's

Joe said okey and hurried off. How long he would be out depended entirely upon how long it took Snooky to relieve him of my hundred dollars.

**T**HIS was the second visit from Taylor Owens in the past week. He had a nearly round head with a few black hairs brushed tightly across from ear to ear. His nose was a sore looking shade of rose and potato-shaped.

He had a square pair of jaws and he used them for clamping the bit of a short pot-bowled pipe. I let him in and he sat down in the chair Joe Harper had been warming, his knees close together and his derby in his lap.

"Well, well, well/' my visitor said in a descending scale.

He looked pleased to find an ash tray handy, gently tapped fluffy gray ash from his pipe, began reloading the hot briar immediately from a striped silk roll pouch.

"The party," he declared, "is all arranged for tomorrow night. Can we definitely count on you to perform?"

I nodded and watched Taylor Owens grope for a match. He stopped groping for a match and groped for a pencil which he found. On a white card he wrote: "The World's Best Magic by Mr. George Chance.\* And so I was included on the benefit party program.

"You slice your baloney thick enough," I told him.

Taylor Owens smiled all over his face.

"Not at all," he said. "The magician who has baffled our best psychologists and entertained the crowned heads of Europe has to be the world's greatest."

He returned pencil and card to pocket, remembered he was looking for a match.

"But," he warned, holding up a forefinger shaped like a wiener sausage, "you'll not fool me, Mr. Chance."

I sighed. "Of course not," and I lighted a match and extended it toward his pipe.

"Thanks," Taylor Owens said, bending forward.

When his pipe was near the flame, I thumb-palmed the match. The disappearance of the match pushed Taylor Owens' blue eyes a little farther out from their sockets. He stood up and said he'd be damned and tried to see on all sides of me at once. When I apparently reproduced the match fully lighted from my vest pocket, he laughed, cautiously took the match from my fingers.

"Elastic," he said between puffs, and sat down again.

"Think so? By the way, you neglected to tell me who's backing this benefit."

"Union of Civic Clubs," he said. "Know the president, Leonard Van Sickle? He's probably been bothering you about the details of your part in the performance. He's a glutton for details. Nothing ever escapes him. If he ever committed murder, he'd never be caught because he'd never leave a clue."

I remembered seeing Leonard Van Sickle's name and picture in the papers. He was a manufacturer who had recently been forced into retirement by some sort of a merger which had been brought about by financial difficulties in his own company.

I told Taylor Owens I had heard the name.

"A good egg in small doses," Owens said.

He took a chubby grip on the brim of his hat and stood up. I saw him downstairs to the door where the cloud of his pipe smoke mingled with the cold, clinging mist. I closed the door. Three steps up the stair, and the phone rang. I decided to take it on the living room extension.

"Mithter George Chanth?" An unfamiliar lisping voice asked.

## CHAPTER II

### *The Man Died Laughing*



"WITH ith Leonard Van Thickle," said the voice, pleasant in spite of the lisp.

I was surprised. I couldn't quite associate the robust man I had seen in the news photos with the lisping voice. Van Sickle had appeared tall, well-made, young-looking for his middle

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# Introducing—The Ghost



*George Chance*

**B**ECAUSE George Chance, whose first memoir we are privileged to publish herein, is such an essentially modest man, we feel impelled to say a few words about him on our own account. Writing about himself, he has naturally been prevented by his modesty from doing full justice to his great attainments in the twin fields which he has combined and made his own—criminology and magic. We hope he will pardon us, therefore, if we do a little blowing on his own horn.

George Chance, Magician, might never say that he is tops in his profession, but there's nothing to prevent our saying it for him. There's nothing to prevent our telling you, for example, that he has excelled the late Harry Houdini in the technique of escape.

We do not hesitate to state that in employing his magical talents in his crime-fighting role of THE GHOST, he has done more in the service of the Law than any other man of his generation. Small wonder that criminals quiver at the prospect of tangling with THE GHOST—master of the science of criminology, remorseless crime-tracker and criminal catcher! When THE GHOST walks, the underworld stirs into deadly life to combat him.

We suggest that you remember these things when you read this and future memoirs of George Chance. We suggest that you keep in mind that this modest, kindly, humorous magician is a far bigger man than he makes himself out to be. He won't say so himself. That's why we're saying it for him.

—THE EDITOR.

age. So this was Leonard Van Sickle, I thought—the man Taylor Owens had humorously said would never be caught if he committed a crime. The voice went on.

"I understand from Mithter Owenth that you will perform for the benefit party tomorrow night. I wanted to ask a special favor."

"No harm asking. Go ahead." I smiled. This Van Sickle's chuckle was catching.

"Could you play a trick on me? I have a childish ambition to get up on the stage with you and have you pull something out of my pocket."

I couldn't help laughing. Of course I agreed—it would be very convincing to pull a serving of hot\* mush out of Van Sickle's mouth.

Still chuckling, the man thanked me profusely and hung up.

I returned to my work in the study. A little later, Joe Harper returned. He didn't stop at the study to say good-night, so I said a mental good-bye to my hundred dollars. Had he won, Joe would have come in with champagne under his arm.

Soon his snores sounded from what I had once called a guest room. I went to my own bed. If Joe's Broadway conscience was clear enough for sleep, so was mine.

I had been asleep for about an hour and a half when the extension phone on my night stand burred softly. I reached for it without opening my eyes and got the right end of the phone to my ear.

"George Chance speaking," I said.

The gruff voice of Police Commissioner Edward Standish came from the receiver.

"Calling the Ghost," Standish said in a low voice. "You alone, George?"

I told Standish I was.

"I'm speaking from the private wire in my apartment. I've got something you might be interested in."

I swung my legs over the edge of the bed and sat up.

"Shoot, Ned," I told him.

"Maybe you've heard of Leonard Van Sickle—"

I was startled. Who wouldn't be?

"Yes," I said. "What about him?"

"The guy killed himself about forty minutes ago! Opened a window in the Cronner Hotel and went for a walk—twenty stories straight down. Underneath him was a lot of hard ground."

Standish cleared his throat, something which usually indicated he was about to hang up.

"Wait, Ned!" I cried.

I got my mind back over the unbelievable short interval which had passed between the present moment and my talk with the chuckling Van Sickle on the phone.

"Ned, I don't get this," I said. "I was talking with him only a little while ago—he was in the best of spirits—"

"He's *with* the best of spirits now, I hope," Standish remarked dryly.

"You're-sure—"

**T**HE commissioner grunted.

"Twenty-five years with the police department I've been, George Chance. And by now if I don't know a dead man when I see one, it's me who should pull a grave over my head and find out what it's like. And there's a payoff to this, George. We can't find the man's false teeth. They weren't in his mouth, they weren't on the sidewalk where he landed, they weren't in his clothes, and they're not in his apartment." And with that, Standish hung up.

I slowly replaced the phone. Standish, whom I knew well enough to call by his nickname "Ned" couldn't be mistaken about a corpse when he saw one. If Standish said you were dead, you could go right ahead and order the flowers. The point I didn't get was the suicide verdict. Nobody in a suicide mood calls up a magician and laughingly tells him to play a trick on him.

"Matter, George?"

I looked up quickly, shuddered at the

sight of Joe Harper in a purple bathrobe.

"Leonard Van Sickle knocked himself off," I said.

Joe yawned. "Guys do that. Aint I just semi-fresh from the funeral of a 'sooey'?"

"They don't laugh an hour or so before they do it," I said, taking off my pajamas and reaching for my clothes. "Or at least I don't remember your mentioning it in the case of Max Gerich."

"I knew something was wrong," Joe said. "I got the jumps like a bow-legged lady before a burleycue try-out. Was that Standish?"

I nodded. "Standish is worried. A set of missing false teeth bother him. Standish thinks he might fumble something big."

"And the Ghost never fumbles," Joe said. "Not yet." He went over to look for cigarettes in my pants. "The Ghost taking a hand, George?"

"That's why Standish called," I told him. "Let's have the pants."

Joe tossed me the pants only after he had helped himself to cigarettes. Three was a dour smile on his thin lips.

"You need them, George. You'll also need a bullet proof vest and an armored bath tub when some of the tough boys I know discover that the Ghost and George Chance are the same guy."

"That's impossible," I said.

The shoulders under the purple bathrobe rose and fell.

"Things get discovered. Look at America." . . . . .

**T**HE Ghost is George Chance. It looks odd on paper. It's a secret I have never before disclosed. Sometimes I've chuckled inwardly about it, and then again my double identity has been like a two-ton safe suspended by a thread over my head. There is reason for the latter. The Ghost's enemies in the underworld are too numerous for comfort. But it is my own

doing. You can't create a wraith-like manhunter, materializing out of the darkness to become a tangible foe, laughing ghoulishly at frantic efforts of discovered criminals to escape, and expect the underworld to take kindly to him.

All things considered, it's only natural that the Ghost should have become the focal point for so much sincere hatred on the part of the criminal gentry. My only consolation is that George Chance, so far as he knows, has no enemies at all.

Now then, to understand fully how the Ghost has managed to spank public enemies who would have welcomed a clash with the police, you should know a little more about George Chance.

I was born in the show business. My father was an animal trainer and my mother a trapeze performer in a circus. Both my parents were generous to a fault, so that when I found myself an orphan at an early age, it was entirely dependent upon my own ability whether or not I was to eat regularly in the days to come.

Thanks to early circus training, I am a fair tumbler and contortionist. I learned much of the secrets of make-up from a clown named Ricki. To the grave-eyed man with the long black burnside who traveled with the show under the name of Don Avigne, I am indebted for knowledge that has made the knife one of the deadliest of weapons in my hands.

Then there was Professor Gabby, who taught me principles of ventriloquism which are today responsible for the hundreds of voices of the Ghost.

But most important of all, while I was hanging around the circus, I won the confidence of Marko, the Magician. His sideshow sorcery caught and held my fascination. Marko was a German. Incidentally, I got the sorrowful word recently that he died in a German concentration camp.

I will never forget the day he called me into his dressing tent and gave me

a half-size set of multiplying billiard balls.

"You haff goot hands for tricks unt gimmicks, George, mine poy," he told me. "Learn to use these unt some day you vill know magic. Unt der vorld vill know you."

I still have the billiard balls Marko gave me, and the supple fingers they developed. To me, they're the foundation of my reputation as a magician which has spread around the world. Magic was the ladder that helped me climb from the circus to vaudeville and from there to my own revues. Magic made me a fortune so that I finally retired from the stage to establish the New York School of Magic where amateurs, bitten by the unending craze to create illusions, are taught.

I first met Commissioner Standish in person when I was performing magic at a policeman's benefit party. I could tell him truthfully that I had always followed his work with more than average interest, since criminology and magic have one thing in common—both depend on keen judgment of human nature and more than rudimentary knowledge of psychology.

**S**TANDISH and I took to each other at once, and my comments on criminology aroused his interest sufficiently for him to invite me to take a hand in a murder investigation. When I exposed the real criminal by means of spirit-slate trick that has been known to conjurers for years, he said: "I'll take a second helping."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"I mean that when I need you again, I'll certainly call on you," he answered soberly.

We looked at each other. I think the idea was born simultaneously in our brains.

"I'll study up on it," I said.

In the days and weeks that followed, I found one concept more and more dominating my thoughts—Magic and Crime-Detection, how to merge the

two and make them one. And so, not all at once, but gradually, slowly—but surely—the idea of the Ghost took form.

Not until then did I take Standish into my confidence.

"Ned, do you know that the late Robert-Houdin, the father of modern magic from whom the great magician, Harry Houdini, took his name, was sent by the French government to Algeria to put down the *marabouts*? Do you know that Robert-Houdin filled the natives with so much terror that they decided not to rise against the French?"

"I've heard something like that," Standish replied. "But why burden my policeman's mind with such queer data? Give me something that will work on some of our modern trouble-makers right here in New York, and I'll say you're talking."

"That's what I'm doing," I said.

"What do you mean?"

I told him.

Standish couldn't quite grasp it at first.

"It won't work," he objected. "You'll be getting yourself knocked off. You're a great magician and you've acquired a pretty thorough theoretical knowledge of criminology. But that's not the same as being a cop, with a cop's training. You're a pretty rotten shot with a pistol. And what do you know of police procedure?"

"Almost nothing," I admitted, "yet to my mind the very fact that I would be unhampered by orthodox police methods might be an asset. All I'd ask of you and the Department is a fair amount of co-operation."

For a moment, enthusiasm for the idea flamed in the commissioner's eyes and then gradually died.

"Suppose it works," he said. "Suppose you catch one member of a criminal gang. Don't you suppose the members who go free are going to put the finger on you? It'll be an added expense on my budget, ordering flowers



Glenn Sanders

for your funeral."

I shook my head.

"I've thought all that out," I said. "Suppose, Ned, I had the perfect alibi?" I grasped his arm. "Suppose it was possible for me to do what all criminals dream of doing! Suppose George Chance were to be apparently minding his own affairs and at the same time be out chasing gunmen!"

**S**TANDISH threw back his head and laughed.

"I've seen you do impossible things, George, but nothing like that. Nobody—positively nobody—can be in two places at the same time."

, It was my turn to laugh but I only chuckled.

"I can," I said. "Ned, if you saw my last stage revue, you've seen me in two places at once."

"What are you trying to tell me?" he demanded.

"Remember the climaxing illusion? I am handcuffed in a mail sack. At the crack of a gun, the mail sack falls limp

and empty to the stage. And at the same time I appear, running out of the lobby of the theatre and into the audience?"

"Yes, I've seen that one," Standish said.

"Well, Ned, there's only one way that trick could be accomplished."

Comprehension dawned on Standish's face. He leaned forward in his chair, his mouth slightly agape.

"You've got a double?" he almost whispered.

I nodded. "An identical double. Now then, suppose my double were to live the life of George Chance while the real George Chance, suitably disguised, is out playing cops and robbers, annoying criminals with his magic, possibly handing over a few murderers to the police!"

Standish's eyes held a gleam now; he rubbed his hands.

"A Dr. Jekyll and a Mr. Hyde, eh?"

"Never cared much for Hyde," I said. "Make it George Chance and his ghost, if you've got to be dramatic

about it."

So much for the history of George Chance and the origin of the Ghost. Now to get on with the case of the lisp- ing man.

As soon as I had dressed, after hearing the commissioner's news about Van Sickle's suicide, I went down into the basement of my house. I have a workshop down there where many new tricks and magical devices are developed. Glenn Saunders was there, working on a piece of apparatus for use in that clever trick which consists of dropping a ball-bearing through a plate of glass without breaking the glass.

Glenn Saunders usually works at night, entering my house under the cover of darkness. You would understand why if you saw him. For, by a curious quirk of nature helped a little by plastic surgery, Glenn Saunders is the identical double of George Chance.

His height measures up to my own six feet-one inch. He has the same broad shoulders and lean waist. His face reflects my own—blue eyes, ruddy gold hair waving back from a fairly broad forehead, thin nose and mouth, prominent cheek bones. He apes every move I make, and does it so well that sometimes when I look at him I could almost be in doubt as to who is who. Ever since the birth of the Ghost, he has acted as my double in exchange for all that I can teach him about magic as an art and a business. It is a considerable sacrifice for a man to shuck his own identity, but Saunders thinks it is worth it.

**F**OR me it is an immeasurable advantage. I can withdraw from my usual haunts, adopt a new identity for the purpose of stepping into the underworld, while Glenn Saunders literally wears the shoes of George Chance. Glenn Saunders is to the Ghost what every criminal dreams about—a perfect alibi.

When I went into the shop, Glenn

Saunders laid aside his tools, picked up a cold briar pipe and lighted the remaining heel of tobacco in it.

"Nice night," he remarked, his voice a natural echo of my own.

"Nice for, murder," I said. "Glenn, you're performing for a benefit party tomorrow evening. The Ghost is going for a walk."

Glenn smiled one-sidedly.

"What's up this time?"

"A suicide," I explained. "A suicide that couldn't have happened."

I walked over to the bench and took the pipe out of Saunders' mouth.

"From now on until further instructions, Glenn, you're George Chance. And I don't smoke a pipe."

"No pipe," Glenn said. "Only your cigars and cigarettes."

"My pajamas you'll find thrown over my bed. Get in them and get some shut-eye. Tell Joe Harper I'll probably need him."

Glenn nodded.

"Right, chief."

And my double and I parted.

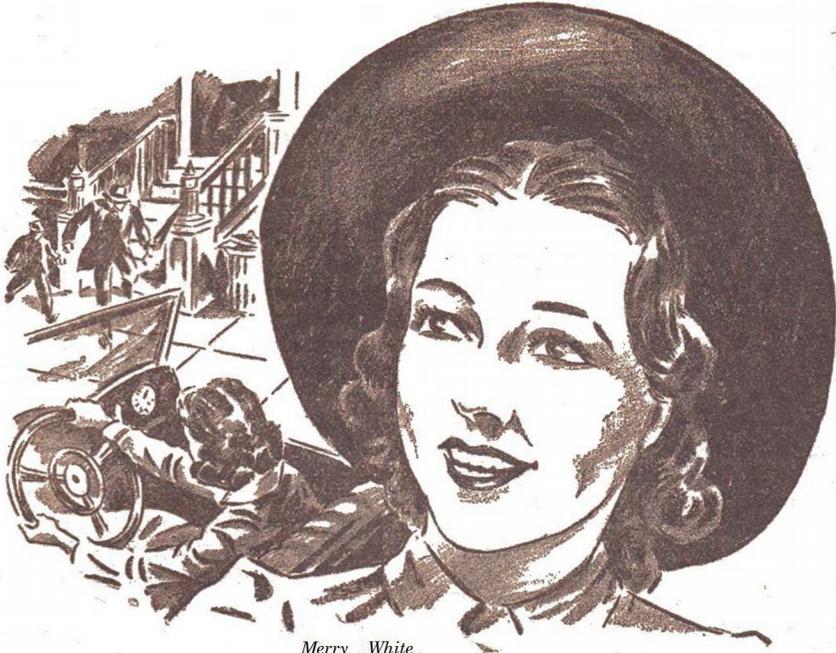
### CHAPTER III

#### *The Ghost Walks*



**I**N A SMALL basement room brilliantly lighted, I began altering my features. I always use as few makeup materials as possible, for I have found that a simple makeup is less likely to be detected and is nearly always just as effective as a complicated one.

To create the character of the Ghost, I take small wire ovals and put them into my nose, tilting the tip and elongating the nostrils. For the somewhat ghastly effect proper to a ghost-character, I darken the inside of each nostril. Simple, eh—yet one must know how.



*Merry White*

Brown eyeshadow goes on to darken my eye pits. Pallor comes out of a powder box. I highlight my naturally prominent cheek bones. Over my own teeth I place shells the color of old ivory.

After that, I have only to affect a fixed vacuity of expression and my face becomes something very much like a skull.

Yet—and this is important because it gives me freedom to get around without attracting undue attention—if I allow my eyes their usual animation and keep my lips closed over the yellow teeth, the Ghost is serviceably hidden beneath the exterior of an ordinary man who is merely a little less attractive than the average.

This done, I returned my makeup materials to a case the size of a tobacco tin. From a closet I removed a black suit—black because the color apparently reduces the width of my shoulders and decreases my height. The

suit has other virtues in the way of secret pockets and clever holders of magical gimmicks I find useful—even more useful than the small fiat automatic I carry or the nasty little throwing knife.

Before I went out, I put on a black felt crusher hat and took a look at myself in the mirror. The possibility of recognition as George Chance no longer existed. I looked like the ghost I had chosen to be—a rather husky, happy ghost, however—for the time being.

As soon as I got outside my door I "turned off the Ghost." I took a walk to Fifth Avenue, where I signaled a cab. The driver took no interest in me except as a potential fare, nor did I expect him to. The cab let me out in front of the Cronner Hotel where it towers above Central Park, and in one of the apartments of which Leonard Van Sickle had once lived and breathed—and lisped to me over the telephone.

The efficiency of the New York police system was pretty well evidenced. The only things outside the hotel to indicate that this was the site of a recent tragedy was a hotel employee diligently engaged in mopping at an ugly stain on the sidewalk, and a uniformed cop talking about the weather to the doorman.

I walked into the lobby. Nobody noticed me. There's a lot of obscurity in a black suit.

**S**INCE suite a while had passed since I had talked with Standish, I wasn't surprised to find that all the bustle attending sudden death was over. Evidently the homicide boys and my friend Robert Demarest from the medical examiner's office had concluded their job. It may seem that there was no particular point in my visiting the scene of the crime before seeing Standish. But I always prefer, when possible, to start at the beginning of a mystery maze instead of plunging into the middle of it.

Almost at once I ran into something queer. When I reached the door of the Van Sickle suite, there was no police guard in the hall. The point is this: Standish, even though he had not said so, suspected murder. Otherwise he wouldn't have asked me to take a hand in the game. Well, where there had been murder, there should have been a policeman.

I tried the door, found that it was unlocked, pushed it open part way.

Something was wrong. I could not push the door all the way open. And the reason for that was pretty much of a shock—the body of a man blocked it.

I stepped over it, into darkness that was total, and closed the door behind me. My idea of getting in on the beginning of this thing was already pretty well shot. Here I was, already in the middle of it.

I knelt beside the man on the floor, using my fingers for eyes.

My hands traveled lightly over the

body on the floor—the body of a man wearing close-woven suiting, a man with a sizeable paunch. My fingers met a bullet-studded belt and an empty holster, passed upward over a rising and falling chest to touch the cold, smooth surface of a shield.

I understood now why the door was unguarded. This man was a policeman and he had been slugged.

I stood up, looked through darkness. Coming from what must have been another room was a faint twinkle of light—the guarded rays of a flashlight. No sound came, however—footsteps were muffled by a rug.

I moved closer. It was a man's hand that held the light. A shadowy figure was kneeling in front of a desk. False drawers of the desk were open, revealing the door of a steel safety deposit box. The man was just closing the door. The light went out. I heard furtive movements.

I was invisible in the darkness because of my black outfit. I flattened myself against the wall, lowered my head to the lapel of my open coat. My left hand whisked upward from a vest pocket, fingers closed over a small rubber balloon. As the man moved cautiously about the extensive suite, I put the nipple to my mouth and quickly inflated the balloon under the cover of my coat. A twist of the valve and the balloon held its air.

**T**HE prowler entered the room in which I was waiting for him. I could hear his quiet breathing. Then his needle of light jumped about the room, paused on the prostrate form of the cop. I saw the prowler's hand in reflected rays from the light. There was a peculiar bluish tattoo mark encircling his wrist like the coils of a small snake.

The light began moving in my direction, as though some sixth sense told the man hidden eyes were watching.

I pulled the balloon from under my coat.

If you have seen spiritual materializations as accomplished by magicians on a black stage, my balloon stunt may be disillusioning. The balloon I had inflated had a ghastly skull face painted on it with luminous paint.

The prowler saw the glow skull face, uttered a gasp, dropped his light. In utter darkness I could hear his shallow, frightened breathing as I advanced slowly toward him, keeping the balloon at arm's length to the right. I dislike being shot at.

"S-stop," the man's whisper ordered. "Stay where you are. I've got a gun. Stop, I tell you!"

His whisper mounted to something close to a hysterical cry. I judged it time to give the balloon a flick that carried it through the air toward him. At the same time, I called up my powers of ventriloquism and gave the prowler the benefit of a derisive, ghoulish laugh.

His reaction was the expected one—he fired.

It was a good shot. The balloon burst, the sound of its bursting lost in the roar of gunfire so that the glowing head must have seemed to have vanished in mid-air. But the man's gunfire had pinned a ruddy sign of his exact location and I made for it, slipped in behind him, clicked my knife from my sleeve.

The knife is good steel and I let him have the tip of it in the quivering muscles of his back. At the same time I uttered the rollicking, macabre chuckle which generally heralds the entrance of the Ghost. It is a rather horrible sound, and I never blame any of its victims for being frightened by it.

"Drop your gun."

My voice was flat, dead, unemotional.

The plunk of the weapon to the carpet sounded.

"Over to the door," I ordered. "You'll turn on the lights and then turn around slowly. No tricks. The knife is a key for unlocking hell for you if

you try anything."

The man obeyed, moving slowly, avoiding the unconscious cop. I heard the whisper of his fingers along the wall as they sought the light switch. Then there was light and I backed a step so that the man could turn around. By this time the muscles of my face had once again frozen into that death's-head expression which makes those who see it think they are smelling their own graves in advance.

The man's piggy eyes were some time taking me in. Then his dry, pallid lips whispered.

"What are you?"

He asked "what," not "who." They usually do at first.

Then his wits returned to him; the play of his thoughts showed in his face; memory of gossip in the underworld made him guess at the truth—

"My God," he muttered, "you're—"

"Yes," I said softly—

"The Ghost. . ." he whispered, and I could hardly hear him.

## CHAPTER IV

### *Crime Strikes Twice*



F MEDIUM height, the man wore gray. His face was as ordinary and uninteresting as a bowl of cold porridge. In a crowd of six men you'd have lost him. He wasn't dark and yet not blond. His small, furtive eyes varied between green and brown. He was just a guy with a serpent tattooed on his wrist.

I flipped my knife from the right hand to the left—an easy gesture for a magician—and stepped in close to him. I set the point of the knife at his throat, and his prominent Adam's apple went up and then down in his attempt to swallow his terror.

"Wh-what are you going to do?"

I let him wonder about<sup>1</sup> the answer to that one and how close he was to becoming a ghost himself. My right hand went through his pockets. Except for a few bills held together with a dollar sign money clip, there was nothing in his trouser pockets. But the inner pocket of his coat yielded the loot from the dead man's safe—a sheaf of bond certificates which I took no time to examine, and a chamois skin bag containing what might have been unset gems.

I pocketed these. Ned Standish would eventually get them.

I nodded toward a comfortable looking chair with a chrome-trimmed smoking stand beside it.

"Sit down," I ordered.

Watching me with his piggish eyes, the man backed to the chair. He sat down as though he had a couple of over-ripe eggs in his hip pockets. Nervously, he fumbled with an ornament topping the smoking stand. And his fingering called my attention to something that lay on the smoking stand.

From where I stood, it looked like a dime that was a little the worse for wear. I went over to the stand, my knife still jutting threateningly in my left hand. I picked up the round disk and flipped it from fingertips to palm. It was a spiral of inflexible wire, like a coiled watch spring except inflexible, as I said, and the wire was round and the color of gun metal.

"What's this?" I showed the man the coil.

"You got me." His voice was husky, maybe naturally that way, maybe because he was scared half-witted.

"I know I got you," I said, "but—"

The door of the room opened. I sprang backwards, twisted around, trying to see the intruder and the man with the tattooed wrist at the same time. I got only a glimpse of the person at the door, a woman, when the man with the tattooed wrist decided he could beat me to his gun which still

lay on the floor where he had dropped it. I could see by the direction of his glance and the way he was gripping the arms of the chair exactly what was in his mind.

I warned him, but he was already in motion. As he stooped for the gun, my fingers slid down the length of my knife to the tip. I threw the knife, pinned his arm to the floor, the knife passing through the cuff of his gray coat as he reached for the gun.

WTO BLOODSHED, no noise. Fear and the knife held the man in a crouching position on the floor. My right hand brushed the bottom of my coat, came up with my automatic delivered from a smooth acting gimmick-clip which had originally been designed to hold a magician's handkerchief-dyeing tube.

I bowed slightly to the woman in the doorway.

"Won't you come in? And close the door, please."

She was calm enough, but that was because I had "turned off the Ghost." She was an attractive, rounded woman, red-haired, with soft brown eyes. My first glance said she was thirty, my second that she was forty. But attractive and less fluttered, I believe, than anyone else could have possibly been under similar circumstances.

She looked at the man with the tattooed wrist.

"Hugo!" she said.

"I see you know each other," I said. "You'll have to pardon Hugo's rather odd position on the floor."

I went over to him, retrieved my knife, retained it in my left hand while my right put my gun in my pocket. Hugo straightened and backed shakily to his chair.

The woman in the doorway was looking in wide-eyed wonder at the cop groaning on the floor in front of the door. And then her brown-eyed gaze moved to me.

"Who are you?" she asked.

"On the contrary," I said, "who are you?"

"I happen to be a friend of Mr. Van Sickle."

"Who is dead," I said; "who jumped out of his window. And there seems to be some slight reason to believe that he was urged."

The announcement made no visible impression upon the woman. Her rounded face was an admirable picture of studied calm.

"And after suicide or murder," I went on, with a glance at Hugo, "a little robbery—"

"Mrs. Kurtzner," said the man with the tattooed wrist, "this guy just cracked Van Sickle's safe. I don't know what he got. I had an appointment with Van Sickle and when I came in—"

"You socked the cop," I concluded for him. "Tell me, when you go to a business appointment, do you generally club the first person who opens the door?"

"He socked the copper," said the man, meaning me. "I didn't even know there was a cop here nor v/hat he was here for."

**M**RS. KURTZNER took a decisive step to the telephone which rested on a small table at the left of the door. The woman apparently had courage and understood the advantage of a receiver off the hook when there was a man with a gun in the room. Her soft brown eyes were fixed on my face as though she wanted to remember me.

"Send the police up to Mr. Van Sickle's suite," she said. "Burglars."

"The police, madam," I said, indicating the cop on the floor "are at your feet."

I went to the door.

"He's trying to escape," Mrs. Kurtzner said calmly into the phone. "He's wearing a black suit and a black hat. His face is dead white and queer looking."

For Mrs. Kurtzner's entertainment,

and also to return my knife to its place in my sleeve, I turned my head slightly and "swallowed" the knife. I was applauded with a faint gasp from the lady. She dropped the phone in place, turned a little pale under her rouge. I saw her lips frame the words: "The Ghost . . .," although no sound came from them.

"Yes," I admitted. "Good night to you."

I stepped out into the hall.

I passed the elevator shaft and glanced at the indicator. A car was on the way up. It was not in my plans to meet the police as yet. I walked to the end of the hall to the red-lighted doorway opening on the fireproof inner stairway. I went up the steps instead of down.

The Sky Room on top of the hotel is a cafe. It was a swank place George Chance had visited often enough. I found the cafe crowded, which was only to be expected at midnight. I kept my hat and slid into a table not far from the lavatory door. It had been my intention to go to the lavatory at once so as to switch disguises in private, but the plan had to be revised upon my seeing a fat man in evening clothes reel into the lavatory. So I took the table and waited.

One of the waiters approached, asked if he couldn't take my hat. I said he couldn't, and told him to bring some beer.

"We have some imported Braumier Pilsner special for this evening only," he said. "We are getting some very nice compliments on it."

I told him to bring whatever could be brought the quickest. He eyed me strangely. I watched the lavatory door, lighted a cigarette. It was only a short time before the alarm would spread throughout the hotel.

My friendship with the commissioner makes everything okey in case the cops pick me up, but an arrest, even though temporary, would mean questions embarrassing to both Standish

and me. Also, the pinch would be bound to make the papers, and the Ghost's prestige in the underworld would be damaged. A good deal of the Ghost's terror-inspiring reputation in the underworld springs not alone from the fact that its members do not know who he actually is but because they believe the police do not know either.

**M**Y BEER came. I left it untouched. The band was breaking into one of Raymond Scott's hectic bits, and while the bodies of the dancers on the floor were getting keyed up to the torrid tempo, my own pulse was beginning to get a bit jumpy—not from the music but because the fat man still occupied the wash room.

I got up and went to the lavatory door, opened it.

The fat man was bending over a wash basin, tie and collar off. He was scrubbing his moon-like face, his pointed ears which reminded me of Mercury's wings, and even splattering cold water on the top of his nearly bald head.

I was amused, but not at that. Once again fate was reaching out for me and taking me by the hand. Certainly in no previous case had circumstances combined so often to save me time and trouble in gathering in the threads. But I am jumping ahead too fast,

"You're supposed to take your bath before you come to a joint like this, mister," I said.

He looked around at me, gripping the edge of the wash basin with soapy hands. I had thought that possibly I might have been mistaken, but he was the man I had taken him for at first sight—Theo Quinn, president of the concern which had absorbed Van Sickle's manufacturing plant after fortune had taken a slap at Van Sickle.

Looking at me, he got soap in his eye, which was my fault, according to the reasoning process of his drink-numbed brain.

"To hell wishu!" he said.

I backed out and left the door open. Quinn continued his washing.

Then, in the foyer outside the plate glass and chrome doors of the Sky Room, I saw a police detective—a man named Hullick. He was just coming out of the elevator.

I turned my back on the door through which Detective Hullick had to pass, and headed for the stairway.

## CHAPTER V

### *Blocked*



**I**N ANOTHER minute I knew exactly how a baseball player feels when he's caught between bases. I hadn't gone down more than a flight of stairs when I heard someone coming up toward

me.

"It was the Ghost," a woman's voice was saying. "No doubt of it!"

"Then you were a sap to inform the police, Lulu. We've got to block him off before the cops do."

"The call was already in before I knew it," the woman justified herself querulously. The voice was that of Mrs. Kurtzner, I didn't recognize the voice of the man who was with her. It wasn't Hugo.

They were hunting the hotel for me, for some reason then obscure, and it looked as though Fate had pointed out a short cut toward the achievement of their purpose.

There was only one thing to do. I bounded back up three steps to the landing I had just left, pushed open a door, went into the hotel corridor. No safety zone there. The cool-nerved Lulu Kurtzner and her scratchy-voiced pal would certainly look in on every floor on the way down. I headed for the door of the first room on my right, knocked on the panel as though the



*The man jerked a gun and  
fired—(Chapter XXII)*

hotel was on fire.

"Telegram for Mr. Reed!" I called out, and pounded the door again.

If the door didn't open in another instant, I knew that Mrs. Kurtzner would spot me.

The door opened. A seedy, inoffensive looking man who might have been a birdseed salesman from St. Louis or a cartoonist's conception of tax-burdened John Public, blinked out at me with sleepy eyes.

"You've made a mistake," he said.

I shoved the door open and showed him my gun.

"Don't rub it in," I said. "I acknowledge the fact I've made a mistake. Sorry about this, old man."

I slammed the door behind me just as Mrs. Kurtzner and her fellow searcher came into the corridor.

Wide-eyed with astonishment, his trembling body setting up waves in the pink stripes of his pajamas, my Mr. Public stared into the muzzle of my gun.

The smartest thing for me to do at the moment would have been to tap the little man on the head with the gun barrel, but I couldn't do it.

When coincidence is unkind enough to throw some innocent bystander into the game of cops and criminals, I think the bystander ought to be spared a lump on the head. So I planted my left hand on Mr. Public's meager chest, shoved him into the bathroom and shut the door. I was counting on the impression my gun had made to last long enough to keep him there while I switched disguises.

I removed the wire ovals that distorted the shape of my nose and the yellow shells of my teeth. A piece of cloth quickly took care of the makeup material on my face. I got a pair of metal "plumpers" from my makeup kit and put them into my cheeks. This added apparent pounds to my thin face. A few touches with a lining pencil at the outer ends of my eyelids created crow-foot wrinkles.

THAT black suit of mine is a work of ingenious tailoring. All I had to do was remove it, snap out the silken lining with its pockets and holders for magical apparatus, turn the suit inside out, replace the lining, and dress again. I was then wearing a suit of gray heringbone.

The Ghost's black crusher hat stands any amount of abuse. I rolled it up and stuck it into a secret pouch at the tail of my coat. Shoulders hunched a little, some white powder worked in my hair at the temples, added ten years to my age.

This took a little time, but the meek little man in the bathroom had offered no word of protest. I opened the door of his room and stepped into the hall. Between me and the stairway stood Mrs. Lulu Kurtzner.

With her was a tall man in evening clothes. His face was one nobody could forget in a hurry—deeply tanned skin, a thin hooked nose, a knife scar on his chin, rivet-clinching lips, cruel slots of eyes. He and the Kurtzner woman were talking in low tones.

I don't think a faint heart ever deceives a fair lady, so instead of showing only my back to Mrs. Kurtzner by going to the elevator, I walked straight toward her, headed for the stairway. The plan would have worked without a hitch, but I had reckoned without my Mr. Public.

As I reached the steps, a door in the corridor behind me was wrenched open violently. I ducked down the stairs. I couldn't see what happened but I could form a mental picture of it—the meek Mr. Public's trembling in the corridor of the hotel, catching sight of the couple near the stairway, running to them, telling them about the invader of his privacy.

Mrs. Kurtzner and her boy friend would need nothing more, in spite of my disguise. They would put two and two together and cotton to the fact that it must have been the Ghost who had passed them. I ran down the stairs.

I never saw the man whose room I had appropriated again, but I will always remember him for having prepared what promised to be a hot fire for me to land in as soon as I had jumped out of the frying pan.

Whether I got out of the hotel without any further difficulty depended a whole lot on how fast I could descend the stairs and how lucky Mrs. Kurtzner's friend in evening clothes was in catching an elevator.

It turned out that I didn't get any sort of a break. When I reached the lobby, the man with the scarred chin and hooked nose was waiting for me.

He had taken the elevator which must have descended without a stop. He was watching me even before I spotted him standing between two elevator shafts.

The lobby was quite crowded. At the three visible exits, police lounged near the doors, evidently on the lookout for the man Mrs. Kurtzner had described over the phone.

**B**UT there was a bright spot among all these spots of unpleasant promise. Leaning against one of the marble pillars that supported the lobby ceiling was the familiar figure of Joe Harper, green hat far down over his dark eyes, one of my cigarettes dangling from his lips.

I gave him a sign perceptible to him alone—the letter "G" formed by the fingers of my left hand in the symbol employed by deaf mutes. Nothing escapes those black beetle eyes of his. He tilted his cigarette in token that he had caught it, otherwise betraying no recognition.

Extremely important, this care we always exercised in concealing any connection. For, if the friends of George Chance were proved to be the friends of the Ghost also, it is obvious how easy it would be for the Ghost's underworld enemies to deduce the connection between the Ghost and George Chance.

Joe Harper had tailed me. I had half expected that. I never know when, as the Ghost, I am going to need the man. And his shrewd eyes and his brain that bulges with facts about Manhattan and Manhattan's crooks, are valued accessories.

True at the present time I couldn't see exactly how he was going to be useful. I couldn't see how the man with the scarred chin could start anything with the police around. Yet there was a certain tenseness in the air. I knew Joe Harper sensed it. Back turned toward me, he headed for the nearest exit. I knew he intended I should follow him.

I started for the same door and the man with the scarred chin moved toward me. He wasn't looking at me, but that very fact, coupled with the fact of his simultaneous movement with me, assured me that he was trying to head me off.

## CHAPTER VI

### *Death at My Elbow*



**R**EATH bated, out of the corner of my eye, I saw the man with the scarred chin cut around in front of a semi-circular lounge backed up against the same post against which Joe Harper had been leaning. But I also noticed something else. I had been mistaken about there being only one bright spot; there were two.

A girl was sitting on the lounge—a girl masked from the waist to the crown of her head by a wide open newspaper—and something about that girl was delightfully familiar.

The man with the scarred chin passed her. She lowered the paper half a foot. I recognized her black hat and her curiously beautiful green eyes.

The girl was Merry White, the feminine attraction in my magical shows and in the private life of George Chance.

If you have seen any of the George Chance magical acts at any of the benefit parties in and around New York, you will remember Merry White—tiny, black-haired, green-eyed, with a roguish smile that wins the heart of even the coolest audience. She has a ten thousand watt personality plus the sweetest face and the most graceful figure. But perhaps I am a bit prejudiced. After all, someday she is to be Mrs. George Chance.

Obviously she had come to the hotel with Harper. She is continually mixing with the affairs of the Ghost, frequently throwing him helpful hints with only a vague idea of their full significance. She has been both a big help and a big worry. Having little conception of the meaning of fear, she's a dark-haired angel stepping in where a fool would fear to tread, her abrupt, impulsive actions utterly unpredictable.

It's a very difficult thing for even a perfect stranger to pass Merry White without giving her a couple of second glances, but that's what I did. The man with the scarred chin kept to his course and I kept to mine. And at the cigar stand he deliberately bumped into me. He was lean and light-looking, but height added weight to his body. I was thrown off balance.

"I beg your pardon!" he said, catching at me with his left hand. "How perfectly careless of me. Wasn't watching where I was going."

"That's all right," I told him.

I noticed he was standing considerably closer to me than was necessary and that his right hand was in the pocket of his jacket.

His left hand began dusting mythical lint from the shoulder of my coat. Whether it was intentional or a mere coincidence, I noticed that the two of us were pretty well surrounded at the

moment by a group of Broadway night hawks who had dropped in for a time at one of the several supper clubs in the hotel.

The man with the scar crowded closer and I felt the nudge of the gun in his pocket.

He spoke in low but distinct tones: "Silencer on this baby. Knock you off pretty damned quick. The grill and make it snappy—*Ghost!*"

AT the moment I was more chagrined that alarmed. It was the first time the Ghost had ever been spotted unless he had wanted to be spotted. My eyes flicked across the lobby. Toward the north side a neon arrow pointed to the entrance of the grill and tap room. I looked into the man's hard inscrutable face. His hawk's nose was close to my face. His pincer lips formed a tight straight line. The scar on his chin was like a second mouth.

I had an uncomfortable moment of wondering whether or not he would shoot. The pop of a silenced gun attracts more attention than the average man supposes. And within twenty feet of us were police on the lookout for me.

For all of that, if I ever saw the will to kill in a man's eyes, I saw it now. I silently debated whether I should reach for my knife and let him have the length of it in his abdomen—I could have done that quickly enough—but I decided that it was what Joe Harper would have called bad percentage. The thrust of the knife would have caused a reflex-pull of his trigger-finger.

If the situation seemed tight, it was a lot tighter exactly two seconds later. I heard the crisp click of high heels on the marble flooring. Merry White, the short skirt of her black suit switching, her green eyes snapping with something that bordered between genuine fury and pure devilment, came toward us. She is unpredictable!



Robert Demarest

She sneaked her way between two top-hatters who were arguing about the virtues of a recent Broadway comedy. She gave friend Scar-Chin an elbow jab in the ribs and let loose a stinging left-handed slap to the side of my jaw.

At the same time, she cried:

"Here he is, officer! Help! This way!"

Two cops came from the doorway, saw Merry White hanging onto my arm as though afraid I would make a break for it. One of the cops wedged in between Scar-Chin and myself, and that was a great comfort.

"What's the matter, lady?" the cop wanted to know. "This man bothering you?"

Merry looked at me, stamped her foot. Her eyes blazed.

"He's a masher. Just an old hotel lobby masher! Didn't you see him trying to make a date with me? And when he pinched me—"

The hand of the law seized me roughly. The voice of the law was

heavy with outrage.

"Annoyin' this lady, was you?"

I was hauled roughly to the door.

Merry's heels clattered after us. She grasped the cop's coat tail just as we reached the street. He turned, still holding onto me.

"Ooh!" Merry uttered a prolonged, hurt cry—it was a masterpiece of sincerity.

Her small gloved hand went up to her mouth. Her head downcast, her eyes rolling upward, I could feel my cop becoming slightly less useful.

"I've made a dreadful mistake!"

She looked at me as though she was seeing me for the first time.

"That isn't the man at all. He was a little like him, but not much. He was wearing black, I remember. A black hat and suit—"

The cop let go of me.

"Where, lady?" he demanded testily. "When was all this?"

"Why not ten minutes ago. Right here in the lobby!"

She turned her eyes on me, gave me

that sweetest smile.

"Please forgive me. I wouldn't have caused you all this trouble for anything."

"Mistakes happen in the best of families," I said with a smile, and sauntered toward the curb.

"Dames," the cop said in disgust.

Joe Harper had just called a cab. When he saw me coming, he started to get into the cab and was slow about it, giving me a chance to catch up with him. But such is the peculiar relationship between the Ghost and the friends of George Chance that Joe and I had to put on a little act.

I tapped Joe on the shoulder as he was about to get into the taxi. "Beg your pardon," I said gravely, "but this is my cab."

Joe faced me, that smoldering cigarette still dangling from his lips.

"Like hell it is," he said. "Where do you get that stuff?"

The doorman from the hotel came toward us, evidently to act as intermediary in what appeared to be an incipient brawl. I gave Joe a push in the chest and sent him back three paces. He took one step forward, swung wildly at my head, missing by a foot. I ducked into the taxi and shoved a five dollar bill under the driver's nose.

"Get going," I ordered.

## CHAPTER VII

### *In Secret Council*



AST Fifty-fifth Street, not far from my house on Fifty-fourth, has an old church with two lean spires that sway when a high wind sweeps across the city. In its shadow is a square brick house formerly used as a rectory. The

brick house is always vacant, always displays a FOR RENT sign on the front door. The rental, in fact, is kept prohibitively high. And the owner of the rectory is George Chance.

The place has a bad reputation with small boys in the neighborhood. Its windows are always shuttered and it is somehow squat and evil looking in the shadows of the steeples that might be the home of Poe's ghouls. The place is said to be haunted, and I would never be the one to deny it. You see, I haunt it. It is the headquarters of the Ghost.

I left the taxi a block away and walked to the Ghost's haunted rectory. It was about three o'clock in the morning. Darkness lay heavy upon the street. There was silence, too, except for the swift swish of tires on the wet pavement of Madison Avenue not far away.

I turned into the narrow way between the walls of the church and the walls of the rectory. The walk led to a small court at the rear of my hideout. I mounted three steps to the back door, unlocked it, stepped into darkness, closed the door behind me. I went down basement steps unlocked another door and closed it before turning on a light.

This basement is no spider's lair. No bones are lying in the corners and there are no chains for ghostly clanking. The basement of the house contains several liveable rooms and it is home to the Ghost when he is working at his unique job of haunting criminals into the electric chair.

I went into a living room furnished with modern simplicity. At a small bar, I mixed a quart shaker of pink ladies, drank one, stretched my spine on the studio couch, loosened tie and collar. Facial muscles relaxed, I suppose I looked a little more like George Chance—a fat-cheeked George Chance. I took from my pocket the oddest assortment of clues I think I have ever run across.

There was first of all the sheaf of bond certificates the man Mrs. Kurtzner had called Hugo had swiped from Van Sickle's small safe. These were bonds on the Deistel International Corporation, a concern I had never heard of.

Opening the certificates, I found that each bore the registered name of the owner—Fabian Deeming, a man as unknown to me as the company itself. There were ten such bonds of two thousand dollars each.

Sort of a springless spring.

The spiral, the teeth, or the bonds—one or perhaps all of these had been of vital importance to the man with the scarred chin. Otherwise, there would have been no reason for him to try that stick-up in the hotel lobby. I could take it that one of these three things was what criminologists call "the essential clue." I put the spiral on the table with the teeth and bonds.

That was the entire lot of crazy pieces that might, when properly fitted



**I** TOSSED them onto the cocktail table beside the couch and took out the chamois skin bag which I supposed contained jewels.

When I opened the bag I got the surprise of my life. It contained twenty-eight human teeth.

Bonds and teeth—a queer combination.

Then there was that curious spiral of inflexible steel wire, a little more puzzling than the teeth themselves. I turned it over in my hand and made nothing of it. It was about the most purposeless thing I had ever seen.

together, give a complete picture. Or they might each represent a piece from a separate puzzle. I'd seen crimes without clues. This one had too many.

Thus far three of my friends were already involved in the Van Sickle affair. I now reached for the phone and called up Tim Terry.

Tim is my oldest friend and certainly the smallest. Nearing middle age, he still isn't tall enough to see over the average table. The midget, for such he is, had been my friend in the old circus days, and now that he had retired we kept in constant touch with each

other. He is one of the six persons who know that George Chance and the Ghost are one. And Tiny Tim of the circus is one of the cleverest of the Ghost's agents.

I told Tim where I was and asked him to come over in spite of the hour. Merry White and Joe Harper would probably drop in, and the four of us would go over the details of what had happened. I hadn't any of the police angles on the Van Sickle case, but those could wait until tomorrow. I wanted Robert Demarest to have completed his medical examination of the corpse before I got any of the police opinions.

Shortly after I had talked to Tim Terry, I heard the opening of the back door of the old house. Only the six who share the Ghost's secret with me have keys to the house, and a moment later I heard Merry White's light step on the stair. She came in, wearing the same smart black suit she had worn when I had last seen her in the lobby of the hotel.

**S**HE stood in the door, a queer little smile on her lips.

"Wasn't I good tonight, darlin'?" she asked.

"You were perfect," I said.

I got over to the door fast, took her in my arms, and kissed her. One arm around her I led her back to the bar and poured her a cocktail. We went over to the studio couch and sat down.

"Whose idea was it?" I asked her. "You and Joe looked as though you were about two jumps ahead of me."

She shook her head, sipped her drink.

"About two blocks behind. Joe knew where you were going and took one of your cars. He picked me up and we went over to the Cronner together. Joe said: 'George will sure as taxes get himself in a jam. I got that kind of a hunch.' And then when he saw the man with the scarred chin in the lobby, he thought his hunch was a sure bet."

"I see. Who was the man?"

"Scar-puss?" Merry put down her drink. The boxey shoulders of her jacket shrugged. "I don't know. But I could see he was out to do you no good. So I did what I did. Just an impulse. He was gunning you, wasn't he? I could see the lump in his pocket. I thought I was pretty good."

"You were perfect," I said again. "Like always."

I indicated the pile of stuff on the cocktail table.

"Make anything out of that stuff?"

I explained where I had obtained each of the objects. It was a waste of time, because when Joe Harper and Tim Terry came in a bit later I had to give them the whole story as well.

"What's the curley-cue?" Merry asked, looking at the wire spiral.

"I don't know. I don't think we can tie up any of that stuff yet. What I do know is that we're in for some trouble and maybe some brain exercise."

Merry stared at the objects on the table. Her slim, fragile-looking fingers toyed with the curl of dark hair above her forehead.

"It could be like this," she said. "The villain is a dentist. He pulls out people's teeth. And when people find what a sissy lisp they have after the operation they go and jump out of hotel windows. Check."

She leaned back, cuddled into my arms.

"How do you know Van Sickle lisped?" I asked curiously.

"He would if he didn't have any teeth, wouldn't he?"

"And those are his teeth, aren't they?" She added as an after thought.

"Maybe," I said. "According to Ned Standish, Van Sickle had false teeth and they're missing. At least no teeth were found in his mouth, so the assumption is he had false ones."

We remained silent for a time, enjoying just being together.

**J**OE HARPER and Tim Terry came in finally. Tim, immaculately clad

in one of his tiny double-breasted suits, the largest of cigars grotesquely clenched in his babyish mouth, came gravely to me and shook hands. Joe Harper didn't say anything, but dumped his loose-jointed body into a chair which he hitched far enough forward so that he could get his feet on the cocktail table.

I poured cocktails around, all the time giving out the details of my actions since the moment that I had concluded my telephone conversation with Standish.

When I had finished, Tim Terry bent double from the chair he was curled up in, put his glass on the floor.

"Well," his child's voice piped, "what ever the answer is, I know my job. I'm to have another kiddy role. I get pushed around a baby carriage in Central Park. Merry pretends to be my nurse. Cops chuck me under the chin—and the next cop who does that, damn it, will get his finger bit off, so help me."

Merry dimpled at the midget. "Tim, if you knew how adorable you are in a little lacy bonnet."

"Quiet, frail!" Tim shrielled.

Merry laughed. Joe Harper grunted. He was staring at the heap of incomprehensible clues on the table. I asked him if he could make anything out of

"It's by me," he said. "All I know is you can thank Merry for putting over a fast one on a dangerous guy tonight. You'd have decorated the floor of the Cronner lobby if she hadn't done what she did. You know who that guy was?"

"Who?" I asked.

"Part of a business firm that went unnamed, but quite a few guys in Chicago knew the telephone number of some years ago. I got that tonight at Snooky's, so I guess you got value received for the money you gave me tonight, huh? The guy was at Snooky's. Stappky pointed him out to me;"

"Who is he?" I asked. "What does

he do?"

Joe Harper's lip-dangled cigarette spilled ashes on his vest. He flicked at the ash with his fingers. A tight scowl you can always take as a sign of nervous apprehension formed between his brows.

"His name is Elmer Tanko," Joe said. "His business is murder."

## CHAPTER VIII

### *Were These Men Dead?*



MERRY WHITE puckered her pretty mouth and uttered a prolonged whistle.

"Such a nice man. George, why didn't I sock him one, too, when I was slapping faces?"

"Don't interrupt, babe," Joe Harper said. "You see, it was this way. Up to the time of the St. Valentine's massacre, the tough boys did their own gun-slaying. Then up Chicago way, along came a couple of mugs named Tanko and Henning. Gus Henning was the other guy. They hung out their shingle, though not in public, and made themselves a nice piece of change murdering for money. You could get a D. A. knocked off for a grand. That was about top price. Smaller fry came cheaper. Henning kicked off with a bursted appendix and Tanko was probably too touched by his pal's death to carry on."

Merry looked at me, eyes wide open.

"Darling, I believe I'm good for something after all. But what have you got, besides me, that Tanko might want?"

I nodded at the clues on the table.

"Take your choice," I said.

"One thing," Tim put in, his baby face screwed into a puzzled knot, "there's a hook-up between the Kurtzner woman and Tanko and the man with the tattooed wrist. Tanko knew

that something had been left in the Van Sickle suite that shouldn't have been. Mrs. Kurtzner didn't know that, otherwise she wouldn't have called the cops. Tanko did know it, and he was in favor of getting to the Ghost before the cops did. That's why he was hunting the Ghost. You've got something, George, that Tanko wants."

"I know it," I said drily. "My life. And—one or all of these clues."

I watched the little man a moment as he sucked great hmgfulls of smoke from his fat cigar. He had summed things up very well and I said as much. Tim reddened with pleasure. Merry clapped her hands. Joe snorted.

"Unless you just want to be melodram about this," Joe said, "the tattooed guy is Hugo Wayne. I know him, and he's dirty and cheap. He's a one-night-stand investment broker. Let me handle him, will you?"

I put my finger on the stack of bonds. "Then these are probably what Hugo Wayne was after. Bonds belonging to Fabian Deeming. Ever hear of Deeming?"

"Complete stranger to me," said Joe. "Wonder what Van Sickle was doing with bonds belonging to another guy."

I ^ O B O D Y had an answer to that.

Nobody had any more answers to anything. There was an interval of silence in which Merry White bent over the human teeth on the table, a distasteful expression on her face.

"They look good as new," she said, "except that one has been filled. I say they're Van Sickle's."

"Hunch, Merry?"

"Hunch."

"All I know," I said, "is that when Van Sickle talked to me shortly before he jumped out of the window, he lisped."

"And all I know," said Joe Harper, "is that he doesn't. Or didn't. I saw him at the Erlanger not long ago. I saw his teeth and heard him talking to the good-looking red-haired lady he

was with."

"Good-looking and red-haired fits Mrs. Kurtzner," I said.

Joe reached for another cigarette, put it in his mouth, didn't light it for a moment. Behind his keen, dark eyes, his shrewd brain was grasping at something.

"What's the matter, Joe?" I asked. He took out the unlighted cigarette, twisted it in his fingers.

"I was just remembering—I went to a funeral today. A friend of mine, Max Gerrich. Max Gerrich killed himself. He was a financial flop and a ham actor. He killed himself by jumping in front of a midnight suburban train. He left a suicide note under a brick beside the track."

"Did he lisp?" Merry White interrupted.

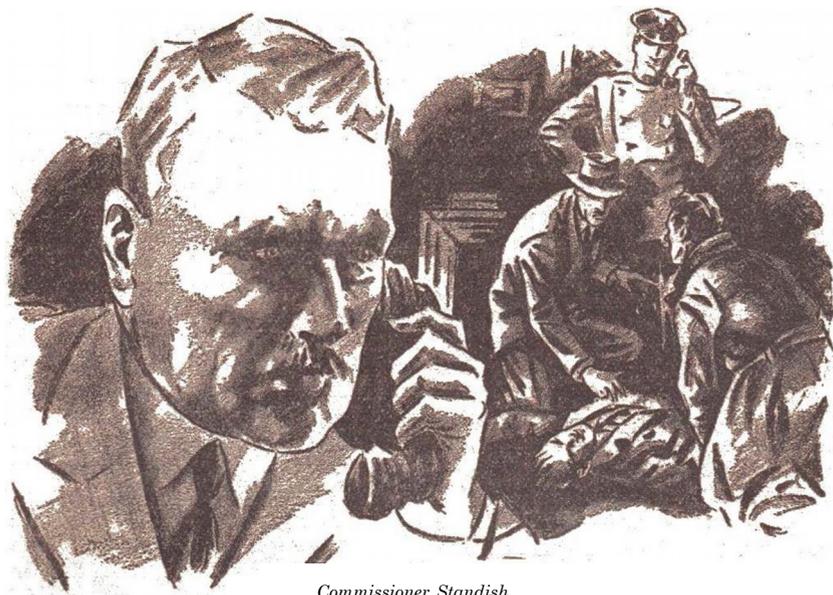
Joe gave her a look.

"Did he lisp! Well, you take all the people from the Battery up to the Bronx, and you'd only find one person who'd ask a question like that. What's lispin' got to do with it? Will you let me speak my piece? I was saying, at the funeral they didn't open the casket because old Max wasn't fit to be seen because of what this train did to him, and you have the nerve to ask if he lisped."

Joe snorted again and continued more rapidly.

"Max Gerrich couldn't have played a first class bloodhound to the best 'Lisa that ever trouped, but his diction was strictly Barrymore. His big trouble was that he always wanted to re-write his parts. He thought an English-speaking audience should never be bothered with words of French or Latin derivation. He hated anything in the world that wasn't Anglo-Saxon."

You may wonder why I didn't get impatient at this seemingly irrelevant matter Joe was spouting. That's because you don't know either Joe or my other aides well enough yet. When they talk, I listen.



*Commissioner Standish*

"What I started to say before I got side-tracked," Joe went on, "was that when I got a little low on funds a while ago, I went to see Max Gerrich." Joe sent me a sidelong glance and lighted his cigarette.

"Max owed me something, I guess. I put him in more bits than anybody else. When I was a percenter I used to put the sting on a lot of producers to give him a walking part in this or that show. Even after everybody knew he was finished, I stuck up for him."

It was the others who were growing impatient, so I prodded Joe.

"What are you getting at?" I demanded.

"Yeah," Tim piped. "You were touching Max, so what?"

ffWJ ^ ELL," Joe went on, "he said wW the damndest thing, when I asked him for money. He said he didn't have any. He made the excuse that he was keeping up a big insurance policy that was keeping him strapped. I asked him what for, since he didn't

have any immediate family. I said: 'Max, you can't take it with you, can you?' And he said: 'Only if you're smart.'"

"I still say, so what?" Tim said, impatiently.

Joe Harper shoved fingers up under his hat and scratched his head.

"Well, Boss," he said, "are you wondering the same thing I'm wondering."

"Yes," I said softly. "Body and face turned into mince-meat by a train . . . 'only if you're smart' . . ."

"What in blazes are you two talking about?" Tiny Tim shrilled.

"George and I are just wondering if Max Gerrich is dead, that's all," said Joe casually.

I looked at Merry White.

"Just why did you ask if Max Gerrich lisped?"

She shrugged. "I just thought the question sounded profound and intelligent."

"Maybe it is," I said, "maybe it is.. I'm just beginning to ask myself another question: is Leonard Van Sickle dead . . . ?"

## CHAPTER IX

*Details of the Crime*

**N**EXT morning early, a cab dropped me off in Broome Street at the side of Police Headquarters Building. I was not myself. I had borrowed a look of wisdom by means of a pair of impressive Oxford glasses, and an appearance of sober dignity by virtue of a moustache. These items, plus a few added touches, sufficed to establish my identity as Dr.\* Stacey, a role I frequently assumed, since it gave me access to the Police Department without embarrassing Standish.

It was early for Standish to be in his office, so I killed some time by walking around to the Centre Street entrance. I hesitated an instant when, going in the front door ahead of me, I spotted my caller of the evening before, Taylor Owens. His black derby sat straight on his head and his purplish potato nose looked irritated by the fog of smoke from the stump pot-bowl pipe in his mouth. And of course he didn't know me from the King of Siam. I wondered what had fought him to Police Headquarters.

Owens wandered about the corridor and I passed him to go directly to Standish's office, where his secretary immediately admitted me.

Edward Standish is not an imposing looking man. You don't realize the full weight of his driving personality until you've known him for a while. Medium height, with a taste for subdued clothes, heavy from the belt upwards, his is a typical cop's figure—hard, muscular\* but spindle-shanked. He has pronounced chops, a black square of moustache, close-set hard gray eyes. In his early forties, he has the less grown gray in the service of

the police department.

Standish got out of his swivel chair to greet me with a crushing hand clasp.

Sitting beside his desk, slumped down, heavy eyelids drooping over protruding eyeballs, was my friend, Robert Demarest, medical examiner, as gloomy and saturnine an individual as ever came out of a morgue alive.

"Did you find Van Sickle's teeth lodged in his liver or something, Bob?" I asked.

Demarest gave me a glum look.

"Don't be funny," he mumbled. "It will become a ghost. The man didn't have any teeth, false or otherwise. And how he expected to maintain *vite* by gumming his food I don't know. Investigation proved his teeth had been extracted. We've checked with his dentist and the dentist doesn't know why it was done."

"Then I take it that Van Sickle's dentist didn't do the extracting," I said.

"What's more," said Demarest, "the condition of the gums of the cadaver indicate that he had never worn plates. His gums hadn't yet been conditioned for plates."

**I** TOOK out the chamois bag of teeth and passed them over to the medical examiner.

"What's this?" he asked. "The family jewels?"

"That," I said, "is probably what a lad named Hugo Wayne thought. He took them out of Van Sickle's safe last night together with a pack of bonds. He slugged one of your cops on the head, Ned."

Standish nodded. "We're looking for Wayne this morning. And not finding him."

Demarest opened the bag of teeth and looked at them. He cursed.

"Another anatomical clue, huh? One of Ned's bright boys brought me a pickled appendix he had found in Van Sickle's suite. Wondered what it was. This Van Sickle must have had a horror of letting his accessory parts go out

of his possession."

"Ned," I said, "is the body definitely Van Sickle's? Could it be somebody else's?"

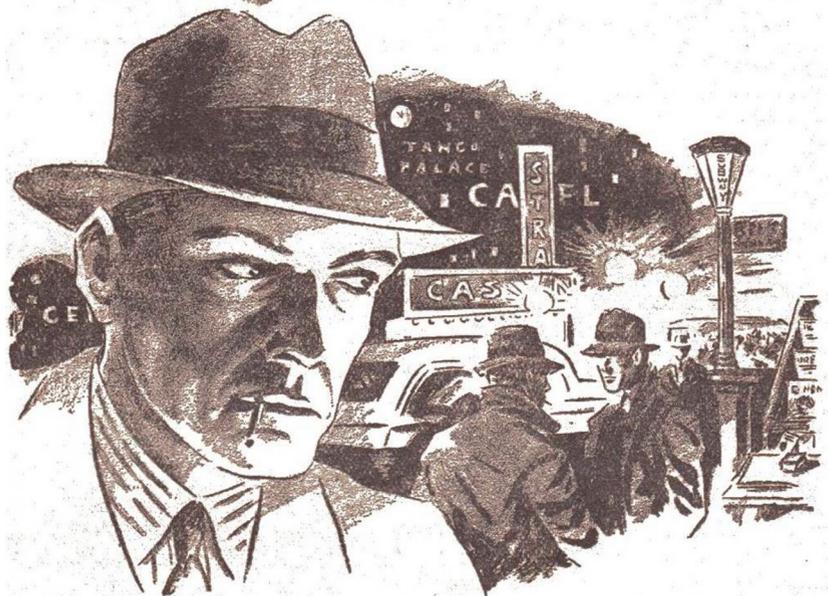
"George," Standish said, "that sounds like a crazy question. I'm forced to admit, however, that after a man falls as far as Van Sickle fell, the corpse is apt to have a kind of anonymous look about it. The face was beyond recognition."

"It was Van Sickle," Demarest said testily, sifting the teeth back into the

showed him the bonds Hugo Wayne had removed from Van Sickle's safe, asked him if he knew the owner, Fabian Deeming. Standish didn't, but he put a man out to find Deeming at once. I turned the bonds over to the police.

The inflexible spiral of wire brought no enlightening comment from either of the men. Demarest said it looked like "something out of or off something" and I returned the clue to my pocket.

Standish showed me the suicide note



Joe Harper

bag. "I examined the contents of his stomach, I checked with what Van Sickle had eaten at the hotel. They agreed. Also, the body had on Van Sickle's clothes and the man jumped out of Van Sickle's window. If you think that adds up to somebody other than Van Sickle, then I suggest that it must have been two other fellows."

"Ignore him," Standish said to me with a grin. "What did you do last night?"

I gave him the whole story. I

which had checked with other samples of Van Sickle's handwriting. It read:

Dear Lucretia: This is good-bye to you and the world. I am the complete failure. What was once my business is now the sole property of Mr. Theo Quinn. My personal property, I hope, will settle my hotel bill

I have provided that a portion of my life insurance shall be paid you in memory of our friendship, which is the only thing I leave regretfully.

Leonard Van Sickle

"I presume Lucretia is Lulu KurtZ-

ner," I said immediately.

"We've already talked with her," Standish said. "She seems on the up-and-up. Damned attractive woman. I'm inclined to think that her association with Elmer Tanko is nothing more than an innocent hotel acquaintance-ship. She made an extremely favorable impression on me. I'm glad that Leonard Van Sickle took care of that detail."

 I THOUGHT of every detail," Demarest growled. "He was a plain crank. Inside the breast pocket of his coat, he had a special pocket tailored in there, just the right size to hold kitchen matches. Apparently didn't care for book-matches."

"Just a minute," I objected sharply. "If Van Sickle just did the Dutch and provided for Mrs. Kurtzner, then everything is rosy. But somehow I got the impression that this was murder. You helped to give me that impression, Ned. So suppose you tell me what first gave you the impression that it wasn't suicide."

"It *was* suicide," Demarest snapped. "Maybe Van Sickle *was* pushed out of the window, but you can't *call* it anything but suicide. There's no proof of anything else. This note was written by Van Sickle and nobody else. The body is Van Sickle's and nobody else's. Those teeth George has appropriated were probably Van Sickle's—"

Standish interrupted. "Answering George's question, it's this business of teeth that gave the suicide a shady touch—missing teeth. At first we thought Van Sickle had false teeth. If so, why remove them to jump out of a window unless he was crazy enough to think he'd have use for them again. If he removed them, where did he hide them? And now that we knew his teeth had been extracted recently by a dentist who remains a mystery, why such concern about his health if he was going to kill himself?"

"Correct," I said. "It was *not* suicide, in spite of the suicide note and the fact that Van Sickle wrote it. Ned, I want to test the craziest piece of coincidence that was ever left like a foun- dling on a detective's very doorstep. Do something for me."

"What is it?"

"An old actor named Max Gerrich jumped in front of a suburban train a day or two ago. He left a suicide note. I want that note."

Standish belled his secretary and sent him to the files for the note. Demarest eyed me sleepily.

"George, you're crazy," he told me. "Do you know how many people voluntarily shuffle off the old mortal coil in this little town of Gotham every week? Now if you try and connect all those suicides, make murders out of them, you're just crazy. But if you want to know about Gerrich, I'll tell you as much as I could gather from an M.E.'s viewpoint. The chances are remote that he ever know Van Sickle existed. He was so heavily in debt that the only thing that would get him out and clear his name was suicide. He had life insurance. So did Van Sickle. But so do a lot of other men who commit suicide. His body was an unrecognizable mess. So was Van Sickle's. But so are the bodies of many other suicides. What do you want to do—establish the fact that nobody commits suicide in this town anymore, that they're all murdered instead?"

**H**ADLEY, the commissioner's secretary, came in with the Gerrich suicide note at that moment and saved me the job of answering Demarest's tirade. I did not know it yet, but I held part of the answer in my hand.

I compared the Gerrich suicide note with the one Van Sickle had written. It took only a glance to show that there was no similarity whatever. I coupled this with what Standish had told me—that the writing was similar to other samples of Gerrich's script.

So far, nothing.

But I re-read the note and something caught me.

Life for me is a ghastly travesty. Why continue it? But a few minutes from now, I, Max Gerrich, answer my last exit cue.

"Anything there, George?" Standish asked.

"Nothing," said Demarest.

He has a habit of answering questions that are not addressed to him. He was about to say more but something in my face must have stopped him.

"Yes," I said slowly, "there is something there. I believe if that body was Max Gerrich's body, Max Gerrich was murdered. . . ."

Standish and Demarest stared at me, wordless. At last Standish said:

"Are you intimating that Gerrich didn't write that note—that his handwriting was imitated?"

"No," I said. "Gerrich wrote the note all right—I'm willing to take the word of the experts on that. It's the *wording* of the note that has suddenly struck me as significant. Max Gerrich, I happen to know, had a peculiar dislike for words originating in the Latin languages. That dislike was intense, probably springing from certain Teutonic prejudices ingrained in Gerrich.

"Now, I maintain, such being the case, that Gerrich, if he had been contemplating suicide, would never have used the word 'travesty' in his suicide note. The word is French. He would have used in preference to it the word 'farce.' Maybe not even 'farce,' since that word, too, is of French origin, although he may not have known that.

"Secondly, he would not have used the word 'continue.' He would most likely have said 'go on.' I say Max Gerrich would not have used those two words—"

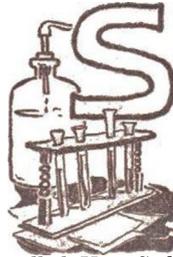
"But the handwriting, man—the handwriting!" Standish cried. "You yourself admit that Max Gerrich wrote that note—"

"Wrote it, yes," I said, "but it was dictated."

There was a second of silence. Then Standish sat way back in his chair and emitted a long whistle. . . .

CHAPTER X

*The Shamus from Boston*



HAKING hands, I got up to go.

"This case has got more angles than a cubist drawing," Standish said. "We'll get hold of Hugo Wayne and this Fabian Deeming. We'll try to find out who pulled Van Sickle's teeth. We'll nail this hot rod, Elmer Tanko. And we'll see how far that gets us. So long, George."

But I was not destined to take my leave yet. Hadley entered and announced that a Mr. Taylor Owens and a Mr. Ken Vickers were waiting to see the commissioner in regard to the Van Sickle business. Standish looked at me and I nodded, resuming my seat.

Standish, apparently, had been expecting the callers. Vickers, he quickly told me, was a private sleuth who worked out of the home office of the Boston life insurance firm of which Taylor Owens was the local representative. Owens had called Standish on the phone, asking permission to bring Vickers over and introduce him. When I had seen Owens loitering in the hall, he had evidently been waiting for this Boston gum shoe.

Hadley showed the two men in. Vickers was one of these personalities who is hell-bent on being dynamic. He pumped my hand and Standish's, regarded Demarest a little as though he was just being introduced to a corpse. He told us who he was in the explosive manner of a young man who is working his way through college selling

magazines. In the end, it was Vickers who introduced Mr. Taylor Owens, instead of the other way around.

Owens was his cordial self. While Vickers was making his speech, Owens sat next to me, his gray suede shoes close together, his derby resting on his knees.

"Associated with the police, Dr. Stacey?" he asked me. I replied that I was connected with the medical examiner's office in an advisory capacity, but I don't think he paid any attention to what I was saying, for at the moment he was attending to the business of scraping soggy, sizzling dottle from the bowl of his stubby pipe.

Vickers explained that the insurance company had sent him to look into the Van Sickle suicide, because Van Sickle's death was costing the company half a million dollars.

"Whether it figures suicide or murder, your company still has to pay up, doesn't it?" Demarest dourly remarked.

Vickers nodded energetically. "Absolutely. Pay without question. But not go on paying any more such claims without question. You grasp the fine distinction. We don't want it to become a habit. And this is the second large suicide claim we've had to pay in the past week."

I looked at Demarest and smiled.

"You're referring to the claim covering the death of Max Gerrich, aren't you?" I asked.

"Yes, that's right—" Vickers let his sentence hang and twisted around in his chair to eye me shrewdly.

"On the police force, Dr. Stacey?" he asked.

He clipped his words much closer than any Bostonian I had ever met before.

ffW ^ R. STACEY is one of my and

JLW Dr. Demarest's most valued advisors, though in no way connected officially with the force. If there's anything smelly about this suicide business, Vickers, I can assure you of his

full and complete cooperation."

"Fine," Vickers said. "That's fine. Commissioner, could you have dinner with me at Charles' Restaurant at seven sharp? Some important matters I'd like to go over with you in regard to Van Sickle's financial set-up. We could go into the matter here, but the man who knows the most about the subject is not available until evening. Dr. Demarest, will you join us?"

"Too many people die, I don't have time to eat," the saturnine M. E. said.

Vickers looked at me. "Medical opinions are always valued. How about you, Doctor?"

I told Vickers I would be there.

A little later, from a drugstore pay station, I telephoned Joe Harper. He was just getting out of bed. I told him to get on the tail of Hugo Wayne to see if he could find out anything about the bonds taken from Van Sickle's safe and also something about the identity of the mysterious Mr. Fabian Deeming. And then I called Tim Terry, asked him if he wouldn't put on knee pants, get over to the Cronner Hotel with Merry White and keep an eye on Mrs. Kurtzner.

Somehow, I couldn't feature Lucretia Kurtzner as a lily white lady. I've always been prejudiced against Lucretias. One of the poisoning Borgias had that name.

In my identity of Dr. Stacey, I visited a rental agency and rented, sight unseen, a small apartment on Amsterdam Avenue, made note of the address, went from there straight to the office of the *Herald*, and inserted an ad.

The ad announced that Dr. Stacey, at his Amsterdam address, would pay one hundred dollars to the dentist who had extracted the teeth of Mr. Leonard Van Sickle if the dentist would call in person after making an appointment on the phone. I gave a telephone number which is not listed in the directory but which rings the phone in the Ghost's own haunted rectory.

By that time it was afternoon. I got

a bite of lunch at a drugstore soda fountain, a setting which didn't exactly suit the dignity of Dr. Stacey's Oxford glasses but filled a vacancy in George Chance.

After that, I took a taxi up Fifth Avenue to Thirty-Fourth, got out, walked half a block to the entrance of the Starret Building. Taylor Owens had his office there, and I wanted to see him about certain details in Van Sickle's life insurance policy.

Owens' office was on the fourth floor, not a large place, but attractive because of an ornamental blonde who sat behind a desk and was, at the moment, occupied with filing her nails. I learned that Owens wasn't in, but was expected any moment. I sat down to wait. The phone rang, and the blonde answered. No, Mr. Owens wasn't in. She asked who was calling.

**A** SHRILL, excited but masculine voice announced:

"This is Jonathan Marvin." Marvin's voice was so loud that I could hear every word he uttered though I was ten feet from the girl.

"Miss Rice," Marvin said, "I must get hold of Owens at once. It's a matter of the gravest importance, even of life and death."

Miss Rice jotted Marvin's telephone number down on a pad, promised to get Mr. Owens as soon as she could. She hung up, looked at me, smiled slightly.

"That man sounded as though he was dying at the very least."

I returned her smile, with considerably more warmth than I felt. The lady looked impressionable, and I now had a reason to impress her. Mr. Marvin had sounded like a living case of jitters to me.

"I couldn't help overhearing, Miss Rice," I said. "If it's really important, I don't mind telling you that when I came up here I was perfectly aware that Mr. Owens wasn't here. In fact, he was talking to a gentleman in the

cigar store on the corner."

Miss Rice looked slightly dazed.

"But I can't see why you came here then," she said.

Her cheeks flushed a little, because it was evident that she understood, or thought she did.

I laughed slightly. "Did you ever look in a mirror, Miss Rice?"

I stood up and stepped to her desk. The Oxford glasses robbed my eyes of the ardor they were faking and frightened the little blonde. She laughed uneasily, stood up, slipped around to the other side of the desk.

"Really," she said, "I must go find Mr. Owens. This is really important."

Miss Rice skipped to the door where she turned, gathered courage.

"You better not let my boy friend hear about this. You ought to be ashamed of yourself, at your age!"

And then she was gone and I heard the beat of her toes as she ran down the corridor toward the elevator shaft.

I picked up the phone. A reflection of Dr. Stacey's dignified countenance reproached me from the nicked rim of the phone transmitter. I did look a little too old to be chasing blondes!

And then I called the number Miss Rice had written on the pad. Jonathan Marvin's shrill voice exploded in my ear.

"Owens? That you, Owens?"

I had heard Owens' voice exactly four times and if what I knew about voice control and ventriloquism would not enable me to impersonate it, I felt that I would not be worth my salt.

I said I was Owens and asked what was bothering Mr. Marvin.

ISTEN," Marvin said, "you won't believe this, but it's God's truth. It's the damndest plot you ever heard of. And I'm in it, Owens. I'm not dishonest at heart, Owens. You know that. You know me—"

"Yes," I said in Owens' voice. "I

know you. What are you getting at?"

"In a moment of weakness, I fell for the scheme. It isn't right. It isn't legal. It makes me a criminal! And I can't go to the police. You've got to advise me!"

"What, man?" The excited flow of words from Jonathan Marvin had increased my blood pressure a little, too.

"Owens, it's—" And Marvin interrupted himself with a small, startled sound. Then, as though he were speaking some distance from the phone, I heard him say:

"It—it's impossible!"

And the connection was broken.

## CHAPTER XI

### *Poison*



INDICATING the address of Jonathan Marvin took a little time. When I had done that, I left Owens' office. The blonde Miss Rice, indignant and not looking the worse for the flush of color in her cheeks, stepped out of the elevator as I entered it. She gave me one of those looks and a toss of her curls, and clicked off up the corridor. She hadn't found Taylor Owens where I had said I had seen him, which was natural enough, seeing that I had fed her pure fiction.

I was three minutes waiting for a taxi to pick me up at the curb. Just as I got in the cab, settled back in the seat, I happened to look across the street. Coming out of the door of the building was the tall, gaunt figure of Elmer Tanko.

He stepped hurriedly to the curb, and his shrewd, dark eyes met mine through the back window of the taxi cab.

It was impossible for him to recognize me as the man he had stuck up

in the lobby of the Cronner Hotel on the night before. Yet that glance he threw at me, which might have been the purest coincidence, gave me an odd, uncomfortable feeling. For just a moment, I had the notion that something had gone wrong. I couldn't dismiss the premonition, because of something I had learned during my early life as a magician.

At one of my first public performances, I was pulling the old cut-and-restored rope trick, the version in which two pieces of rope are employed, the piece that is actually cut being jerked beneath the tails of the coat by an elastic pull.

At this performance, I had just offered the second piece of rope for examination as "proof" of the fact that my magic had healed the cut, when that curious, inexplicable premonition of danger came over me. And I dismissed it. That time I dismissed it, but never again.

For when I turned my back to the audience in order to take up my wand for the next trick, howls of laughter sounded in the auditorium. And I discovered that something had gone wrong with the elastic pull and several strands of cut rope dangled from the base of my spine, in full view of the audience!

If you've ever had the experience of stooping over in a crowded street and thinking that you've heard a rip, you have a conception of how I felt when I found I had bungled the rope trick. I felt about the same when Tanko's eyes spotted me through the window of the cab.

For just a moment, I had an impulse to have my driver stop, turn around, and if possible follow Tanko. But then I lost track of the gaunt killer in the crowd. Then, too, if this man Marvin was involved in some sort of a plot, it was probable that he merited attention before anything else.

The plot in which Marvin had found himself must have had something to

do with insurance, otherwise why had he sought the advice of Taylor Owens? And some sort of an insurance swindle, I believed, was back of the Van Sickle "suicide" and possibly the Max Gerrich affair; though up to this point in the case I had little to go on but hunches.

**J**ONATHAN MARVIN lived in a three story house which had been converted into small apartments. A glance at the row of mail boxes in the entry way and I knew where to look for the man. I walked up a flight and knocked on the door. The echo of my knocking whispered along the dingy corridor. - I knocked again, and still no answer.

Fingers covered with a handkerchief, I tried the knob of the door, found the place unlocked, opened the door, walked in. A man was sitting in a lounge chair, his white, shaggy head just visible over the back of the chair, his right arm dangling over the arm. On the little table beside him was a tall glass with an inch of liquor remaining in it. I closed the door quietly, not that there was any danger of waking the man in the chair, and went over to the table.

The shaggy man's heavy-set figure had that crumpled attitude of the newly dead. His face was livid, ghostly, even in the pale light that seeped through an unshaded portion of the window.

Beside the liquor glass was a small bottle plainly labeled HYDROCYANIC ACID. And had the man lived over ten minutes after drinking a highball of that stuff he had an unusual constitution. The poison bottle was weighing down a piece of note paper on which was written in pen and ink:

When a man takes his own life, it is customary to leave some sort of an explanation. Here is mine.

I have recently been placed in a position of great trust as the secretary of Arnold Smock. Mr. Smock, I found, was not only a man of wealth but a man who is careless with his money.

All of his money matters were turned over to me. I took advantage of my position, embezzled certain of the funds entrusted to me, planning to make a killing on the stock market. Of course I lost.

In order to repay Mr. Smock the full amount owed, this is the only thing I can do. The entire record of my fraud will be found clipped to life insurance policies in which Mr. Smock is named beneficiary. He will be repaid.

Jonathan Marvin.

[Turn page]

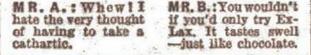
**THE AWAKENING OF MR. A.**



**MR. A.:** Whew! I hate the very thought of having to take a cathartic.



**MR. B.:** You wouldn't if you'd only try Ex-Lax. It tastes swell — just like chocolate.



**MR. A.:** Why, that's what we give to the youngsters. What I need is dynamite!

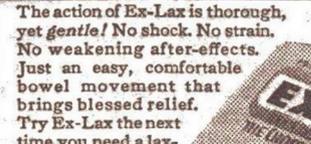


**MR. B.:** Don't kid yourself! Ex-Lax is plenty effective, but it won't upset you.

**LATER**



**MR. A.:** Boy, I feel like a million this morning! That Ex-Lax sure is great stuff!



**MR. B.:** You said it, pal! We've been using Ex-Lax in our family for 30 years!

The action of Ex-Lax is thorough, yet *gentle*! No shock. No strain. No weakening after-effects. Just an easy, comfortable bowel movement that brings blessed relief. Try Ex-Lax the next time you need a laxative. It's good for every member of the family

**10¢ and 25¢**



IT was a puzzler. The note conformed to the conversation I had had with Marvin over the phone, except for one thing. Marvin had said that he had been involved in "the damndest plot you ever heard of." While embezzlement might be damned, there wasn't anything novel about it. And I knew perfectly well that this man had not committed suicide but had been murdered.

But the proof? There was none. I could see what was coming. It was a set-up. Jonathan Marvin's records would show that somebody named Arnold Smock had been swindled by Jonathan Marvin. Mr. Smock would turn out to be an individual whose past record was clean. And Mr. Smock would collect on Marvin's insurance policy.

It was something you knew instinctively to be crooked, yet you felt also that it's set-up was law-proof. The brain behind the scheme was a clever one. Even if Arnold Smock himself was Marvin's slayer, the chances were that he would walk off with the boodle.

I intended to prevent that, but as yet I did not know how I could.

I telephoned Police Headquarters, said I was Dr. Stacey and that I would like to speak to Commissioner Standish. I was put through to Ned's private office at once.

I gave him the story as briefly as possible.

"Get a man on the tail of this Arnold Smock," I said. "Watch Smock day and night. Don't put a restraint on the insurance company, but urge immediate payment. And when the check goes through and Smock cashes it, find out what he does with the money. I'll repeat that, *find out what he does with the money!*"

"If he keeps it, there's a chance he's the ringleader of the whole business. That being the case, we'll probably find ourselves up a dead-end street unless Smock can be broken down. But if he's just a hireling for the master

brain, there's a chance that the route the money takes after it leaves Smock's hand will bring us to the man we're after."

"Hang on," Standish said, "while I issue those orders." I waited and he came back on the wire.

"We've got a trace on this bird, Fabian Deeming," he told me. "A man by that name reserved two passages for Europe on a ship leaving New York on the twentieth of this month. He paid for the tickets, had them sent to a post box at Grand Central Annex. But the pay-off is that we can't get a description of him. He managed the whole deal by mail. His letter to the travel agent was mailed at Grand Central and it was written in a penciled print-script. Cash was enclosed in the envelope. The passengers were to be booked as Mr. and Mrs. Fabian Deeming. I've got a man watching the post box mentioned as the return address. There's an envelope in the box right now for Fabian Deeming and from the travel agent. It hasn't been claimed, yet, but when it is, we'll have Deeming by the neck."

## CHAPTER XII

### *On Tanko's Trail*



GOING out of Jonathan Marvin's apartment, I was an entirely different person than when I had entered it. Reversing the suit I had worn in the identity of Dr. Stacey, I was now clad in sage green Shetland. My rather heavy mustache was gone and in its stead I wore a Van Dyke beard and a mouse-tailed mustache. Additional pommade gave my eyebrows an upward curl at their outer extremity. In Marvin's medicine cabinet I found cotton and adhesive tape and with this made a bulky

dressing for an imaginary wound on my left cheek. Dr. Stacey's Oxford glasses I put away.

Why all this precaution? Nothing explains it except that curious premonition that something had gone haywire and that Tanko might have had the X-ray eyes to pierce my disguise.

Next, what had Elmer Tanko been doing in the building across from Owens' office? Nothing could keep me from trying to find an answer to that one, so I taxied back to Thirty-Fourth street, entered the building across from the Starret, went immediately to the building superintendent.

The superintendent was an accommodating man somewhere in his fifties. He regarded my bandaged face with only casual interest and I began at once to get what information I could out of him. I said I was looking for a friend of mine.

"A tall man," I said, "deeply tanned, with shrewd dark eyes, a knife scar on his chin. A man with a nose that is both thin and hooked."

"Mr. Avery?" the superintendent questioned.

I nodded, hoping that his Mr. Avery was my Elmer Tanko.

"Mr. Avery rented an office on the fifth floor," the superintendent told me. "A queer duck. Not very talkative."

I laughed. "That's Avery, all right. Close as a clam. Mind telling me the number of his office?"

"Number five-twenty," the superintendent said.

"Avery is queer," I went on, "until you get to know him. He knows a lot of queer people, too. Tell me, have any of his friends visited him recently?"

The building superintendent said he couldn't be sure they were friends or not, but he had noted a couple of men who had visited "Mr. Avery's" office. One, he had noted particularly, had a glass eye. The other man was squat and neckless, and not the sort of man you'd like to meet up a dark alley.

I laughed again.

"Avery," I commented, "knows the worst people. He writes about them. I guess I'll run up and see him."

"Go right ahead," said the superintendent. "Do you happen to know when Mr. Avery will move in his office equipment?"

**I** DIDN'T know. I supposed, though, that all the office equipment Mr. Avery needed was a silenced revolver and a few rounds of ammunition.

"Probably something is holding him up," the superintendent speculated. "He's had his phone connected for two weeks. And he visits his office quite frequently. I hope you find him in."

Fervently, I echoed the superintendent's wish, but mentally added that it would be nice if I found Avery before he found me.

I took an elevator up to the fifth floor, found the door of five-twenty locked. It's a pretty lucky thing that the Ghost has enlisted on the side of law and order, however, for he knows a bit about getting into places where he is not wanted. A skeleton key, smudged with lamp black and inserted in the lock, gave me the exact position of the tumblers. Some manipulation with a piece of strong wire, and the lock was picked.

I went into a clean, barren room, where late afternoon sun streamed through a window. I went to the window and there found the only piece of "office equipment" that the place contained besides the telephone—a pair of French field glasses in a worn leather case.

The window faced the Starret building, and looking out of it I could see the gold lettering on the window of Taylor Owens' office. I borrowed the field glasses, brought them into focus. Through the window, I could clearly see that Taylor Owens was occupied. He had his right arm about the blonde Miss Rice's shoulders. And the blonde

Miss Rice was crying into a handkerchief large enough to belong to Owens himself. Probably she had committed the crime of filing her nails when she should have been filing reports, bringing down the insurance man's wrath and subsequently his forgiveness.

"Reach for the ceiling, mister!"

The order in a low-pitched voice came from behind me. I turned slowly, the field glasses in my hands. Three feet this side of the door stood a man. He was squat as a toad. His head grew from hunched but powerful shoulders and the only indication of a neck that he had was a narrow collar which seemed to include his heavy chin.

His right hand dwarfed the proportions of the black automatic he held, but I couldn't say that it reduced the potential danger to me in any way.

"Friend of Mr. Avery?" I asked, as pleasantly as you could ask anybody who looked like something off a branch of the toad family tree.

"I said reach, didn't I? Put'em way up or I'll drill you, wise guy. We don't exactly give snoops the glad hand when they come in here."

**T**HE field glasses in my right hand, my left hand started slowly upward, the left elbow out from the body. Naturally, my suit coat gaped on the left side, but something else happened, too. A black silk pouch, well known to magicians and attached to the left side of the lining of my coat and also to the top of my pants, opened, ready to receive anything I cared to vanish, from a palming coin to a small goldfish bowl.

A flick of my right wrist, and I threw the field glasses into the pouch. Hardly had I felt the jerk which signified that the glasses had disappeared, than the fingers of my right hand flicked downward to nip the knife in my right sleeve.

All this was accomplished in less time than it would take you to wink an eye, and my gaze had not left the

squat man's face. To him, it must have appeared as though a pair of field glasses changed into a knife. It was disconcerting, a bit bewildering to him. He squeezed the trigger of his gun instinctively and I still think the noise of the shot startled him more than it did me.

Anyway, he was running backwards to the door when he fired. I heard the whine of the bullet, but didn't feel the impact of lead smashing bone.

I let go with the knife in that fumbling moment when the squat man was trying to get through the door. I'd have pinned his left hand to the door except for the fact that his hand and the knife moved simultaneously and not in the right directions to meet. He went through the door and I was after him. A second to jerk the knife out of the wood work where it quivered like a living thing, a second to get out my own gun; and then I was in the hall, running after the squat man who was fronted with the hopelessness of an empty elevator shaft.

But the squat man had got out of places in a hurry before. I called on him to stop as he darted around a corner in the hall, going toward the stairway. He didn't stop, and I fired at his stumpy legs. But when Ned Standish said that George Chance wasn't the world's best marksman, he hadn't exaggerated much. My shot was a clean miss and I had to go flat against a doorway as the toad-like man tried a shot from around the corner.

Other office doors on the floor were popping open. People were coming out in the hall, complicating matters for me, but not for the squat man who threw his lead without any particular discrimination, and then plunged for the stairway. I followed. The guy was worth nailing. Any friend of Elmer Tanko was worth nailing. But I had to get him alive. Inside his fat head might not be too efficient a think tank, but it might contain the answer to half a dozen riddles that had popped up in

the past couple of hours.

**H**OW the man's short, thick legs ever got him down the stairs as fast as they did, I don't know. And at every turn in the landing, he would try a shot at me. Between us we made a lot of gun noise and did very little else until the squat man reached the landing between the second and third floor. Then, as he turned after trying a shot at me, he saw a cop coming up the stairs toward him, gun drawn.

He was blocked out. He tried to go over the banister for a short cut to the floor some twenty feet below. The cop had him covered, was shouting his warning. The squat man tried a shot at the cop, the cop retaliated, and when the squat man went over the banister, it was head first.

Somewhere below, a woman screamed. Men pelted along the corridor. The cop who had shot the squat man turned around, went down the steps to the hall below. When I got there, there was a knot of people standing around the spot where the squat man evidently lay. I heard somebody say the man's neck was broken. Then I slipped out the front door of the building, avoiding the crowd and the copper's questions.

More than the squat man's neck had been broken. An important link in the mystery chain had been broken as well.

CHAPTER XIII

*I Play the Danger Game*



**K**EN VICKERS had ordered a good dinner in the little private alcove off the main dining room of Charles' Restaurant, but Dr. Stacey was not there. The premonition that the Dr. Stacey identity was unhealthy for me persisted, and I

turned up as a chesty, red-haired, entirely fictitious Detective - Sergeant Hammill, who, according to Commissioner Standish, was in charge of the Van Sickle suicide mystery.

Ken Vickers, his blond skin almost transparently clean, shook hands with me, asked Ned Standish where Dr. Stacey was. Ned alibied the missing "doctor," and we were both introduced to Theo Quinn, the man who now owned all the Van Sickle manufacturing interests.

Theo Quinn, sober, was entirely the reverse of the fat, bald men whom I had seen taking an impromptu bath in the wash room of the Hotel Cronner Sky Room the night of the Van Sickle tragedy. He was grave, slow-speaking, though not entirely courteous toward Standish and me. It seemed that he had the not unusual conception that the police department is an inefficient, tax-eating octopus paralyzed in at least seven of its tentacles.

Taylor Owens was there.

"No real reason why I should be here," he said to me, plastering at the countable hairs that crossed his cranium. "All this business of crime and corruption is way over my head. But inasmuch as it's the insurance company I represent that is standing Vickers' expenses, I thought I might as well take advantage of the free meal.

"I'm sorry I won't be able to linger over the coffee. Eat and run. I'm on an entertainment committee for this Union of Civic Clubs benefit party given tonight. Got to be there. Got George Chance the magician to donate part of the show. He's clever."

Owens then told me about visiting George Chance's house, about how George Chance had vanished a match right under his nose, and then explained the trick to me, its author, as a "simple thing anybody could do with a piece of elastic."

I smiled inwardly, and had to discount my own skill by agreeing that a piece of elastic was probably back of

the match-vanish illusion.

After dinner, we pushed back from the table and Ken Vickers discharged a fire-cracker volley of words at Theo Quinn.

"About Leonard Van Sickle, Mr. Quinn—you're intimately acquainted with his financial resources. How come he hit the financial skids?"

Theo Quinn pondered, savoring his cigar.

"Purely a matter of bad luck. Leonard Van Sickle was the most careful man I've ever known. Spent too much time fussing over minor details. But he was very astute in business."

**T**AYLOR OWENS scraped a soggy heel of tobacco from his stumpy pipe and filled the pot bowl from a striped tobacco pouch. He borrowed a match from me, and I could scarcely resist vanishing it before his pipe was going again.

"Was Van Sickle resentful of you when you took over his business?" Vickers shot at Quinn.

The fat man mused again.

"Not any more than could be expected. The merger was more in the nature of a foreclosure for debts long due." Quinn's baby-smooth forehead crinkled a little. "Is this absolutely necessary, Mr. Vickers?"

"Quite," Vickers said. He got half way to his feet, one of those surprising moves born of unrestrainable physical energy. "And Van Sickle retained absolutely no hold on what had formerly been his property—nothing that would have made it easier for you if Van Sickle had been out of the way?"

It was a tactless question. Theo Quinn stood up. He eyed us all frigidly.

"This is something I should have expected," he snapped. "It is also something I will not tolerate—an insinuation that I might have something to do with Van Sickle's death. Gentlemen, I am afraid my time is too valuable to be spent in the character of the

wicked witch in a fairy tale compounded by the police. Goodnight."

He walked out on us. Vickers saw he had pulled a boner. He tried to alter our opinion of him by ordering after-dinner cordials."

"None for me, thanks," Taylor Owens said. "Maybe a bottle of beer. Braumier, if they've got it."

It was while we were drinking that I saw the man with the glass eye. He came into the restaurant, disregarded the table designated by the headwaiter, came to a small table not far from the door of our alcove.

Now there must be thousands of men in New York who wear counterfeit eyes. But this man had a certain furtive attitude that often marks the bum and the criminal alike. Also, I was conscious of the fact that he was paying us a lot of attention. I remembered what the building superintendent had told me about the glass-eyed friend of the killer, Elmer Tanko.

Was Glass-Eye looking for Dr. Stacey, whom premonition warned me had been marked by Elmer Tanko's gun-sight eyes?

"Tell me, Vickers," Ned Standish said, "just who benefited from Van Sickle's death besides Mrs. Kurtzner to whom Van Sickle addressed his suicide note."

"A protege of Van Sickle's—a woman named Mrs. E. L. Long." Vickers took out a notebook and revealed Mrs. Long's Hoboken address.

Standish and I made a note of it.

"I delivered the company's checks in person to both Mrs. Kurtzner and Mrs. Long. Mrs. Long ought to appreciate it. The house she lives in is a rat's nest."

"**A**NOTHER thing," I put in, "what about this man Jonathan Marvin, who did the Dutch today? Is he insured with your company?"

"Yes. To the tune of three hundred grand."

Standish fiddled with the thin stem

of his half-filled wine glass.

"The Marvin case is damned confusing. In his suicide note, he mentioned gambling on the market. We've checked with every stock broker in town, and no one ever heard of Marvin. He was working as secretary for a Mr. Arnold Smock over in Brooklyn. Smock's an eccentric who raises pigeons. He just moved into a fancy house he's rented, seems to have had a little money. But when we told him about Marvin, showed him the suicide letter Marvin had written, Smock phoned his bank, discovered that they had never received three hundred thousand which he had sent Marvin to deposit some before."

"You mean," Taylor Owens gasped, "this Smock person sent his secretary with three hundred thousand dollars in cash? Incredible!"

"But true," Standish insisted, "according to what Smock says. And we found Marvin's insurance policies and the beneficiary had been recently changed to Arnold Smock, in an effort on the part of Marvin to clear up his name. It's all damned mid-Victorian and unconvincing. If a man has so little conscience as to embezzle that amount of money, why commit suicide for the sole purpose of paying it back?"

"I'm going to instruct the company to withhold Smock's check until further investigation," Vickers said decisively.

Standish remembered my instructions and advised Vickers against do-

ing that, giving my reasons. Vickers agreed that they were sound.

I was still watching the man with the glass eye. Whenever I'd glance at him, he'd be looking our way. I reached into my pocket and speculatively fingered what I had there—something I had brought especially for the purpose—the Oxford glasses that characterized Dr. Stacey.

Again that disconcerting premonition of danger came over me. Had the man with the counterfeit eye been sent there by Tanko to eliminate Dr. Stacey? If he had, I felt certain that in spite of the putty nose I was wearing, in spite of the red toupee, if I were to put Oxford glasses astride my nose, Glass-Eye's interest in me would receive a powerful boost.

And I was determined to find out. It was just a little bit like a man who suspects he is dying of an incurable disease and wants the truth from his physician. I wondered a little if I wasn't scheduled to die of an acute case of Oxford glasses.

I got up and moved to the door of the alcove. No one was in the same line with me and the glass-eyed man. My right hand was within inches of the gimmick-holder that held my automatic. If Glass-Eye thought he could get to his shoulder holster before I could get to my gun, he had the privilege of trying.

I raised my left hand to my coat pocket and took out the Oxford glasses.

*{Turn page}*

## WOMEN KNOW WHY THIS FREE OFFER WORKS!

FREE SHAVING CREAM SAMPLE? WHAT'S THE IDEA?  
WELL, WHY NOT? YOU'RE ALWAYS GROUING ABOUT HOW SHAVING HURTS YOUR FACE. —THIS LISTERINE SHAVING CREAM MIGHT BE THE ANSWER.

HONEY, YOU'RE A GENIUS! THIS CREAM'S THE NUTS!! MY FACE FEELS LIKE A MILLION —SMOOTH AND COOL AS A BABY'S. —GUESS I KNOW HOW YOU'VE WON —IT'S A LAMBERT PRODUCT.

BILL TELLS HIS FRIENDS  
I'M TELLING YOU! —YOU CAN'T BEAT LISTERINE SHAVING CREAM! —SAVES CASH TOO — ONE 35¢ TUBE LASTS THREE MONTHS. —LISTERINE, EH? —UNDERSTAND THEY MAKE A SWEET BRUSHLESS CREAM TOO.

**20 SHAVES FREE**

Lambert Pharmaceutical Co., Dept. 118, St. Louis, Mo. Please send me free and postpaid your large sample tube of  Listerine Shaving Cream;  Listerine Brushless Cream. (Check whichever is desired.)



Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

## CHAPTER XIV

*The Truth—But Not All*

ALTHOUGH it was on my nose that I placed the Oxford glasses, I might also say that the glasses struck the furtive man at the lonely table directly between the eyes. His mouth was open, a forkful of food six inches from it, but there was a perceptible pause before he conveyed his fork the rest of the way. And immediately, he looked away from me and away from the alcove where we had eaten. Up to now, he had been watching Ken Vickers\* party closely. After the appearance of the Oxford glasses he studiously avoided looking our direction.

I was a marked man, but I couldn't reproach my sixth sense for not warning me. I went over to Vickers and shook his hand, told him I'd have to be going. I said good-bye to Ned Standish and Taylor Owens.

As I left the alcove, I slipped a mirror ring over the middle finger of my left hand, turning the mirror setting inward. A mirror ring has its uses in magic and in detection. With it I can see what goes on behind me and at the same time appear to be ironing worried wrinkles out of my forehead. I knew, then, as I passed the one-eyed man's table, that he was prepared to tail me.

At Charles' Restaurant, there's a private dining room reached by a little hall to the left of the main dining room. The place is used chiefly by luncheon clubs, and is seldom occupied at night. It wasn't in use tonight. I entered it, unobserved except by Glass-Eye.

Inside, the place was dark except for what light filtered in through windows which opened on a little driveway for delivery trucks at the side of the building. In what light there was, I could

make out tables draped with white cloth. Beside the door was a hat tree which I carried to the opposite side of one of the draped tables.

I stripped off my coat, used a table cloth from another table to add bulk to the shoulders, hung the coat on the clothes tree, putting my hat on top of it. Anyone entering the room would have thought there was a man standing behind that table, his legs hidden by the table itself.

From a large flat pocket in the lining of my trousers, I took out a flat pack of black silk. Folding the silk is no easy job, but unfolding it can be done with a flourish. Unfolded, it becomes a black domino suit with a mask-hood which will cover me from head to ankle. In the darkness the black domino is as good as the legendary Invisible Cloak.

In my black robe, with black rubber gloves on my hands, I waited for the glass-eyed man. Fingers of my right hand were about the handle of my knife, but the blade of the knife was pointing upwards.

Evidently as soon as he found an opportunity to slip to the private room without being observed by any of the patrons or waiters, the glass-eyed man pushed open the door. I saw the glint of a gun. I saw him look right and left, as though he was prepared to find me hiding behind the door. And then he saw the impromptu dummy I had rigged up behind the table.

I got a big laugh out of watching him pussy-foot toward the dummy. And then I closed in on him quickly. My left hand slapped across his mouth to gag him with the clammy palm of my rubber-gloved hand. My right let him have the butt of the knife handle back of the ear. He went limp in my arms and I let him slide down to the floor.

I got out of the black robe and gloves, wadded them up, and, after I had put on my coat, stuffed the robe up under my coat front. This gave me

a little paunch, but to fold the robe and return it to its original pocket would have taken longer than to stuff a magician's production cabinet with twenty silk handkerchiefs.

I carried Glass-Eye to the nearest window opening on the truck drive, eased the window up, lifted him over the sill. He dropped like a sack of bones on the pavement. I followed, stooped, got his left arm across my shoulder, and made for the street. Out on the street I pulled a ventriloquist act, dug a drunk song from Tin Pan Alley's junk heap of memories, made the unconscious man appear to sing. I got a cab right away.

When I got in with Glass-Eye, ventriloquism made Glass-Eye say in a mushy voice:

"Where we goin', pal?"

And I replied: "We're headed for bed, Johnny." Maybe I should have said my "dummy" Charley.

Out of the cab half a block from the Ghost's haunted rectory, I lugged Glass-Eye the rest of the way, let myself in through the back door of the rectory, went down to the basement. Joe Harper was sitting on the back of his neck, his heels cocked up on the coffee table, asleep.

I stretched Glass-Eye out on the floor and when I looked around, Joe Harper was awake and watching me, although he had not altered his position in the least.

He looked at me and shook his head.

"Haven't you got your roles a little mixed, Ghost? What's the idea of wearing Dr. Stacey's glasses?"

I indicated the glass-eyed man on the floor.

"This guy was sent to Charles' Restaurant by our pal Tanko to bump off a man who wore Oxford glasses—Dr. Stacey, specifically, but to this one-eyed gent, just a man wearing Oxford cheaters. There wasn't anybody in the party with that kind of glasses on, so I obliged."

The man on the floor groaned, moved

slightly. I told Joe Harper he'd better go into the next room because the glass-eyed man was coming around. Joe helped himself to several cigarettes from my humidor and went into the adjoining room.

I knelt down and frisked my captive. He had dropped his gun when I knocked him out. There was nothing important in his pockets. I went to a small cabinet that stood at one side of the room, took from it a hypodermic syringe and a bottle of scopolamine, or truth serum. My friend Dr. Demarest would have laughed at my technique, but as soon as the glass-eyed man became conscious, I tested his heart and finding it okay gave him a shot of the drug.

**T**HE drug works differently on different people, but mostly the first effect is something like a stroke of apoplexy. That's how it was with Glass-Eye, and that's why it was necessary for me to test his heart first, for I didn't want to kill him.

He turned purple, had a slight convulsion, and when he had relaxed a little, his one good eye stared up at the ceiling and was almost as glassy as its counterfeit mate. I knew his conscious mind was subdued. I spoke to him in a gentle voice.

"What's your name?"

"Thomas Ivor," he answered hoarsely.

"Tonight you were sent to Charles' restaurant. You had a gun. What were you going to do there?"

"Stick up a gent. He had on glasses with a black ribbon. Nose pinching glasses. He wasn't there at first and then he was."

"What were you supposed to do with the man?" I asked.

"Stick him up. Avery said he had a little curly-cue of wire in his pocket. I was to get it and kill the man."

I drew a long breath.

"What was the curly-cue of wire? What was it for?"

"Don't know."

"What was the man you call Avery going to do with it?\*"

"Don't know."

"Did the curley-cue belong to Avery?"

"Don't know. I wanted it. Avery isn't his real name. His real name is Tanko. He's some hot rod."

"You work for Tanko?"

"Yes. He the boss."

"Who's Tanko's boss?"

There was a long pause. I repeated the question.

"A man," came the answer.

"What man?"

"Don't know."

"What does he look like?"

"Never saw him. He just telephones and Tanko talks to him."

"Do you know what kind of a game Tanko and the boss are playing?"

"They're after money. Big dough."

"Whose dough?"

"Don't know. I just do what I'm told. I'm a good guy to have. I do what I'm told."

Before the man could come out of his trance, I sealed his eyes shut with tape and taped his lips. I called Joe Harper into the room.

"As soon as this guy can navigate, get handcuffs out of my drawer and lock him to you. Get one of my cars, take him over to the other side of town, handcuff him to a police call box. Telephone Commissioner Standish and tell him where to have his cops pick the man up."

**J**OE nodded. "Okay. Say, can that guy hear what we're saying now?"

"He'll forget as soon as he's out from under the scopolamine. Why?"

"Nothing much. I got a couple of phone calls here while I was waiting for you to come back. Glenn Saunders called up. He just wanted you to wish him luck with his performance at the benefit party."

"He doesn't need luck," I said. "He's using my best tricks." \*

Just about now, I reflected, Glenn Saunders would be performing as George Chajtice at the party. Taylor Owens would be informing who ever would listen that all the tricks were accomplished with elastic.

"Somebody else called up. A man. He said he wanted to speak to Dr. Stacey. He wouldn't leave his number."

I wondered if the ad I had inserted had brought results already.

"And I didn't find Hugo Wayne," Joe said.

"He may have lammed out of town."

"Not Hugo. Too smart. He knows this town as well as I do and it's the easiest place in the world to lose yourself. Look how long Lepke stayed around until he gave himself up to the G-men. I'll get Wayne yet."

"After you get through tying Glass-Eye to a call box, how would you like to take a run over to Hoboken and find out what you can about a Mrs. E. L. Long. She's the lady who gets the other half of Van Sickle's half million dollar life insurance."

Joe agreed to this and I gave him the address Ken Vickers had mentioned. Our friend with the glass-eye showed signs of coming out from under the influence of the drug and Joe Harper got the handcuffs and took him out.

I was alone in the Ghost's haunted rectory. The *brrr* of the phone brought me out of my chair. I picked it up.

"Dr. Stacey?" a man's voice asked.

"Yes," I said.

"This is Dr. Chalmers, a dentist. I saw your ad in tonight's paper. I'd like that hundred dollars."

"You can give me information regarding the extraction of Van Sickle's teeth?" I asked.

"I certainly can."

"Can you identify the teeth? Can you give me a brief description of them?"

"I can. They were good teeth. There was one pretty bad hole in one of them, but it was filled."

"Which tooth was filled?"

"An eye tooth, I believe," went on the voice.

"Why did you do the extraction?"

"Van Sickle wanted his teeth out."

"All right. Meet me in an hour at my apartment on Amsterdam Avenue.

**I** HUNG up. I did not believe this Dr. Chalmers was a dentist. Dentists did not say "hole" when they meant "cavity." Nor did they, when talking to, either a medical or a dental colleague, call a "canine" by its common name of "eye tooth."

I had a pretty good hunch that Dr. Chalmers had a thin, hawk-like nose, close-set dark eyes, tanned cheeks, a knife scar on his chin, and that his real name was Elmer Tanko.

Sometimes, when you know the location of a trap and about what to expect, you will risk walking into it. But what I expected and what I found weren't the same thing.

## CHAPTER XV

### *Death Across My Door sill*



**T**HE logical next step was to call up Merry White at the Cronner. Or rather, I called "Miss Miestest" which was Merry's idea of a good alias. She told me she would run down to a pay station and call me back—she didn't trust hotel switchboard operators.

I smoked a cigarette half down before she called.

"How's everything?" I asked.

"Oh, swell. Tim's right here in the phone booth protecting me," Merry laughed. "He looks so cute with a lollipop in his mouth."

"Cut it out, frail!" cried Tim.

"Find anything out about Mrs. Kurtzner?" I asked.

"Oh, sure. Her husband died of something wrong with his gall bladder. She has her hair done at Maurice's. She likes children, especially little boys like Tim—"

"About the money she realized from Van Sickle's death."

"Oh, yes. I went with her down to the bank to get the insurance company check cashed," Merry said. "I make friends quick."

"Pretty crazy set-up, eh, Merry?"

"Pretty crazy insurance company."

"They're acting on our advice."

"Honey, I never saw so much money in all my life."

"So Lucretia goes to the bank with a quarter of a million dollar check," I said, "the bank cashes it, and she takes the cash—just like that. This is quite a case, Merry."

"And she goes back to her hotel carrying all that cash," Merry said.

"She had guards, all right," I said grimly, "only you didn't see them. They watched her plenty. You do the same. Lucretia is up to something. She's by no means the pure white lily she so skillfully pretends to be. She's in the mob somewhere. If so, somebody will come after that money. If anybody comes, give them a lot of room, you understand? But if possible, find out what they look like and get in touch with me or Standish immediately. Got that?"

She had it.

I called a taxi company and ordered a cab to meet me on a corner two blocks away, altered my makeup to the extent of removing the red wig and remodeling the putty on my nose, locked up the rectory and went for my cab.

I gave the driver the address of the furnished apartment I had rented but had never seen, settled back in the seat and removed from my pocket the steel wire spiral that Tanko took so much interest in. I carefully transferred it to a secret compartment in my cigarette case.

**M**Y cigarette case is a double purpose affair, for holding cigarettes and also for serving the purpose of a magician's card box. In other words, it has a false bottom, undetectable unless you know the secret. The flat spiral of wire was safe beneath the false bottom.

As I rolled along I tried to figure out by what means Tanko had discovered that the man known as Dr. Stacey had possession of the wire spiral. There was only one possible explanation—Tanko knew that Dr. Stacey and the Ghost were one.

From the window of his office he might have watched me, as Dr. Stacey, prowling around in Taylor Owens' office. But all that proved was that Dr. Stacey—well, it simply proved that Dr. Stacey was in Owens' office.

No matter where I started, it always came out at that unsatisfactory conclusion. Unless Tanko had Owens' wires tapped and had heard Dr. Stacey impersonating Owens over the telephone, while knowing that Owens was elsewhere. And even then the tie-up with the Ghost would not have been definite.

I figured that the tapping of a single telephone leading off the trunk line that served a fruinding the size of the Starret was impossible without the special aid of the telephone company. And that was absurd.

And then something else hit me between the eyes—the idea that the blonde Miss Rice was in league with Tanko! When I had sent her from the office on the pretext of finding Taylor Owens, she might have tiptoed back to the office door, listened to my telephone impersonation of Owens, and informed Tanko. That was the most logical explanation of all. I mentally added Miss Rice to my list of people who ought to be watched.

The apartment I had rented on Amsterdam wasn't particularly fancy, I noted, as soon as my cab pulled up. I paid the driver, and let him go. Then

I walked around the four story apartment building, saw that there was a fire escape that might prove a convenient exit, returned to the front door, went in, pressed the bell button marked "Janitor."

When the janitor appeared, I told him I was the new tenant and asked him for the keys.

"Sure, sure," he said, groping in his overall pockets. "I'll show you to the place myself. Good thing you wasn't here today, Mister. They'd have pestered the daylight's out of you."

"Who?" I asked.

"Oh, enterprisin' people from the neighborhood shopping district. A new family moves in, they all get out and try to get you to use this milk, an' that cleaner, or the other bakery."

"Just give me the keys," I said. "I'll find the place myself. You needn't bother."

"No bother at all," he said.

**B**UT I couldn't risk taking the janitor into anything that might include hot rods like Tanko and his men, so I gave the janitor a buck tip *not* to show me the apartment, went off up the stairs with him gaping behind me.

I found Apartment B6 at the end of the second floor corridor. What the janitor had said was true enough. Shopkeepers from all over the neighborhood had been here to solicit the patronage of Dr. Stacey, for I could see their advertisements and hand bills sticking under the edge of the door.

My eyes caught sight of a square white cardboard down on the floor—something that stood apart from the other litter. On the square of card board was a large black skull and crossbones. Beneath this death's head were the two words:

SURE DEATH!

My gun out, I gave the door a push with my knee and dropped to a crouch to pick up the death's head card. And then hell broke loose.

## CHAPTER XVI

*Tangled Threads*

RUDDY flash like a bolt of lightning, a stunning explosion, the scream of shot, and instinctively I dropped from a crouch to a position flat on my belly. I rolled to the left. Echoes of the blast died. An interval of silence, and then the confused babble of voices of occupants of other apartments. Doors opened and closed, footsteps thudded on the floor, a door in the corridor behind me opened and a woman screamed:

"Someone's been killed!"

I sprang to my feet. The woman in the corridor behind me screamed again, ran back into her room and slammed her door. I gripped my gun and stepped across the door sill and into the dark. My hand found the light switch and flipped it. The tiny living room blazed with light.

There on a straight-backed chair a few feet from the door, I saw my would-be murderer—a shotgun, tilted so that its charge would rip into a tall man's heart and lungs. The gun was tied to the chair and a net work of string leading from the trigger, through a staple, and across the door made this as simple and effective a murder machine as I had even seen.

I turned to the door. People were standing in the hall way.

"No cause for alarm, folks," I said in a calm voice. "Accidental discharge of a shotgun. Sorry to disturb you."

The woman who had screamed put her hands on her hips and glared at me.

"Sorry to disturb, are you! Blow up half the building, scare a person out of a year's growth, and you're sorry to disturb!"

I looked down the hall and could see the damage the spreading scatter of shot had done to plastering and wood work. But even so, the indignant woman had exaggerated a little.

"We'll not have people like you for neighbors," a pompous little man said. "No sir. Anybody that don't know when a gun is loaded isn't safe anywhere outside of an asylum."

I stooped, picked up the death's head card, closed the door in the pompous man's face. He didn't need to worry. I wouldn't be his neighbor any longer than I had to.

In the bright light of the living room that had come so close to being a dying room, I examined the death's head card. On turning it over, I read in printed letters;

YES! SURE DEATH TO MOTHS IF YOU SEND YOUR GARMENTS TO BURTAMAN'S, THE CLEANER WITH THE REPUTATION!"

And that may have something to do with the fact that George Chance, ever since then, always has his cleaning done at an establishment known as Burtaman's.

**B**Y this time, I had come to the conclusion that Elmer Tanko was a thorough-going individual. The set-gun had been arranged just in case Glass-Eye failed to polish me off. When I went to settle with the janitor for the damage done, I learned that about two hours before my arrival, the janitor's wife had unlocked the apartment for a man who claimed to be Dr. Stacey but who answered the description of Elmer Tanko.

As soon as I could get away from the janitor, I went back to the Ghost's rectory.

In the basement room, I found no less a personage than Medical Examiner Robert Demarest, his sleepy, heavy-lidded eyes watching the frost form on the outside of a tall glass he held in his hand. When I went in,

he lifted the glass to his lips, took a slow drink, licked his lips. I went through the business of getting putty and makeup off my face.

"How's ghosting, George?" Demarest asked.

I told him ghosting was okay and how was my liquor. My liquor, he said, tasted like embalming fluid, but maybe that was because he'd had a hard day's work in the morgue. I had a drink with the doctor, neither of us saying much. Demarest is a queer egg, but I usually enjoy his secret visits to the hideout.

I had to tell him all that had happened. His only comment was that I was a swell magician. On his way from the morgue that night, he had dropped in on the Union of Civic Clubs' benefit.

"This George Chance," he said, "is pretty good stuff."

"Thanks," I said, knowing that he referred to Glenn Saunders, my double.

"What's-his-name Owens was master of ceremonies at the party," Demarest said. "If I had a nose like his I'd never get up on a stage. I left before the party was over. I ought to go get some sleep, but this damned suicide epidemic is driving me nuts. Aren't you getting anywhere?"

I said I didn't know. I went over to a small writing table, took out a piece of paper, began doing a bit of pencil-thinking. I doodled, but all my pencil could draw was a lot of little curly-cues like that spiral of wire I thought was an essential clue to the case. Then I wrote down some names.

**H**UGO WAYNE, who was linked with bonds belonging to Fabian Deeming. Wayne was missing and Fabian Deeming was an unknown quantity entirely.

Then there was Taylor Owens' beautiful secretary, Miss Rice—was she hooked up with Elmer Tanko? And the red-haired Kurtzner woman—a

woman who had a suitcase full of money she wouldn't have had if tragedy had not come to Leonard Van Sickle.

I added Arnold Smock to the list. He was to get a nice piece of change, apparently owed him, because of Jonathan Marvin's death. Who was Smock, anyway? An eccentric who raised pigeons. I drew a not very good sketch of a pigeon on the paper while I was thinking. I got an idea.

"Listen, Bob," I said.

Demarest's sleepy-looking eyelids flickered a little, indicating that he was all attention even if he appeared to be half man and half cadaver.

"Have you heard Standish say what kind of pigeons Arnold Smock raises?"

"I never heard of Arnold Smock."

"Well," I said, "he has a flock of pigeons, I hear. Sometime tomorrow, he's going to cash a check from Marvin's life insurance. If he's the brains of this mob, maybe he'll just keep the money. If he's just a tool, he'll try to get it to the head man, won't he? And the cops will be watching him, he'll know. Bob, that's where the pigeons fit in, if pigeons fit in at all."

"You mean carrier pigeons?"

"Yes. A flock of them could carry a lot of money in large bills."

"And should that be so?"

"It must be looked into," I said. "The Department will put an aeroplane onto that angle, Smock's pigeon roost will be watched, the watchers will be in communication with the Department, and the Department will contact the plane by shortwave."

I then added the name of Mrs. E. L. Long of Hoboken to my list. She netted a small fortune by Van Sickle's death, too, and her relationship with him was even more vague than that of Mrs. Kurtzner.

Lastly, I put down an X that stood for the dentist who had pulled Van Sickle's teeth.

Lighting a cigar, I settled back in silence to think. Demarest's heavy eyelids finally closed all the way. Like

most doctors, he had learned to sleep in a chair. I hadn't. I went over to the davenport and lay down without removing my clothes. I must have made a good picture of a dead-tired man at a dead-end.

And at exactly four o'clock in the morning, I was awakened by someone coming slowly down the basement steps, dragging one foot behind the other. I sat up, half blinded by the light to see Joe Harper stagger in the room, his hair matted with blood.

"God!" he said hoarsely, "somebody get me a drink!"

Slowly his legs crumpled under him.

CHAPTER XVII

*The Lispering Man*



**J**OE was out cold. I got him across my shoulder like a sack of meal and earned him to the couch on which I had been lying.

Demarest was awake. He came over, looked at Joe,

grunted. He revealed a gash in the forehead.

"Hot water," Demarest said to me. "And don't worry, he'll be okay."

I went to get a basin of water and some towels. On my way back from the Ghost's basement bathroom, I got a bottle of whiskey. I thought that

would do more toward putting new blood in Joe's veins than anything else.

Demarest bathed Joe's wound. It wasn't deep. Swabbing the cut with iodine brought him around. He looked at me.

"Hi, Geoiqe."

He looked at Demarest.

"Well, I always did expect to wake up in a morgue sometime. Get this vulture out of here, George."

"Hold still, parasite," Demarest said sourly. "I don't know why I bother with you."

I poured Joe a drink and he took it neat. He tried to light a cigarette, but his hands were too shaky and the cigarette wobbled in his lips. I helped him get lighted. Then he leaned back on the couch. No use trying to prod information out of him. When he was ready to speak, when he got his thoughts in order, he'd tell us what had happened, but not until then. He dragged in deep lungfulls of smoke, let ashes fall where they would. Then he told us his story . . .

As soon as he had left the Ghost's rectory with Glass-Eye, he drove south for a dozen blocks or so, taking a circuitous course in order to prevent the man with the glass eye from ever doubling back on the trail and finding the Ghost's hideout. At a police call-box on East Forty-First Strfcet near Madison, he had left glass-@ye—securely manacled to the call box. Then he

[Tarn page]

**GIANT THRIFT PACK**  
**12 for 25¢**  
 REGULAR PACK  
**4 for 10¢**

**STAR**  
 WORLD'S  
 LARGEST-SELLING  
 SINGLE EDGE BLADE  
 FOR GEM AND  
 EVER-READY RAZORS

had gone to a telephone and called Commissioner Standish. He failed to find Standish at Headquarters or at his home, but finally found him at Charles' restaurant where, evidently, he was still in discussion with Ken Vickers.

That done, Joe called a taxi, drove over to Hoboken Ferry, got out, crossed the river and ran up another taxi bill finding the house of Mrs. E. L. Long.

It wasn't much of a house—one story frame with mid-Victorian filigree trim on porch and eaves. The place needed painting and repairing. Blinds were down, but through the lightning-like cracks in the green shade cloth, Joe could see streaks of light.

Joe went to the door and knocked. The door was opened immediately by a woman. She looked about forty years old and she had tried to do something about it in the way of an elaborate paint job. Her hair was straw-blond and rolled up on patent metal curlers. She had on a man's bathrobe which didn't entirely conceal the fact that her figure was still okay.

**T**HROUGH the half open door, she eyed Joe Harper. Joe had his hat pulled well down over his face.

"You from the boss?" she asked in a brassy voice.

"Sure," Joe said.

She opened the door and let him in to a living room which conformed pretty well with the general scheme of things in the Long House. The furniture was gaudy and worn like Mrs. Long's face and the scroll work that decorated the outside of the house. And like Mrs. Long's bathrobe, the place was dirty. Joe found a chair that was covered with wildly colored tapestry and sat down.

"Haven't you forgot something?" Mrs. Long said as she took a cigarette for herself and passed the box to Joe.

Joe didn't know what it was he had forgot. Not the woman's face. The

more he studied it, the more sure he was that he had seen it before.

"Wasn't you in the second row of the chorus in the burleycue business once?" he asked. "Isn't your name Patsy Moore?"

"Maybe so," she said. "Haven't you forgot something?"

Joe got it then. He was supposed to have some sort of a letter or countersign to show the woman to prove he was from "the boss." He didn't have it. He didn't know what it was he was supposed to have.

The woman came up to him, stood squarely in front of him, eyed him closely. Pretty soon she said: "Sa-ay!" drawing it way out. And then she pulled a nicked revolver from the pocket of her bathrobe and turned it on Joe.

"Push your hat up a bit, sonny boy," she said.

Joe pushed his hat on the back of his head. He knew what was coming. If this woman was Patsy Moore, he had got her a job or two back in the days when he was acting as a booking agent. She'd been quite a song and dance girl until she'd put on too much weight.

"I'll be damned!" she said. "The ten-percenter! The gyp artist! Joey Harper in person! Listen, you two-bit mug, what the devil do you want?"

She moved in close with the gun. Joe Harper looked at her coolly. His right hand went up to remove the cigarette from his thin lips, then suddenly struck out at her gun. He slapped the muzzle to one side. Patsy made the gun speak, or maybe it spoke out of turn, but Joe didn't get the slug; the chair-back got it.

Joe came to his feet, got the woman's gun hand and lifted it so the gun-muzzle pointed at the ceiling. He wedged a finger in between the back of the trigger and the guard.

She squeezed the trigger, but mostly squeezed his finger. She spat in his face. He took that because this was a

lady. He doubled her gun arm around her back in a hammer-lock because even that was fair in love and war and this wasn't love. She dropped the gun and cursed him. He shoved her back and picked up the gun.



"OW," he said, "another squawk out of you and I'll let you have it."

There was no way of telling that he wouldn't have let her have it, so she didn't squawk. She just watched him with those large, tired-looking eyes of hers.

He thrust the gun into her back. "Ladies first, always," he said.

He gun-shoved her through the house and found that all the rooms in the place were just like the living room except that they were dirtier. In the bedroom, under the unmade bed, he found a Gladstone bag which he made the woman open. She said she didn't have the key to the bag, but he told her to get it or he'd look for it. She produced the key from her bosom, and giving Joe a lot of new names, opened the Gladstone.

It was stuffed with money—the dough she had cashed in on with the check from Van Sickles' life insurance.

Joe looked at the dough. "Listen, Patsy, there's a lot of mazuma in that bag," he said. "Maybe we could split it and go somewhere."

Patsy shook her head.

"It's mighty generous of me," Joe said. "I could take the whole works myself."

She laughed at that.

"You couldn't get a block from this house with the dough. Not half a block. And I don't cross up anybody. It ain't much of a life, but it's the only one I got."

"This boss of yours—who is he?" Joe asked.

Her rouged lips came together as though they were going to stay that way. She paled a little. Joe kicked the Gladstone closed and shoved it

under the bed.

"Let's look in here and see what we find," he said, meaning the bathroom.

He shoved her ahead of him into the bathroom. On the wash basin were a lot of cosmetic jars. The porcelain was dirty and stained with rouge. Everything was there on the ledge around the basin except what Joe was looking for. But he found it in the bathroom closet—a pair of shears and a safety razor.

There was just one way to third degree a woman. If you could hurt her vanity you could get somewhere. He took Patsy back into the living room.

"Sit down," he ordered.

"Wh-what are you going to do?" she stammered.

And then she got a grip on her courage and unleashed a vocabulary that would have withered a saint but had no effect whatever on Joe Harper. When she got through, Joe came in close with the shears and razor.

"Murder me, damn you!" she said. "See where that gets you!"

Joe shook his head.

"I guess a woman can take more physical pain than a man. I'm not going to hurt you."

He lifted the shears to Patsy's straw blonde hair and snipped off a lock of it. He dangled the hair in front of her eyes.

"See?"

**S**HE looked at the hair and her eyes widened.

"I'm going to cut it all off," he told her, "as close down as the scissors will take it. Then I'm going to shave you bald. Get a picture of what you'll look like, Patsy. You'll want to bury yourself alive. You won't want to live. You'll look terrible with a bald head."

"You—you wouldn't dare!" she defied him.

Joe shrugged, raised the shears, snipped off another piece and dropped it into her lap. Then he raised the shears a little and snipped at the air

a few times. And Patsy broke. She fell down on her knees and started to cry.

Joe stood back from her, the shears in his hand. His black eyes squinted through the fog of cigarette smoke.

"Well," he said, "you going to answer a few questions?"

"Wha-what do you want to know?"

"Who's your boss," Joe asked. "That's all I want to know. It's just a personal matter. You give and I'll go away. You don't give and I'll make your head look like a cue ball."

"I don't know! Don't ask me that, Joe. Because I don't know. I've never seen him. I don't know anything about this racket. All I know is that I get a grand for collecting the money. Listen, if there was a way of blowing with the dough, wouldn't I do it? The boss would kill me. You can't get away from him. Nobody can."

Joe sighed. "This hurts me almost as bad as it does you, babe."

And he advanced with the shears.

"No!" she screamed. "Don't touch me. Don't do that,\*"

Tears swelled into her eyes again. And maybe it was just the tears, but anyway Joe thought she was telling the truth.

"Listen," she said, "you take a thousand bucks out of that suitcase. Go get ten C notes. I was to get a thousand bucks, and I'll tell the boss I took my thousand bucks out. You get a grand. Can you use the dough?"

Joe laughed.

"Anytime, babe."

But he didn't take the money. He took the woman into the bedroom and instead of taking out the Gladstone, he went to the closet

Her clothes were hanging there—not many clothes, but gaudy stuff. And on the same rod was a man's suit. The man's suit was good stuff—good cloth, tailor made. Joe thought he's seen the suit somewhere before. It was a little too conservative, in his mind, but it was an unusual cut. There was some-

thing about the breast pocket of the coat, something funny.

Feeling in the pocket, he found there was a shallow, narrow pocket sewed into the lining. In the pocket were half a dozen kitchen matches. He searched the side pockets of the coat. They were empty except for a business card. He took the card out, couldn't read it because of the dim light in the closet. He held the card in his left hand and scuffed a match on his heel.

Behind him, somebody hisped:

*"Thick up your handth!"*

Joe dropped the match, pivoted on the balls of his feet, lashed out with his fist. The blow didn't connect. The man who had come up from behind moved fast to slice the air with his gun and bring the muzzle down on Joe's forehead.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### *Death at My Elbow*



PERCING the scintillating explosion of lights in front of his eyes, Joe glimpsed the man's face. And what he saw was more of a shock than the blow on the head though the blow brought him down to his knees. And there was another man in the room—somebody with a black cloth tied over his face. Nothing about the man's face stuck with Joe except the eyes. The eyes were somehow relentless, stabbing, and infinitely cruel. "Finish him off!" the masked man said.

The gun raised again above Joe's head. Joe fell backward from his kneeling position, legs doubled under him. Then he remembered that Patsy Moore's revolver was still in his possession, the pearl butt of it sticking out of the slit of his pants pocket. He pulled the gun, fired, got the man

through the arm somewhere because the man dropped his gun, ducked to retrieve it with his left hand.

Joe got to his feet. Somewhere sounded the chill skirl of a police whistle. On the other side of the room, through the red haze that swirled over Joe's eyes, Joe saw the man with the mask kick out a window with the heel of his shoe. The masked man had the Gladstone in his hand. He tossed it ahead of him and was going through the window when Joe turned the revolver on him and let loose a pair of shots. He didn't know whether it was a hit or a miss. The masked man was gone.

Joe reeled across the room. The other man, who had surprised Joe in the closet, had picked up his gun and started to follow the masked man through the window. Patsy—Joe didn't know where Patsy was. He didn't care. Because coming through the door of the living room was a cop.

Joe swung to the right, blundered through the kitchen door. The cop warned and then fired high over Joe's head. Joe went through the back door, running. He didn't know exactly where he was running. He didn't know how Jong he could keep those leaden legs working up and down. Somewhere in the backyard he fell over an ash can, didn't think he could get up. But he got up just the same and kept running. . . .

**"A**ND that," Joe Harper concluded, "is about all there is to it. I made a fizz out of the whole business, maybe. But here's this."

He reached into his pocket and brought out a crumpled piece of pasteboard—a calling card. He handed it to me.

Demarest and I had listened closely to Joe's narrative. When he had mentioned the match pocket in the coat of the suit he found in the closet, Demarest and I had exchanged significant glances. I looked now at the calling

card. In conservative engraving was the name:

*MR. LEONARD VAN SICKLE*

**I**HANDED the card to the medical examiner. Demarest grunted.

"Why didn't you nail something besides a card?" he complained.

Joe flicked his cigarette into an ash tray.

"Listen, cadaver, did you ever have a corpse come up to you and sock you on the head with a gun? Maybe you don't believe it, but a dead man can sure hit hard."

"You're nuts," Demarest said.

"What Joe is trying to tell you," I said quietly, "is that Leonard Van Sickle is living over in Hoboken with a Patsy Moore and is going under the name of E. L. Long."

"Nuts!" Demarest said. "Did the man you say was Van Sickle have the scar of an appendectomy on his side?"

Joe sneered.

"Sure. After he socked me, I told him to take off his pants and tell me about his operation! What do you think this was—a reception after an opening night?"

"Joe, did you see the man's face clearly?" I asked.

"George," Joe groaned, "you don't see clear with more lights dancing before your eyes than a top-billed star gets. But I saw and heard enough. Sure, those suicides are murders, but I don't think Van Sickle was the guy who was murdered. The racket's been worked before. Van Sickle collected half of his life insurance himself. He'll have to split with the mob. The other half went to the Kurtzner woman who is probably strictly legit. Right, George?"

"Can't say," I answered. "It may look that way but it doesn't necessarily have to be that way. For one thing, I can't see Leonard Van Sickle living in a rat's nest in Hoboken with an ex-follies dame. That's a false note in this

queer drama of human folly and greed. There have been other false notes. I expect that the cooing of a certain Mr. Arnold Smock's pigeons will add to the discord."

**T**HE following Tuesday, Mr. Arnold Smock received his check from the Boston Insurance Company.

He was about as insignificant a person as I have ever seen. Though his chin and forehead both receded and his nose was prominent, you couldn't say there was anything sharp about his face.

My first impression was that the master brain behind the suicide epidemic did not lurk behind the dull blue eyes of Arnold Smock. He did not impress me as a man who could manage money, with or without the assistance of Jonathan Marvin, who had claimed to be Smock's secretary.

Still, first impressions are not necessarily correct.

I watched Arnold Smock cash his check. I was the whiskered ancient who stood behind him in the line at the branch bank in Brooklyn where he cashed it. But other eyes besides mine were on Arnold Smock. Ken Vickers, the insurance company detective, was there. And there was one of New York's most capable plainclothesmen on his trail.

And all that day, Arnold Smock and his house were watched by the police. In addition, up against the lowering gray ceiling of sky, a small red plane droned—a man-made bird set to watch pigeons.

It was no holiday for the cops. Hoboken police, cooperating with their New York colleagues, were on the lookout for the lispng man Joe Harper had sworn was Leonard Van Sickle, and inasmuch as Joe also claimed to have wounded the man, hopes of a speedy capture ran high. Newspapers had the story and captioned it:

LEONARD VAN SICKLE BELIEVED  
ALIVE

I read the story later in the Ghost's rectory. It was the usual police hand-out, colored by a reporter's imagination. It made good reading. Then there was something else that struck my eye in an adjoining column:

MYSTERY MAN IN VAN SICKLE  
CASE CAPTURED

It was about John Fabian Deeming. Not much about him. Mr. Deeming was a salesman for an Iowa farm machinery manufacturer who had registered at a New York hotel, and that was about all that there was to it except that the mystery man emphatically denied all knowledge of the affair and had threatened suit for false arrest.

**I**TELEPHONED Commissioner Standish.

"What about Deeming?" I asked.

"Oh, that." Ned Standish sounded slightly annoyed. "The man's clean. He's just not the same Fabian Deeming. Got more alibis than a suburban estate has mortgages. We let him go, poured the old oil on his troubled waters. This Fabian Deeming business looks like a dead end. But we got a lead on Van Sickle."

"I thought you thought Van Sickle was dead," I said.

"Listen," Standish sighed, "I stopped thinking. There's no percentage in it. But the Hoboken police have picked up the trail of a man and a woman. The man was toothless, answered in a superficial way to Van Sickle's description. And the lady with him sounded like Patsy Moore. The man's carrying a slug in his arm. He had a run-in with a doctor last night when the doctor refused to treat his wound. The doc was lucky to get off with his life."

And that was that until at about three o'clock that afternoon, there was an "accident" at Arnold Smock's house. All of his pigeons got loose at once.

The cop in the plane saw Smock's frantic and ineffectual attempts to cor-

ral his birds. They seemed to fly everywhere at once and it was utterly impossible to follow them because of lowering clouds, a fog that rolled in from the sea, and the fact that the birds didn't make off in a body as expected.

This last fact did not contcadict my theory of carrier pigeons but rather confirmed it. The answer was that some were carriers and some were not. Those who were not just flew. Those who were—if my theory was correct—Sew toward a destination, bearing bills of large denominations. But the aeroplane could noit determine which group to follow, and percentage dictated that it would follow the wrong one.

It had been a clever move, but we were prepared with counter-moves. Standish's detectives searched Arnold Smock's house immediately, over his strong protest, and did it legally, for they had a warrant ready. But the money he had brought to the house in cash was gone. Smock claimed he had hidden it and refused to tell where it was. He was arrested.

Two hours of questioning couldn't break him down. He contended that the money was legally his as the beneficiary of a life insurance policy, that as such he could do with it what he pleased, and furthermore did not have to account for what he did with it to anybody.

**L**EGALLY he was right. By four o'clock, it looked very much as though the police and the Ghost were stalemated. I did not think so, however. There was still Joe Harper to reckon with, and he had promised me he'd catch up with Hugo Wayne. At half past four the break came. Joe Harper phoned me.

"I've got Hugo Wayne," he said. "I found him in a Tenth Avenue hideout. I softened him up with a few well chosen punches and he came across. Who do you think Fabian Deeming is?"

"Leonard Van Sickle," I said

promptly.

There was a whistle on the other end of the wire.

"George, what does a guy have to do to surprise you?" Joe said. "Listen to the payoff. A few days before Van Sickle's suicide, apparent ojr otherwise, Van Sickle called up Hugo Wayne, He wanted Hugo Wayne to transfer the title of the shares of stock Van Sickle held in the Deistel International Corporation, the stock you hijacked from Hugo Wayne. Van Sickle got hold of Wayne, made him swear to keep this dark. Van Sickle had Wayne register the stock in the name of Fabian Deeming.

"The stock," Joe went on, "was practically worthless at the time. But evidently Van Sickle wanted to hang on to it. He must have been riding a hunch. Hugo Wayne didn't know why, but he wormed it out of Van Sickle that Van Sickle was going to do a disappearing act. Van Sickle bought, or had Hugo buy for him, two passages to Europe, one for Van Sickle and one for Mrs. Kurtzner. The transaction was carried on through the mail and the tickets were to be sent to a post office box."

"I know all that," I said. "Why did Wayne swipe the stock?"

"Because Van Sickle's hunch came true. The stock boomed. Hugo Wayne was on his way to the Hotel Cronner to tell Van Sickle about the stock jump, when Van Sickle, apparently, jumped out of his window and killed himself. Do I have to go on, George?"

"No," I said. "Knowing that Fabian Deeming didn't really exist except in the mmd of Van Sickle, who had seen the name somewhere, stored it up in his suboonsconscious, and then resurrected it when he needed an alias, and believing that Van Sickle was dead, Hugo Wayne went to Van Sickle's suite right after the homicide boys were through. Wayne knocked out the cop who was on guard, opened Van Sickle's safe, took out the cer-

tificates. Wayne's idea was to put himself in the place of the fictitious Fabian Deeming and cash in on the stock. While he was about it, he snatched that bag which he thought contained jewelry but which, as we know so well, turned out to be a set of human teeth. So much for Deeming. What about Mrs. Kurtzner?"

"Well, what about her? I think she's legit. Wayne met her at Van Sickle's before. According to him, Van Sickle was in love with her. I think the two ~~but~~ tickets to Europe prove Van Sickle's intentions. The whole thing boils down to this—Leonard Van Sickle is alive, and just to guess, I think he's the brains behind this whole damned business!"

## CHAPTER XIX

### *The Missing Quarter Million*



SICKLE, in Joe Harper's mind, had undergone as many transformations as a chameleon. From Leonard Van Sickle, he had changed to a man named Long who was living with Patsy Moore in Hoboken. And from Long he had changed to Fabian Deeming who would have liked to elope with Mrs. Lucretia Kurtzner. A very fickle person, according to Joe.

The door of the rectory opened and I heard the sharp clack of a woman's high heels on the steps. It couldn't have been anybody but Merry and I went to meet her.

I lifted her to Hp level, and pressed her warm mouth to mine. This time her lips were less clinging. She wriggled from my grasp, darted across the room, bounced into a chair. Her breath coming in shallow gasps and color had gone from her cheeks. I crossed the room to her.

"What's the matter?" I asked.

"Plenty," she panted. "Oh, I've run ten blocks if I've run one. They've got Tiny Tim. Tim and I followed them in a taxi. They stopped up the street at a liquor store. Tim got into the trunk of the car, so now they've got him. He shouldn't have done that."

Her fists clenched tightly and she bit her lower lip.

"I could spenk Tim!"

She bounded out of the chair, grasped my coat lapels in her hands.

"We've got to do something. And I don't know where to start."

"At the beginning, Merry," I told her. "Up to know, you haven't told me anything. *Who's got Tim?*"

"I don't know!"

She pulled off her hat and tossed it across the room. Her hand brushed up the dark hair above her brow.

"We were watching Mrs. Kurtzner, like you said," she began. "Ever since Mrs. Kurtzner cashed that quarter of a million dollar check and carried the money away in a suit case, we've been watching her. Tim drilled a hole through the panel of the door and one or the other of us have been watching Lulu's door, which is just across the hall, most of the time. You said somebody would come for the money. Somebody did. This evening at dinner time."

"Who?" I asked.

"Don't know." Merry shook her brown curls vigorously. "A couple of real tough looking men. They knocked at the door and Mrs. Kurtzner let them in without a Word. Tim and I watched through our hole in the door. And when Mrs. Kurtzner's door opened again, we could see Mrs. Kurtzner sitting in her living room, taped to a chair, her mouth taped shut with that sticky black tape.

"The two men came out and both of them were carrying square bundles of newspaper, tied up tight. It was the money, as sure as anything. It's going to look as though Mrs. Kurtzner

had been robbed, only we know it wasn't that. It couldn't have been. She didn't look scared of the two men she let in. There wasn't any noise that you could think was caused by a struggle, because Tim slipped out of our room and went over to listen at Mrs. Kurtzner's door."

"Right," I said. "Mrs. Kurtzner will claim she was robbed. She always keeps her skirts clean. What happened after that?"

**T**IM and I followed the men from the hotel. It was exciting. Tim was good. He stopped in front of a candy store and yelled for me to buy him some candy, just like a kid. The two tough men up ahead couldn't have known what we were up to. Pretty soon, they got into a parked car. Tim and I grabbed a taxi and followed them. They took their time. About eight blocks from here—yea know that liquor store with the purple and green sign that—"

"Yes," I interrupted hastily.

"Well, the two of them went in and bought a bottle of whiskey. They carried their newspaper packages with them. Tim and I were in the cab parked not far behind them. Tim got out and ran to their car. I tried to stop him and he turned on me in his excitement and called me names that didn't sound very little-boyish. The taxi driver decided that Tim wasn't a kid; He wanted to know what this was all about. He thought it was something crooked. He was sort of a cute cab driver with a cleft chin and a little black mustache, except for which he would have looked something like Richard Greene—"

"Yes. Let's have the rest."

Merry shrugged her shoulders, lifted her hands in a helpless gesture.

"That's all. Tim got into the trunk of the two tough men's car while I was arguing with the cab driver. The tough men came but of the store and drove away. The cab driver said he wouldn't have any part in the whole

business. Gosh, but you'd have thought he was virtuous! He wanted to be paid off. I tried to pay him off, but when I opened my purse I was sort of reminded that I'd lost my last dime to Tim Terry in a dice game we played to kill time in the hotel. The driver said we'd call it square if I gave him a kiss."

I scowled.

"FU let you guess whether I gave the kiss or ran straight here," Merry snapped at me. "What do we do now? Get Mrs. Kurtzner and put her on the grid?"

"Put her on what?" I asked.

"The grid. Grid, griddle, grill—what's the difference, and who cares so long as Lulu Kurtzner cares enough to come across with the truth? That redhead lady is no angel. She's mixed up in this. The robbery was faked and I don't know how we're going to prove it otherwise. But we've got to do something. Tim's smart. He can take care of himself as long as it doesn't come to a fight. But when I think what one of those tough men could do to him, I turn cold all over."

She shivered a little and I put my arm around her. The ringing of the phone startled us both and drew our nerves taut.

I reached for it, heard Tim's voice coming out of the receiver.

"It's Tim," I whispered to Merry and listened again to the nidget's shrill voice.

"Listen," Tim piped, "I've got them! That is, I know Where they've staying. You'd better come. I'm down on Oliver—"

**A**ND that was the end of it. Just a crash in my ear and then the monotonous buzz of the disconnected phone. I dropped the instrument back on its oradle. Merry roust have read anxiety in my eyes. She asked me what the matter was and I told her the line had gone dead, and started for the room in which the Ghost keeps his

particular kind of wardrobe.

"Maybe he'll call back," Merry said.

Her optimism is always on hand when she thinks I need a lift. In the dressing room, I put on the outfit I had worn that morning—a dark suit that needed pressing, gray whiskers, bushy false eyebrows, a gray wig capped with a slouch hat.

I took a furled umbrella which has certain special properties not allotted to the usual run of umbrellas, and as I walked from the room my shoulders drooped with the weight of an incredible number of fictitious years.

Tim was down on Oliver—did that mean Oliver Street, not far from Chinatown?

## CHAPTER XX

### *The House of Dead Birds*



**D**ISGUISED in the character of the whiskered old gentleman with the umbrella, I rent a garage in the neighborhood where I keep a dilapidated looking sedan, the dented hood of which hides an eight cylinder modern power plant. Merry White and I hurried to this garage and got into the car. The garage is back of a small knit goods store which is deserted after five o'clock, and the secluded court in which it is built makes it ideal for the secret comings and goings of the Ghost.

With Merry beside me, I drove down Madison and into Broadway, dropping as fast as traffic would permit into lower Manhattan, cut across the little Orient of Pell Street and came into Oliver Street.

I parked the car and we got out. I was an old, inoffensive man then, leaning on ray umbrella and partly on the arm of a girl who might have appeared

to be my granddaughter—something of a nuisance on the crowded sidewalks of the Ghetto. Any of the shops and dingy dwellings might have been a place where Tim Terry and disaster had met.

I think if it hadn't been for the dark-haired, dark-eyed kid we found playing on the curb, we wouldn't have found the place at all.

My pegging umbrella tip nearly spiked the boy's hand. He jerked it away and stood up, cuddling something up against his ragged shirt and looking at us with offended eyes.

"Watch who you're steppin' on, gran'pop!" he yelled at me.

I stopped, looked at him, asked him what he had in his hands. He said it was none of my business.

"It's a kitten," Merry said, smiling at the boy. "Isn't that what it is?"

"No. I ain't got a kitten," the boy said. "It's a bird, that's what it is?"

"Hold it tight," Merry said. "It'll fly away from you."

"It won't," the child said, warming a little toward Merry. He stroked the feathered form with his fingers. "It can't fly. It's dead."

I took a step forward. "Let me see the bird," I said.

The child backed into the gutter.

"I won't. You can't have it. It's mine. I found it and it's mine."

"Would you let me see it?" Merry asked sweetly.

She put out an appealing hand. The kid lifted one hand slightly and we could see that it was the body of a dead pigeon.

"Where did you get that?" I demanded.

The kid pointed across the street.

"Over there. That pet shop. There was lots of them in the trash this afternoon."

I looked across the street, saw a gloomy doorway and unlighted windows. I gave Merry's arm a tug and we made our way across the street. The place pointed out by the boy bore

a faded sign unilluminated except by the gray glow of the city night. The sign said PET SHOP, the words lettered on it with black paint.

**M**Y pulse picked up. Dead pigeons from a pet shop. Was this black little hole the destination of the carrier pigeons that Arnold Smock had released?

"Go get the car, Merry," I said to the girl. "Park across the street. Keep the motor running. This place needs a little looking into. Thanks to Tim, we've found it."

"Right!"

Her whisper was tense. Her eyes glowed excitedly. She released my arm and started back toward the place where we had left the car.

I went past the pet shop, entered the narrow walk between it and another equally dark building. If this was the destination of Arnold Smock's winged messengers, it seemed logical that the pigeons had been destroyed lest their cooing attract the attention of some cop who knew that pigeons had been the object of considerable worry from his superiors during the past few hours.

In the darkness along the side of the building, I moved faster than my apparent old age would have admitted. Windows in the wall were dark not because blinds were pulled but simply because there were no lights behind them. The uncomfortable thought struck me then that the place was as deserted as it seemed. Perhaps poor little Tim had been taken on one of those one way rides. His body would have been easy to conceal.

At the back of the house, the same darkness and silence. I approached steps leading up to the back door. Near the steps were several cages made of wood and heavy mesh wire and there were crates such as dogs and other animals might have been shipped in. My foot was on the bottom of the three steps when I heard the husky croak of rusty metal, saw the

door opening slowly inward. I dropped behind the pile of crates and cakes.

A man came out of the door, down the steps. Two feet from where I was hiding, he stopped, fumbled for a cigarette, put it between his lips, scuffed a match on the side of a match box. The flame, cupped between his hands, highlighted his face. He was narrow-eyed, heavy-jawed, flat-nosed. If this was one of the men Merry and Tim had seen going into Mrs. Kurtzner's suite, I didn't wonder that Merry had described him as tough.

I stood up slowly as the man turned his back toward me, let him take one step, then swung my umbrella. The innocent looking handle of the umbrella is loaded and it would have taken more than this man's dark felt hat to resist the skull-cracking force of that blow. It was something like hammering a nail into soft mud, the way he went down.

**I**BENT over the man. From a concealed ball dropped on the left side of my coat lining, I brought out one of those large red billiard balls a magician delights in manipulating. My right hand coat-sleeve gave up my knife which I used to pry his clenched teeth apart. I wedged the ball between his jaws and tied it in place with a handkerchief. I used a length of strong silk cord from my pocket to bind his hands and ankles.

Then I walked up the steps and to the back door.

The man had not locked it. I stepped inside.

Beneath the balls of my feet, a floorboard gave perceptibly. I stepped forward quickly, but not quick enough to prevent the loosened board from doing its work; for somewhere in the dark shop a bell tinkled. There was no other sound.

The place sroelled. The close-pressing darkness reeked with animal odors intermingled until each lost its distinction. I took out a tiny flash-

light, let its beam shine through its rice-grain sized lens. It was in some sort of back store room. At my right, a basement stairway yawned. On the left, more shipping crates were piled to the ceiling, some of them bearing the labels of well known pet foods. Ahead of me was another door.

I stepped to the door and pushed it open.

The small needle of light fell upon canary cages with their downy yellow occupants heedlessly sleeping. The beam passed on toward the dirty front windows.

A puppy barked shrilly, frightened from its nap. A green parrot pulled its head from beneath its wing and screamed at me.

**I** TURNED out my light. No other sound than that of the frightened puppy and the indignant green bird with the sharp eyes. The shop was empty.

I went back the way I had come in, flashed my light into the basement stairway, started down the steps. Somewhere in the dark ahead of me, an electric signal *brrred* like a rattler's warning.

No other sound.

I kept on going down the steps and came to a door that was standing part way open. I knew I could squeeze through without touching the panel. I stepped into the darkness, and the beast-odor of the place became almost overpowering.

I sensed movement behind me. Light blazed. I turned swiftly, glimpsed a man who was holding an electric torch. And at the same time the heavy, stagnant air above me stirred.

I ducked instinctively and something dropped over my head, shutting out the light. Someone who had waited **behind me had dropped a sack over my head.**

The sack had a draw string that tightened at my throat **with such**

stricturing strength I thought I knew what it was like to be hanged.

## CHAPTER XXI

### *The Master Mind*



**I** OR Tiny Tim Terry's sake, it was most important that these men did not discover I was anything but what I seemed I can say without bragging that I could have given the pair a little more trouble than I did when they tied me up. But I tried to match my struggles with my apparent age and so was comparatively submissive while they bound my hands and feet.

"Who is this old buzzard?" one of the men asked his companion in a harsh voice.

"Looks like Santa Claus to me," said the other. "Tie his umbrella up against his back. It'll stiffen him up so he can't wiggle out of the ropes. We'll save him until Tanko comes back with the boss. Some night's catch, ain't it—a midget and an old snoop like this. Don't hardly give a guy's muscles a chance to exercise."

I sighed. They were saving me for the boss. There was a pretty good chance, then, that they were also saving Tiny Tim. In complete darkness, with a cord about your throat half strangling you, any kind of wait is a long wait. I had no idea how long it took for Tanko to return with the boss. Just a lot longer than I liked.

The two men lingered in the room and I heard the clink of whiskey bottles on glass. I would have given a lot to feel a stiff slug of whiskey rasp down my throat.

Pretty soon, I heard the opening of a door. "Hi, Tanko," somebody said. "Good evening, boss."

"What have you there?" a muffled

voice asked the two thugs.

"Some damned old snoop," one of the men said.

"Take the bag off," said the muffled voice.

A man bent over me and the cord about my throat was loosened. I needed a long breath and took it. The bag was pulled from my head and I blinked at the light, groaned realistically, looked around.

Elmer Tanko's gaunt figure was lounging against one wall. The two men who had welcomed me at the door were standing beside me. Neither of them were impressively large, but they looked capable of killing for a dollar's worth of postage stamps.

The man who had been greeted as the boss stood over me. He wore a long, shapeless topcoat that concealed any characteristic lines his figure might have had. A hat was pulled well down over his eyes, and the lower half of his face was hidden by a black triangle of cloth. I couldn't see his eyes, but I was aware that they were studying me closely. I put a lot of hope in my own disguise.

"LEASE," I said in a quivering

voice, "let me get out of here. This is no way to treat an old man. I just came to buy a package of bird seed for my little yellow bird. I couldn't get in the front way so I went to the back door. I thought somebody must be at home because I saw a man coming out of the back door."

"That was Wilkie," one of the men said. "He had a date with a dame, boss, so he went out just a little while ago.

I didn't think Wilkie would be entirely acceptable to his dame after he got out of a crate that had been used to ship dogs in.

The boss spoke and I had to repress a jump. "Tho you were jutht after thome bird theed, were you?" he said.

The lispng man! To all appearances here was Leonard Van Sickle,

alive after Demarest, the best medical opinion in town, had pronounced him dead? Van Sickle, now called the boss! Joe Harper had heard that lisp in that house in Hoboken, and now I heard it here.

The boss thrust his gloved hands into his coat pockets and turned to the others.

"Got the money?"

"In those newspaper packages in the closet. We fixed up Lulu so it looked like robbery—"

"Thut up!" the lispng man cut in sharply.

The speaker blinked at the masked man.

"What the hell? What if the old bird does hear it? We're bumping him, ain't we?"

"No," said the boss. His lispng voice was mocking. "I do not believe in the wanton dehtstruction of human life."

Elmer Tanko laughed harshly.

"You're getting chicken hearted, chief."

"Lock the old man up," the boss said. "When you get through with the midget and get him to thpeak, you can give the old man a beating to help him learn not to thnoop."

"And the midget?"

"Perhaph you'd better kill him after he talkth," the lisper said.

Then he and Tanko went out together.

One of the men, the larger of my two captors, got hold of the ropes at my ankles and dragged me across the basement floor, into what proved to be a windowless room. He left me on the floor in clammy, stinking darkness, went out, closed and locked the door.

I felt pretty certain I knew why my life was to be spared after I had been given a beating. I was sorry, but I didn't think I could stay to endure any punishment at the hands of the two toughs. My first objective was to get Tiny Tim out of the jam into which he had fallen.

**T**HE umbrella roped to my spine made escape a little more difficult than it would have been otherwise. I couldn't bend my back a whole lot. Even so, I didn't think it was going to take me long to get out of the place. I didn't dare take long because I didn't know what kind of resistance Tiny Tim could put up against this pair of crooks. And once he talked, they wouldn't take long to kill him.

I opened my mouth wide, lips drawn way back from my teeth. I drew in air through my mouth, let it dry my teeth thoroughly. When my whole mouth felt as dry as a wad of cotton, I bent my head until it seemed my neck would snap.

My early days as a contortionist had been well spent. My teeth locked on the edge of the button at the top of my coat, pulied it off. The button held in my dried teeth, I brought my tied hands up to my mouth, inserted the edge of the button between the tightly drawn pieces of cord and left it there.

I closed my mouth, allowed saliva to collect, then turned over on my belly, hands up to my mouth again. I soaked the cords and button with saliva, drew my hands down toward my chest and waited for the moisture to soak through the thin coating of carbon that covered the button.

If the criminal world knew that the top button of the Ghost's coat is always made of metallic potassium it's likely that no one would have taken the trouble to bind my hands with cord. No sooner had the moisture soaked through the coating of the button than the potassium reacted with the water in the saliva, liberating hydrogen gas so rapidly that enough heat resulted to cause the hydrogen to burst into an intense flame. It's just a bit of chemical magic which was never precisely intended for the use to which I put it—it's a little hard on your hands. You get bUHNed a bit.

The cords burned through instantly and I dropped flat, smothering the

flame with my chest. The pain of the burn was less than you'd imagine because I had smothered the flame quickly. I immediately got my knife from my sleeve and cut myself loose from the ropes, but let the ropes drape across my chest and legs so that it appeared I was still tied. I moved to one side, got the umbrella in my hands.

I've said the umbrella has peculiar properties. The silk cover, unfurled and removed, reveals a white lining which is silk and unfolds to cover the black outside. The cloth is coated with a magnesium compound such as is used in magician's "flash paper." At a touch of flame, the doth bursts into a blaze of light and is almost instantaneously reduced to ashes.

The frame of the umbrella isn't exactly ordinary. The ribs are readily detachable and I took off all but two of them. The remaining two can be operated as usual by the sliding ring on the central rod. A length of silk thread is attached to this ring in such a manner that the ring can be slid up and down by the thread. This causes the two ribs to raise and lower.

**I**N ADDITION, a pencil-shaped cigarette lighter with automatic mechanism is attached to the central rod up near the tip. This is concealed, usually, by the cover. A second silk thread operates the lighter. Finger-rings tied to each of these threads enable me to operate them readily. The central rod of the frame is very ingenious, for it is made of telescoping sections of tubing painted dead black. The whole central rod can thus be expanded to the length of about twelve feet, forming what the fake spirit mediums call a "reaching rod." This is very convenient for making a ghost walk.

I draped the white silk cover, now expanded to the size of a small sheet, over the two ribs of the umbrella. A pull on one of the silk cords raises the ribs, causing the "ghost" to flap its silken wings as I've been told some

ghosts are in the habit of doing. Expanding the reaching rod, I could lie fiat on my back, apparently a helpless old man tied hand and *foot*, and make my ghost perform at a distance of twelve or more feet from me.

I lay there on the floor, listening to what went on in the next room. I could hear Tiny Tim's shrill voice above the voices of the two toughs. Tim was saying that his two captors could go to a warmer climate. He was denying emphatically that he was a police spy.

"Listen, yah little squirt," one of the men threatened, "how'd you like to have your arm twisted off, huh? When we said give, we meant give."

I thought it was time for the Ghost to intervene.

## CHAPTER XXII

### *Escape*



CERTAIN muscles in my throat drew tight. From my parted lips sounded the rollicking ghoul-ish laughter of the Ghost. At the same time I extended the umbrella - reaching - rod with the white

silk doth draped over the movable arms. Two fingers of my left hand were in the rings that controlled the silk threads that made the white silk put on its surprising performance.

In the room outside, there was an interval of silence. Then a man's hoarse voice asked:

"What was that?"

"Somebody laughing," came the answer.

"But where? The old man in there?"

"That wasn't an old man. That was—"

I didn't hear the rest because I gave out with more ghoul-ish laughter. In the next room, a man cursed and strode

to the door of my prison. He unlocked it, swung it wide. Light falling through the open door was sufficient to barely illuminate my prone figure, but the whiteness of the "spirit" I operated stood out clearly.

I made the spirit flap. The man in the door turned, saw the white thing that danced twelve feet from me. He jerked out a gun, fired a shot. The spirit soared toward him and the Ghost's laughter screamed.

The second man pushed through the door, took one look, cried out hoarsely. He too pulled a gun, tried a shot. I jerked the second thread which fired the cigarette lighter under the magnesium treated cloth. There was a blinding flash of light. The two men ducked their heads. And as my dancing spirit vanished in the blast of flame, I swept the reaching-rod across to the door and used it to slam the door shut behind them.

In the total darkness, the ventriloquism of the Ghost is his best weapon. The laughter echoed from every corner as I got to my feet, pulled my gun from its gimmick. The laughter drew fire from one of the crooks, but his shot struck the wall yards from the source of my laughter. Gun-flame targeted the man and I fired two quick shots and moved swiftly toward the door.

It was a break that at least one of my slugs struck the man. As Ned Standish always says, I'm not the world's best shot. I heard the man strike the floor. His companion beat me to the door, yanked it open. He twisted in the doorway and tried a panicky shot back into the room. He was nearly as lucky as I, for I felt the bullet jerk at my sleeve.

I didn't retaliate. The man was on the rim and I didn't think he'd stop in a hurry. What I wanted was to get to Tiny Tim and then have a little time to look around the pet shop in search of a clue.

I heard the man race up the steps, heard the door slam. And I went out

into the room where Tiny Tim Terry was tied to the top of a small table. He looked at me, his baby face screwed up into a knot.

"It's about time, Ghost. About time."

I took out my knife and cut him loose.

**A** QUICK search of the shop revealed nothing that could be construed as evidence. The man I had shot at—dead, one of my slugs through the center of his forehead—I picked Tith up—under his arm and carried him up the steps and out the front door of the shop. Across the street, Merry was waiting for us with the motor of the car running. We piled into the front seat with h&r and got going.

Merry looked at Iftm. The little man was Shaking all over with excitement, groping in his pocket for one of his enormous cigars.

"I got to quit smoking," he said, as he lighted up. "It's bad for my health. In fact, it pretty near ended my career. As soon as I got out of the trunk of the car, which those two mugs were riding in, I skipped across the street to call you, George. They must have glimmed me from the pet shop."

"I needed a smoke bad, so while I was calling you in the store across the street, I lighted a cigar. Pretty soon, the two mugs came in, put a gun on the proprietor, mobbed me in the phone booth, I'm sorry, George. I shouldn't have broken the rules like that."

"Sorry I haven't time to give you the bawling out you deserve for taking such chances," I said. "Let me off up here at the corner, Merry. I want to call the cops."

"You should have captured some of the men and put them on the grid. Or griddle or grill," Merry said to me.

I shook my head.

"They don't know who their chief is. He wouldn't wear a mask around them if they did. Besides, there's one of the gang tied up in a crate at the back of

the house. I'll have the police pick him up and let them do the grilling." I smiled down at Merry. "Or maybe it's griddle or grid."

It \was a funny thing, but Merry's "grid, griddle, grill," kept running through my head like the strain of a popular song.

I got out near a shabby lower east-side hotel and Merry and Tim went on with the car. From a booth in the hotel, I contacted Ned Standish and told him about the business at the Oliver Street pet shop.

"Yots'd better send some men to clean up **and** stop up the hole so the rats can't get back. Not that the brain behind this mob would ever think of using the same place again."

"I wish you'd come around where I could talk to you, Ghost," Standish said. "You see, we've picked up the lispng man. We got him on ice—in the morgue."

**W**HEN I stepped through the door of that gloomy building on the north side of Bellevue Hospital grounds, close to midnight, I was in my plain clothes sergeant's guise. I went directly to the room in the morgue which Medical Examiner Robert Demarest calls his own. Demarest himself admitted me, and I knew by his greeting that he was either alone or that only Standish was with him.

"How's ghosting?" he asked.

I stepped into the room and went over to shake hands with Standish. The commissioner looked a little grizzled about the chops. His hard gray eyes seemed to have sunk: farther back in his head. His black mustache looked a little ragged.

"Don't think you've got the brains of this outfit in your morgue, even if he does lisp,\* I said at once.

"Who said he lisped—the brains, I mean?" Standish asked.

"I said so," I informed him. "He was talking with me a couple of hours ago."

Standish plumped out his cheeks and let the air explode out of them.

"Then why in hell didn't you—" he stopped.

"Sorry, George," he said. "This thing is getting the old man down. I suppose if you could have brought Mr. Brains in with you, you would have."

I nodded. "I was hampered by a few yards of clothesline and too many people looking on. Too many guns, too."

I told them of what Merry and Tim had discovered about Mrs. Kurtzner and about the adventure at the pet shop.

"Get Mrs. Kurtzner and put her on the fire," Demarest suggested.

"You mean the grid, griddle, or grill," I said.

Demarest looked at me as though he thought I was crazy. I didn't bother to deny it.

"Mrs. Kurtzner," I said, "is perfectly clean. She's got that appearance, anyway. You can't do much about her if she says she was robbed, and I expect the robbery has been reported at headquarters by now. You can bet there was some pretty good evidence left behind to prove, in the eyes of the law, that she had been robbed. You couldn't get to first base with a case against her, and you know it."

"I'm not disputing that," Standish said. "Want to see our lispng man? He's the chap with whom your pal Joe Harper had a run-in over in Hoboken. His name's E. L. Long and he died resisting arrest. He left Hoboken and came over here, tried again to get medical attention and the doctor was smart enough to get word to the cops."

We went out into the refrigerator room and Demarest readily found the proper crypt and opened the door. He hauled the dead man out on the roller slab and I looked down into the face of the corpse. And I could see where Joe Harper, his head reeling from the gun barrel blow he had received, might have thought this man was Leonard Van Sickle, especially just after discov-

ering one of Van Sickle's suits in the closet of the Long house in Hoboken.

"It's too bad Long died," the commissioner said. "We might have got something out of hira about the identity of the man behind these suicides."

"W^EMAREST shoved the body back into its crypt and closed the door.

"I wonder if Long knew who his boss was?" he mused.

I shook my head. "Perhaps Tanko knows, because Tanko is the brain's strong-arm man. But so far as Long or Patsy Moore or Arnold Smock or any of the rest go, you'll find they don't know who their chief is."

We walked back to Demarest's office, and there pulled up chairs around the desk, had a drink, and lighted cigars. We did some summing-up.

"We're stalled," Ned Standish said tiredly. "We can't even establish murder."

"We can," Demarest disagreed. "We've got circumstantial evidence to prove that Van Sickle didn't intend to commit suicide. The stuff that the Ghost and Joe, Harper have dug up would indicate that Van Sickle, under the name of Fabian Deeming, was going to cash in on some stock and run off to Europe with the Kurtzner woman. On the Max Gerrich case, I'll admit we're stuck. There's nothing but that business of Latin-derivation words in his suicide note to indicate that he might have written it at someone's dictation. And the murder of Jonathan Marvin—" Demarest shrugged.

"I suggest concentration on the death of the lispng map," I said. "And I mean Leonard Van Sickle. We can prove *that* was murder."

Ned Standish wriggled in his chair, looked from Demarest to me. He was frowning.

"This may be an idiotic question, but have we decided that Van Sickle is dead?"

"Beyond a shadow of a doubt J" Dem-

arest snapped. "The man scraped up off the Sidewalk in front of the Cronner was Van Sickle. If George says the master mind lisp, why then there just has to be a third lispng mail somewhere."

"That'th the," I said, lispng, and Ned Standish darted a glance at me and opened his mouth slowly.

"I get it," he said.

"Anybody can lisp," I said. "The only really dumb play the chief criminal has made, he made tonight. He didn't investigate the old man with the umbrella thoroughly enough. I mean yours truly, of course. If he had killed me, I'd have gone into the big black elsewhere thinking that the murdererT was pretty smart. There's only one reason he put on that lispng act tonight. He read in the papers that Van Sickle was believed to be alive. He thought that if he lisped in my presence and then didn't kill me, I'd go out of the pet shop and tell the cops that the brains of the business was Leonard Van Sickle. Van Sickle is dead and I know who killed him."

**D**EMAREST raised one of his sleepy eyelids and glared at me.

"Would you mind being more specific?"

"Gladly. I've now got three points to go on. First of all, the murderer had to be a man who was in the Cronner Hotel the night Van Sickle was pushed out of the window. Our murderer *was* in the hotel that night.

"Second, the murderer left behind him a material clue of such importance that he sent Tanko back to the Van Sickle suite to get it."

"You mean that crazy little spiral of wire?" the commissioner asked.

"Yes. I think I know what that clue is and who it belongs to. The third point is in the nature of a question. Tanko knew me as the Ghost when I was wearing the disguise of Dr. Stacey. How did he know? Answer that one and you've got the whole thing in a

nutshell."

"It's in your nutshell, maybe," Standish said, "but I'm damned if it's in mine."

"I say I know who the guilty party is," I went on, "but I'm not announcing him because I haven't as yet got enough proof to stand up in court. And that's what you want."

"You might give us the killer's name anyway, just so we can write it in our diaries," Demarest said drily.

"Your list of suspects is as long as mine," I said. "Arnold Smock, Theo Quinn, Elmer Tanko, Lucretia Kurtzner, a blonde named Miss Rice, a private detective named Ken Vicke\*s, Taylor Owens, Hugo Wayne, Patsy Moore—"

"Oh, let it go," Demarest said.

"One of them fits the picture," I said. "And the killer's scheme is so perfect that if you pinched him he'd have an even chance of breaking Standish for false arrest. Worse, if you pinched him, there would be no guarantee that his murder-machine couldn't go right on functioning."

The phone on Demarest's desk rang. The medical examiner reached for it lazily and then passed the instrument to Standish. Apparently, it was Standish's secretary Hadley on the wire. We heard Standish say: "Okay, Hadley, you have him call me here at once. If he's not one of those cranks, I'll talk with him."

Standish hung up. A man by the name of Hurst had been trying to get hold of him. Hurst claimed to have an entirely new angle on the Van Sickle affair, according to Hadley. Hadley had checked on Huist, found that he was David John Hurst, who had once held a responsible position in Wall Street and was a man of considerable weight even today.

**M T E** HADN'T long to wait before the phone rang again. Standish answered, smothered the transmitter against his chest and whispered to us:

"It's Hurst."

The commissioner listened for a moment and then said that he would be right over. He hung up and turned to me.

"This Hurst chap says he's got the McCoy. He says he knows what kind of a scheme Van Sickle and Marvin were trapped in, because he's in the same sort of a trap himself. He says he can see through the scheme and will tell the whole business, point his fingers and name names. He's got a place out on West End Avenue, wants me to come out right away. I think this man is sincere. He sounds it Will you come along, George?"

"Of course," I said.

Demarest got up and reached for his hat.

"I might as well go too," he said gloomily. "If Hurst doesn't need the medical examiner now, he'll need one by the time we get there."

Demarest was a little bit wrong, but not much.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### *Masked Death*



for us.

"Mr. Hurst?" Standish inquired pleasantly.

The man nodded. "Come in, Commissioner."

We went into a nicely appointed living room and Standish introduced Demarest and me. I thought that Hurst turned a shade paler when he discovered that Demarest was the medical examiner. It must have been a lit-

tle bit like having an undertaker offer you his business card.

We made ourselves comfortable in chairs. Hurst, sitting very straight upon a stool, lighted his cigarette and held it awkwardly between his fingers.

"How much life insurance do you carry, Mr. Hurst?" I asked abruptly.

He looked at me, startled.

"Why—why, that's exactly what I called you here to talk about I carry two hundred thousand dollars worth. If I were to die tomorrow, the proceeds would be divided equally between my daughter and a charity organization—"

"Have you a daughter?" I cut in.

"I have. She lives in Chicago—"

"All right," I said. "I believe you have something extremely important to tell us. I perceive, however, that you are under the strain of a considerable fear, and so may tend more or less unconsciously to hold back certain things. Suppose, therefore, you let me give you my conception of the matter—in other words let me tell you what I imagine you were about to tell me, checking me where you find me wrong in any particular. That will make it easier for you. Agreed?"

"Agreed," said Hurst and he relaxed a little. "What is your conception of the matter?"

"It's an insurance swindle," I answered promptly. "You know it to be such, and so does your daughter who is to be part-beneficiary. The charity you speak of is simply a myth and you also know it to be such. It is simply the collector for the criminal who is behind the whole scheme. The idea is that the criminal who plans the hoax should collect half of the total insurance, and that you should collect the rest of it through your daughter who has agreed to the plan. Right so far?"

"Right" said Hurst, wetting his lips. "Go on."

"According to the criminals your death is to be faked. That is what they have told you. Your daughter will ool-

lect one hundred thousand dollars and pass it over to you. The criminals, through this fake charity, will collect the balance as payment for originating, devising and carrying through the scheme. Right so far?"

"Right," said Hurst.

**A**N EXCLAMATION broke from Standish. He was staring at Hurst curiously.

"I wouldn't think that anybody, much less a man of your obvious intelligence, would fall for a scheme like that," he said.

"You're wrong," Hurst said. "A lot of men would. A lot of men have stunted themselves all their lives, paying money into life insurance companies, and all the time wishing that they could enjoy the full face amount of their policies while still alive. That's why they'd fall for it, that's why the plan's a natural. Only"—he paused—"I didn't fall for it. I didn't because I saw through it, saw what was beneath it, hidden from the sight of those whom the criminal devisors of the scheme approached as prospects."

"What did you see?" I asked.

Hurst smiled a little sadly.

"I think you already know what I saw and don't need me to tell you. You seem to know so much, perhaps more than I do. But since you ask, I'll tell you:

"The idea was brought to me not by the criminals themselves but by a friend of mine, Stephen Perkins. *He* was completely sold on it and had readily agreed to fall in with the criminal scheme.

"I listened to Perkins. I was tempted. Then, all at once, I saw something in it that frightened me."

"You saw murder," I prompted.

"Yes," he said, almost in a whisper. His voice rose. "But I didn't think that what I saw was possible. Then came Leonard Van Sickle's death. The thought came back to me, and I felt certain that Van Sickle had been

sucked into a scheme from which he himself would never benefit."

"You thought in other words that Van Sickle was really and truly dead," I said.

"Yes," he answered.

At this point I asked Standish if this Stephen Perkins had turned up on the "suicide" list yet. He said "no."

"Why did you agree to the idea?" Demarest snapped at Hurst. "You say you're caught in the same trap, yet you suspected almost from the very beginning that the criminals were not going to be on the level with their 'clients.'"

"Van Sickle was a friend of mine," Hurst said. "So I told Perkins that I'd be glad to listen to the particulars of the proposition. A man by the name of Tanko came to me and we had a talk. I seemed to agree. Actually, I was just doing a bit of amateur detective work. I hope you believe me when I say that."

"Naturally, we do," I said. "We certainly don't think that a man in his right mind would enter a scheme like that just for the sake of making himself a candidate for murder. But I don't think you were very sensible—"

**I** BROKE off. Hurst had gotten to his feet. He had been sitting facing the door. The commissioner, Demarest and I were in chairs facing Hurst. Hurst's eyes stared glassily at the door. His mouth worked wordlessly. I got out of my chair, at the same time drawing my gun. I turned.

A masked man stood in the door, an automatic in his hand. Beside him was a masked hood of similar build to the one who had escaped me at the pet shop, and this one was nursing a tommy-gun.

Demarest on my left and the commissioner on my right, both stood up and raised their hands. The masked man said harshly: "Drop it," meaning my gun.

But I didn't. He thought I did, but I didn't. A snap of my right wrist and

I vanished my gun into the pouch attached to the left side of my coat.

"Aji Tight;" the masked man said. And that was a Signal to the man at the machine gun. As Tanko advanced toward me, the deadly chatter of the tommy-gun cut through the taut silence within the room. I saw Hurst curl up like the leaves of a sensitive plant, spin half around on his heels, hit the floor. I released my right-pocket gun down; onto the floor over to my left and to Demarest's feet. My knife appeared in my right hand as I rushed the masked man. His masked man's gun blazed, but my left hand had already jammed it upward, and I felt the hot flame from the muzzle across my face, drove my right hand forward to sink the knife blade into the masked man,

I never quite knew where my blade got him, because at that moment somebody shot out the light, it was Standish who did for the light thereby preventing a slaughter. Anyway I left my best knife in the masked man. And when the black-out came, the masked man slipped out of my grasp and opened up with his gun again.

He was going into retreat, marked by a blaze of gunfire to the door. I knew my shooting wouldn't stop him unless I was lucky. As for Demarest, I think he was somewhere behind a chair, popping shots at the man with the tommy-gun.

No sooner was the knife I had used on the masked man out of the grasp of my rifle than I retrieved the gun. I had vanished with the machine gun had a grudge against Ned because his tommy-gun was riddling every piece of furniture behind which a man could have hidden.

Then I saw Standish come out from behind a Japanese screen. He moved across a window and was dimly illuminated by the night glow for just a moment, his heavy jaw jutting as fiercely as the Police Positive his right hand carried. He waited for the masked man as that individual went through the door, drew machine gun fire, and flattened to crawl behind a davenport. And then I lost track of the commissioner and Demarest.

I went through the door after the masked killer. I saw him legging across the lawn toward a parked car. He tried a shot over his shoulder that came close, but I kept going.

**T**HE killer had a man at the wheel of his car and the motor was going. Almost as soon as he struck the running board, the car rocketed from the curb. I sprang into the police car and kicked at the starter. The Starter-motor whined. I leaped forward, watching through the windshield as the car

[Turn page]

# CLOTHESPIN NOSE



Cold make breathing difficult? Nose feel "clamped in a clothespin?" Put a Luden's in your mouth. As it dissolves it releases cool menthol vapor—which, with every breath, helps relieve clogged nasal passages, unclamp "clothespin nose!"



which carried the killer turned west at the corner. The starter-motor of the police car still whined. And I knew that was that. They had pulled a portion of the ignition cable before entering the Hurst house.

I had a pretty clear idea of the "what" and "why" of the tragedy so recently enacted. Hurst had been slated to die. It was that which had drawn Tanko—for I was sure it had been Tanko—to the Hurst home. Not our presence, for he had had no way of knowing that we would be there.

But, reaching the house, he had seen the police car. He had leaped to the quick and correct conclusion that Hurst was spilling the beans. He had seen only one course open to him—to kill! To kill quickly and thoroughly and unanimously, all of us!

Well, he had failed, except for poor Hurst who had been the victim of his own desire to play detective.

I went back to the house. There was no sound of gunfire—only the chatter of neighbors knocked from their sleep by the thunder of our warfare. Lights came on in the Hurst living room. I went through the open door.

The man with the machine gun still had his weapon. His arms were folded around it and his legs were drawn up under him. His head was twisted around so that I could see one side of it, and two fatal wounds showed.

Ned Standish was standing over the man, his smoking revolver in his hand. With all due apologies to his successors, I don't suppose New York ever had a police commissioner who was as thoroughly a cop as Ned Standish. The man could stand up under gunplay or physical punishment, always the same iron man, hitting hard, shooting with the same accuracy that had won him a medal when he had gone through his first police training.

Demarest was sitting on the arm of a chair, his chin in one hand.

"Some men," he said, "are born

crazy. Others get that way, meaning you, Ghost. You left a nice, gentlemanly profession like magic to play in a slaughter house."

I didn't say anything. All this reminded me of a game of chess. We were taking the criminals piece by piece, but the checkmate was still a good distance away.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### *Man About to Die*



"HAT now?" asked Standish.

We were both wondering if the criminals would have the colossal nerve to try to collect the insurance money made available to them after the wanton murder of David Hurst. I didn't think they would. Standish did.

"They'd have the nerve, only the insurance company won't pay," he said. "Yet they'd have a legal case if we couldn't establish a connection between them and Hurst's murders."

"True," I said. "It is an established judicial principle that no man may be permitted to profit by his own wrong. So we've got to pin the wrong where it belongs. The charity beneficiary is a fraud, of course, but the named beneficiary is probably the secretary of some charitable institution."

"Well, you can lay a bet," Standish said grimly, "that if the money is paid out, we'll grab the collector of it."

"Who won't know the name of the brains behind this business," I said.

I went to the rectory and there I found Joe Harper asleep on the couch. He woke up when I came in to tell me that a dentist by the name of MacKay had been calling for Dr. Stacey most of the evening. Joe had taken the telephone number. Could it be that the advertisement I had inserted, in an

effort to find the dentist who had pulled Van Sickle's teeth, was going to bring me something besides trouble? I telephoned MacKay at once.

The dentist explained that the reason he had not answered my ad earlier was that he hadn't seen it. He had been called out of town to attend a funeral. Looking over an accumulation of newspapers on his return, he had found the ad. Could he still earn the hundred dollars?

I told him that there would be a check for him in the mail tomorrow if he would answer my questions over the phone. Needless to say it would be a cashier's check to protect my anonymity. I did not need the information anymore, but I had inserted the ad, so it was a kind of promise I felt obligated to keep.

MacKay told me what I had already inferred—that Van Sickle had come to him voluntarily and had asked him to extract all his teeth. MacKay had argued against it, because the teeth were good, but he had needed the money and Van Sickle had been insistent.

Anyway, I now had enough material to reconstruct the crime of the murder of the lisping Leonard Van Sickle. I thought I could do fairly well with reconstruction of the other murders as well, though I would have to play on my imagination a little.

**M**Y next job was to visit Mr. Stephen Perkins, the man named by David Hurst as another prospective victim of the criminal's suicide-murder scheme.

At three o'clock in the morning, I found Stephen Perkins in the lower half of a Bronx two-family house, sleeping the sleep of the just. I was still wearing the disguise that identified me as Sergeant Hammill and the official shield that went with it, so that when Perkins staggered to the door in his pajamas, his eyes puffy from sleep, there was really nothing he could do

but let me in to see him.

"The police," he said. "Yes, the police. J-just wait until I put on my robe."

I followed him into his bedroom where he put on a bathrobe, then I told him to sit down on the bed. He was a tall man, with blonde hair that was becoming a bit sandy now that he had reached middle age. There were many wrinkles about his eyelids and his prominent nose. His mouth was lax-lipped. I felt that I could do a pretty good job of impersonating him.

Perkins sat down gingerly on the edge of the bed and I stood in front of him.

"You got yourself into what appears to be an insurance swindle, didn't you?" I said without further preliminaries.

"Wh-what do you mean?" he asked, fingering the bed clothes.

"You're a damned poor liar," I told him. "Hurst told us what you were up to before he died."

"Hurst? David Hurst—dead?"

I gave him the details of Hurst's death and smeared it on pretty thick. He needed something to wake him up.

"And," I added, "among other bright men who thought they were going to have a good time on their own life insurance, are Jonathan Marvin and Leonard Van Sickle. Perhaps you've been reading about *their* 'suicides'."

"B-but they're not really dead," Perkins objected. I could see more clearly than ever before, how anyone who would permit himself to be victimized by the same plot would have to believe that.

Perkins bit his lip. "You shouldn't have made me say that," he said in a frightened voice. "They said they'd kill me if I hreathed a word—"

"I know," I interrupted. "But what *you* don't know is that they'd kill you anyway. Would you care to avoid filling a grave for a while, Mr. Perkins? If so, you'd better tell me exactly what the plan was."

"Well," Perkins began slowly, "a man came to me and wondered if he couldn't sell me more insurance. He was a tall man with a scar on his chin."

My friend Tanko again.

ffW OBJECTED on the grounds that I was having trouble keeping up the insurance I had, and that, having been left pretty much alone in life, I could see no reason why I should provide insurance that would enable my spendthrift nephews to have a good time after I was dead. Besides, I wanted to have a little fun myself."

"There was a woman, eh?" I asked suggestively.

"Yes," he said. "But she isn't mixed up in this. She couldn't be. She's too good and beautiful. Just a harmless widow."

"The proposition made me by this man was extremely attractive. I have about a hundred and fifty thousand dollars in life insurance. It was suggested that I change the beneficiaries on my policies. Seventy-five thousand was to go to this widow lady who would hold it for me until we could skip the country together. The rest of the insurance money was to go to the son of a man I had never heard of. This man, I was told, would commit suicide in my place and in such a manner that his features would be completely obliterated. In other words, the body of this man would be identified as Stephen Perkins."

"And," I interrupted, you were supposed to collect through the widow, while the criminals collected through the son of the man who killed himself in your place. And you really thought that somebody would be willing to commit suicide to accommodate you?"

Perkins nodded.

"Certainly. The man was in poor health and was going to die in a few weeks anyway. He had no way of supporting his son."

"Didn't you ask the man with the

scarred chin to show you this suicide proxy?" I asked.

Perkins shook his head. "I didn't bother. I went confidentially to my friend Hurst and talked the matter over with him. Hurst said he'd like to get in on the scheme, so I thought it was all right."

"Now Hurst is dead," I said. "Hurst saw there was something crooked somewhere and wanted to play amateur detective. But Mr. Leonard Van Sickle, with his love of details, although he fell for the scheme too, demanded to see the man who was to be proxy for him in death."

And that, I knew, and the reader has perhaps guessed, was the reason Van Sickle had had his teeth removed. Demanding to see this man who was going to commit suicide for him, the criminals had brought out Mr. Long, Joe Harper's lisping assailant from Hoboken. Van Sickle saw that there was a superficial resemblance, but also noted that Long didn't have any teeth. So that was the reason Van Sickle had had his teeth removed.

Van Sickle had carried the teeth away from the dentist's with him, hiding them in his safe, keeping them just as he had kept his removed appendix, as though he could not bear to part with anything that had once belonged to him.

I looked squarely at Perkins.

"Didn't it ever occur to you that after you had changed your insurance policies to the two new beneficiaries, that all the criminals had to do to collect was to murder you?"

**P**ERKINS blinked his wrinkled eyelids.

"I— I never thought. I— Good Lord!"

"They had to write a suicide note, I suppose?" I said. "Get it for me." Perkins went to his desk, took out the note. He brought it back to me in trembling hands.

"You—you don't suppose that my

friend, that sweet lady—"

"The widow, you mean? Van Sickle was going to run off with a widow too. Be that as it may, the gang still stood to collect seventy-five grand and not by any proxy-suicide arrangement either. To make sure that the body was identified as yours, *you*, and you alone, would be the one to die."

"You—you mean they would murder *me*?" he gasped.

"Of course. They'd do it subtly so it would look like suicide, plant this note beside your body, and leave you alone. Very much alone in a lot of blackness."

Perkins shuddered. Then he stood up and grasped the lapels of my coat.

"What can I do to avoid this? You've got to tell me! You've got to help me!"

"That's what I'm here for," I said. "I'm taking you out of this house at once and secretly. This time, there'll be a proxy for the suicide act."

I didn't tell him so, but I was going to be that proxy.

## CHAPTER XXV

### *I Dig My Grave*



EARLY, before dawn in fact, Perkins was out of the house and off to spend some time in Tim Terry's apartment. And before dawn I took Glenn Saunders, my double and assistant, into the Perkins

house in the Bronx and explained some changes I wanted made in the place.

That was high-handed of me, but Perkins owned the place so I didn't care much. After all, it was a small price to pay for saving his life.

Glenn Saunders, skilled artisan that he is, was to install a trap door in the floor of the living room and make certain changes in the lighting of the place. And in spite of his likeness to

George Chance, no one would have mistaken him for me. In carpenters' overalls and dark glasses, his face smudged with dirt, he was pretty well disguised.

It was now time to double-check my deductions by having a talk with the manager of the Hotel Cronner and also the proprietor of a little Shop on East Forty-Fifth Street.

As soon as I was through with this double-checking, which I am keeping under my hat for the present, I visited Police Headquarters and talked with Ned Standish. I told him exactly what I planned to do, and what cooperation I expected from him.

I then spent some time with Stephen Perkins in Tim Terry's apartment, carefully watching the man, memorizing his characteristic movements, every line of his face and figure, paying particular attention to the way he talked. I took a few snapshots of Perkins, had them developed at the police laboratory. After that I was ready to step out of the shoes of Sergeant Hammill

THAT night, the combing of my hair changed, its color changed, too, with powder that made it appear sandy, I moved into the duplex of Stephen Perkins. With putty and plumpers, I had built the contours of my face to match those of Perkins. I had matched the color of his complexion, added penciled wrinkles about my eyes. Alone in Perkins' house. I talked to myself, but in Perkins' voice, until to speak as Perkins spoke was second nature.

And I was perfectly willing to meet any sort of "suicide" that Tanko and the master mind of the criminal gang had planned. If death was to come with bullets, I was prepared with a bullet proof vest. If I was to drink poison, I had the proper magical cup to drink it from, for it was made after the manner of a magician's Foo-can for vanishing liquids. I even had a knife with a telescoping blade which

I thought might come in handy.

Finally, beneath my arms, close inside the armpits and held there with pieces of adhesive tape, were small wooden balls, one ball in each armpit. These balls had a most important place in my scheme of things.

I inspected the workmanship of Gtenn Saunders. It was, as usual, perfect. No magician's stage ever was rigged up better, with concealed traps, mirrors, and ultra-violet lighting. On the bed in the bedroom was a special sheet, a double affair with flexible ribs of metal concealed inside.

Robert Demarest was taken into the secret of the sheet and he knew exactly how it was to be used.

In a rented room across the street from the Perkins place, Merry White waited for a signal from me. Joe Harper was not far distant, either. And in a closet in the hall between living room and kitchen in the Perkins house, were black robes and carefully constructed death masks. There was a death mask made with a photograph of the late Max Gerrich as a model, another made in the image of Leonard Van Sickle, a third modeled after Jonathan Marvin, a fourth made up to resemble the face of E. L. Long of Hoboken. A fifth mask was made from the dead face of David John Hurst. And a sixth mask had been modeled after the living face of *Stephen Perkins*, whom I was impersonating!

And with all these preparations, nothing happened the first night that I was alone in the Perkins house.

The next day came and went, and the night followed. Nothing happened. And the next day Commissioner Standish sent me a letter, for we didn't think it was smart to communicate by phone from the Perkins house.

"Of all the brass-lined grts!" Standish's note read. "They're going to try and collect on the Hurst killing. HaW of Hurst's policies are payable to a man named Paget who is secretary of a beneficent society for the protection of oppressed children in the Far East. Paget, who' looks pious as a monk,

has put through his claim. What's to be done?"

 NOW that I was established in the identity of Perkins, living in Perkins' house, it would have been extremely risky for me to leave the house in any other identity. For all I knew, the criminals might be watching me twenty-four hours a day. So I left the house, walking as Stephen Perkins would have walked, looking like Stephen Perkins, my lips drooping dumbly as his drooped. I went to a nearby drugstore and into the phone booth at the back. I gave Ned Standish a ring and got him on the second trial.

"Listen, Ned," I told him, "this is going to be okay. You just keep the chief suspects on tap where you can get them quickly. About this chap Paget, just keep an eye on him. Have Vickers let his check come through. And when Paget cashes, grab him. Hustle him and the money down to police headquarters. Just tell him you're checking on him to see that his charity is legitimate. But you don't check on him. What you do is get the money away from him, see?"

"No," Standish objected.

"You will when I get through. Do you know what *naphthionate* is?"

"No," Standish said, "unless it's something to clean clothes with."

"It isn't. You talk to Demarest about it. It's a powder. All you have to do is get Demarest alone with that money for a little while. Have him dust every bill lightly with naphthionate. When he gets that done, you pack up the money and return it to Paget with profuse apologies. Add Paget to your list of suspects, but don't watch him so close that he won't have a chance to pay the money over to his big boss. The naphthionate won't come off. Once it gets on the hands, it's scarcely visible and mighty hard to wash off. Now do what I say and stop worrying."

That done, I bought a cigar and went

back to the Perkins house. The rest of the day I waited. All this watchful waiting was driving me batty, but there wasn't anything I could do about it. The move I had told Standish to make would convince the criminals that their plan was fool proof. They would certainly make an attempt to kill the man they thought was Perkins.

Night came. At eight o'clock, the Perkins phone rang. I picked it up and answered in Perkins' voice. Elmer Tanko's voice came out of the receiver.

"Mr. Perkins, if you've got some time tonight, I'd like to talk over our little plan with you. A few matters to settle. When will it be convenient?"

"About ten o'clock," I said. "I'll be expecting you."

He didn't know how much I'd be expecting him!

I hung up and went at once to the front of the house where I stood in the window and lighted a cigarette. In the house across the street, where Merry White waited, a second story window-shade went down. Everything was okay. Merry had my signal. I had dug my grave, but anybody who thought I was going to stay in it was wide off the mark.

**B**Y THE time Tanko arrived at the Perkins house, the police had moved—not with the screaming of sirens and the thump of heavy feet, but with all the subtlety and silence of approaching shadows.

It's a popular conception that the police of New York are dumb. They aren't. I've worked with them and I know. I know of no more efficient group of men in the country than the New York police.

Tanko came in smiling. He shook hands with me, and there wasn't a shadow of a doubt but that he thought I was Perkins. I took him into the living room and pointed put a chair for him near the only lamp in the room that was lighted. I took my place in a chair opposite him.

In the floor at my feet was the cleverly concealed trap door which Glenn Saunders had arranged at my instruction. At my side was a table and on it the magician's Foo cup from which I intended to "drink" poison, if that was the design that had been arranged for my death.

In the dim light, Tanko's face was, as evil as Satan's. That scar on his skin stood out vividly like a second mouth on some sort of a pagan idol. His close-set dark eyes glowed like polished lumps of jet.

"All set, Perkins, for the cleverest swindle of the age?" he said.

"I—I'd rather you wouldn't refer to it as a swindle," I said in Perkins' timid voice. "It makes me feel like a criminal."

Tanko laughed. "You're nothing of the sort. It's about time these insurance companies got some sort of a trimming. They've fattened enough. Tomorrow you'll be seventy-five thousand dollars richer. You have your suicide note all ready?"

I nodded. Tanko told me to get it for him. I went to Perkins' desk and got out the suicide note I had seen before. When I turned around, Tanko had an automatic in his hand. At least, it appeared to be an automatic. He was holding it with the muzzle against his right eye and Was pulling the trigger with his thumb. The gun emitted a buzzing sound. I hadn't looked for anything like this. I asked him what he was doing.

"The damndest thing I've ever seen," Tanko said, laughing. "I got it in a novelty shop this afternoon." He dropped the gun into his pocket. "You look into the barrel and pull the trigger. There's a battery in the handle which illuminates the picture of a bubble dancer. And does she dance!"

Tanko gave me a significant wink.

My heart beat a little faster. If I asked to s'ee the gun, he would switch the toy in his pocket for a real gun. I would put it to my eye, pull the trigger,

and then what? If I didn't ask to see k, or express some curiosity, Tanko's suspicions would be aroused. So I said:

"Let's see the gun. Some of these novelties are pretty clever."

**T**ANKO smiled, put his hand into has pocket. My left hand went to my own coat pocket and palmed a hollow rubber ball. Tanko passed me the gun.

"Just put the muzzle to your eye," he said, "pull the trigger and keep your eye open. Boy, oh boy, what a kick you'll get!"

I took the gun in my right hand, muzzle toward me. My thumb slipped into the trigger guard.

"It has the feel of a real gun, doesn't it?" I said.

Tanko admitted that it did. And I knew damned well it was a real gun. I was supposed to put it to my eye and pull the trigger. I stood up. Holding the gun with muzzle toward me, I raised it slowly, ,, , .

## CHAPTER XXVI

### *Death of a Ghost*



**U** P TO my heart the gun was when I "accidentally" pulled the trigger. The crash of the shot, the stab of gun flame, and I am certain that a look of surprise and pain passed over my features.

The look wasn't counterfeited. Up to that time I had the impression that getting shot by a .32 caliber bullet while wearing a bullet proof vest would be something like getting hit with a paper wad. It was more like taking the kick of a mule. For just an instant, I thought I was knocked out. And I didn't dare go unconscious, because thts^show 'had to go on.

I twisted sideways. My right hand still clutched the gun. My left came up to my chest, squeezing on the hollow rubber ball. The rubber ball was filled with red stain closely resembling blood, and as I pressed it close to the hole the bullet had made in my coat, "blood" squeezed out between my finger. I fell to the floor, writhed over onto my back, getting rid of the rubber ball in the upper breast pocket of my coat.

I let my eyelids sag a little, rolled up my eyeballs. Tanko dropped to his knee beside me.

"That wasn't the way it was supposed to go," he whispered. "But just so's you're dead . . . just so's I don't have to put another bullet in you." He laughed. "You damned dumb cluck!"

Tanko got the Perkins suicide note out of my coat pocket after he had pulled a silk glove over his hand. He put the note on the table beside the chair. Then he took my left wrist in his hand.

A smile of satisfaction spread slowly across his face. He could actually feel ray pulse ebbing away into something imperceptible. It was one of the oldest tricks of the Hindu *fakirs*, who claim to be able to control the beat of their heart. Remember that under each armpit I had attached a small, hard ball. All I had to *do* to stop off the flow of blood through the artery that leads down through the arm, was to press the upper arm against my side so that the baft in the armpk cut off the flow of blood in that artery.

Tanko stood up. He was satisfied. I was dead. He quietly left the house. Though he didn't know it at the time, he was quietly walking into the arms of the waiting police.

Tanko's career as a criminal was just about Over,

I suppose I didn't alter my position for twenty minutes\* Someone from the family m the upper part of the duplex summoned up enough courage after hearing the shot, came down> dis-

covered my "corpse", took one look, called the police.

A group of homicide men came in answer to the man's call, and with them Robert Demarest to officially pronounce me dead. Demarest was nervous about the job. Maybe I looked too realistically dead with my eyes rolled back, fake blood all over the front of me, my jaw hanging open.

Demarest stood up after a bit of poking at me. And then the front door of the house opened and Commissioner Standish came in. He wasn't alone. Quietly, he had gone about rounding up our suspects and they filed in behind Standish, escorted by a uniformed cop.

**H**UGO WAYNE, the shady investment broker, was directly behind Standish. Following Wayne came Loretta Kurtzner, as lovely and as perfectly possessed as ever. Behind Mrs. Kurtzner was Ken Vickers, a somewhat puzzled frown on his ordinarily smooth forehead. Taylor Owens, his face white, his potato-shaped nose purple, followed Vickers, his stubby pipe cold but gripped tightly between his teeth, his derby hat in his hand. Theo Quinn, fat, bald, pompous, followed Owens, and Quinn was mightily indignant about the whole thing.

"Nothing but a farce!" Quinn exclaimed. "A damned farce, Commissioner. I'll break you for this!"

And then he saw me, the corpse, and decided that it wasn't such a farce.

Behind Quinn was the blonde and beautiful Miss Rice, Taylor Owens' secretary. Arnold Smock, the insignificant looking man who raised pigeons, followed. And Elmer Tanko, handcuffs on his wrists, brought up the rear somewhat involuntarily.

Standish and his men placed chairs for the suspects at one end of the room, facing the door of the hall that connected the living room and kitchen. The blonde Miss Rice sobbed into her handkerchief. Taylor Owens wriggled

into his chair and groped in his pocket for matches which he didn't find. He sucked his cold pipe and it bubbled noisily.

"What's the meaning of all this?" Quinn demanded.

"This," Standish said, "is murder. One of you killed Stephen Perkins. Elmer Tanko may have been the instrument of murder, but another person planned it—the same person who plotted the deaths of Max Gerrich, Leonard Van Sickle, Jonathan Marvin, David Hurst. We're here to find out the truth."

"Commissioner," Hugo Wayne ventured, "you got me all wrong. I didn't have anything to do with this."

"Do—do we have to sit here and 1—look at that—that on the floor?" sobbed the blonde Miss Rice.

Taylor Owens reached over and patted her head in a fatherly manner.

"Demarest, you might cover the corpse with a sheet," Standish said.

Demarest went into the bedroom, came out with the gimmicked sheet. He spread it out over me, pressed it over my body from head to heels. I had chosen my place to "die" carefully. Because of the concealed ribs in the sheet, now bent to conform with my body, I could drop out from beneath the sheet and still it would appear that a human body was beneath the white cover.

Under the sheet, I tapped gently on the floor. It was a signal to Joe Harper, who had entered the basement of the house at the same time the police and the suspects had come in the front door. The trap beneath me opened swiftly and silently. I fell through to a soft mattress on the basement floor. I sat up, looked up through the trap. The mound of white sheet was undisturbed. In the dark basement, Jee Harper helped me to my feet.

"All set upstairs?" I whispered.

"All set," Joe answered. He, too, felt the tenseness of the situation. He clipped words short in his nasal voice.

"Glenn and Merry are up there waiting for us. We're timed like a radio show. Let's get moving."

**WE** WENT quickly and quietly up the steps leading from the basement. Joe Harper was wearing a black robe that reached to his ankles. Merry and Glenn would be dressed the same way. There was a similar robe waiting for me on the kitchen table. While I was getting into it, no easy job in the darkness even with the help of Merry and Joe, I could hear Commissioner Standish talking to the suspects in the living room.

"You who are innocent," Standish was saying, "may wonder how these murders were accomplished. For they were murders, even though there has been every appearance of suicide. The whole idea behind the plot was to convince the victims that they would benefit by an insurance swindle, that a fake suicide would be arranged. In other words, the victims were convinced that their suicide would be accomplished by proxy so that they might collect on their own insurance and go on living under assumed names in some other part of the world.

"But this was no hoax on the insurance company. The joke was on those foolish men who sought to profit by agreeing to assist the criminals in the scheme. For at some convenient time after the victims had written their suicide notes, which they believed would fool the insurance company and the police into believing that they had killed themselves, the victims were either murdered by the criminals, or baited into unknowingly killing themselves.

"The beneficiary clause in their life insurance policies had been changed so that the criminals could collect after the victim's death. Not changed by any criminal means, understand, but the changes were made voluntarily by the victims themselves, who were led to believe that at least half of the entire amount paid on the policies would

be returned into their hands after the faked death.

"Sometimes," Standish went on, "the criminals employed an attractive woman to lure the victims into making such an agreement—an agreement which amounted to a death warrant. We know that Mrs. Kurtzner worked such a scheme on Leonard Van Sickle."

"That's not true," Mrs. Kurtzner's voice said.

But you could tell she was much less calm than before.

Standish went on talking, and I stepped across the kitchen, opened a cupboard. In it Glenn Saunders had installed a small switchboard and a microphone. The switchboard operated lights in the living room. The microphone was connected with a loud-speaker concealed beneath the davenport in the living room.

This cupboard was not far from the hall which led from the kitchen to the living room. In this hall, Glenn had installed a full length mirror, so placed that anyone standing in the hall and in front of the mirror, would appear to be standing directly in the door connecting living room and hall.

**I**N THE closet in the hall, not far from where the mirror was, the death masks of the murder victims were waiting, so placed that they could be readily found in the dark. The masks had been treated with ultra-violet paint so that in darkness they would not be visible. This same ultra-violet paint, when subjected to ultra-violet light, is clearly visible. Needless to say, ultra-violet lamps had been installed in the little hall and also in the living room and could be controlled from the cupboard switchboard.

Merry, Glenn, and Joe, dressed in their dark robes, had crowded into the hall closet. Each waited his cue. And I was at the microphone, one hand on the switchboard.

In the middle of a sentence uttered

by Commissioner Standish, I turned out every light in the house. Mrs. Kurtzner and Miss Rice streamed. Men cursed.

A copper warned: "Don't move, anybody. Every exit is covered. Try to get out and you'll be shot. Something must have gone wrong with the lights."

"That's true police reasoning for you," Thea Qufer said gruffly. "Something has gone wrong with the lights!"

Muscles in my throat tightened. I raised the microphone, uttered the ghoulish laugh that the criminal world has learned to recognize as that of the Ghost.

"My God!" Hugo Wayne said hoarsely. "The Ghost!"

And "My God!" Ken Vickers echoed in an awed whisper.

CHAPTER XXVII

*Dead Men's Tales*



**Y**AWPING into the microphone, my voice was charged with mockery.

"Don't bother to look behind you, Mr. Vickers. You couldn't see me\* You don't want to see me, do you?\*" I laughed again.

"Hello, Tanko. How do you and your boss like to be alone in the

dark—with the Ghost? And alone with the spirits of the men you have murdered? They are here."

"Remember Max Gerrich, the old actor? He was too old to earn a living, but not too old to enjoy living. Not too old to be enticed into your insurance swindle with the hope of finishing his file in a bed of roses which you promised him\* Bed of roses? That's a laugh. Bed of cold, clinging clay, shared with the worms. Take a look at him now!"

And that was Joe Harper's signal. Wearing the death mask of Max Gerrich, he stepped from the closet. As he did so, I pressed the switch that turned on the ultra-violet light in the hall. Black light, it is sometimes called, because ordinary objects cannot be seen in it. But the ghastly mask that Joe wore could be seen, because it had been treated with ultra-violet paint, used in many magical effects.

To those in the living room, it must have appeared that the dead Getfich's face was floating in the air between the doorposts of the living room door, thanks to the angle at which Glenn Saunders had placed the mirror. Actually, Joe was in Use hall, safely beyond the reach of bullets.

The object of all this was to strain the killer's nerves to the breaking point. Quickly, I changed my voice to something which I hoped would resemble the voice of Max Gerrich. I

[Turn page]

" I T A L K E D W I T H G O D "

{Yes, I Did—Actually and Literally}

and, as a result of that little talk with God some ten years ago, a strange new Power came into my life. After 46 years of horrible, sickening, dismal failure, this strange Power brought to me a sense of overwhelming victory, and I have been overcoming every undesirable condition of my life ever since. What a change it was. Now—I have credit at more than one bank, I own a beautiful home, drive a lovely car, own a newspaper and a large office building, and my wife and family are amply provided for after I leave for shores unknown. In addition to these material benefits, I have a sweet peace in my life. I am happy as happy can be. No circumstance ever upsets me, for I have learned how to draw upon the invisible God-

Law, under any and all circumstances. You, too, may find and use the same staggering Power of the God-Law that I use. It can bring to you, too, whatever things are right and proper for you to have. Do you believe this? It won't cost much to find out—just a penny post-card or a letter addressed to Dr. Frank B. Robinson, Dept. 711-12, Moscow, Idaho, will bring you the story of the most fascinating success of the century. And the same Power I use is here for your use, too. I'll be glad to tell you about it. All information about this experience will be sent you free, of course. The address again—Dr. Frank B. Robinson, Dept. 711-12, Moscow, Idaho. Adv. Copyright 1939 Frank B. Robinson.

had never heard Gerrich speak, but I thought that in the voice of a "spirit" this wouldn't make much difference.

"I was Max Gerrich," I said. "You, *murderer*, came to me with a plan by which I could appear to die and yet go on living to enjoy at least half of the life insurance money which would be paid at my death. The other half was to go to you by an indirect route, in payment for inventing the plan. I was a little terrified at the whole idea of becoming involved in a crooked scheme. You asked me to write a note explaining my suicide, and I was so nervous I didn't know what to say. But you dictated what I was to write, and I wrote words which I ordinarily would not have used. Had it not been for those words, my murder would have gone undiscovered.

"For you murdered me. You took me by force to the railroad, threw my body in front of a midnight train. You are the man who plotted my death."

I switched off the ultra-violet light and this gave Joe a chance to vanish. Merry White stepped from the closet and she was wearing the death mask which had been molded from the face of E. L. Long. I turned on the ultra-violet and gave the Ghost's laugh into the microphone.



REMEMBER this man, Tanko? He landed in the morgue. He died resisting arrest because you involved him in your murder scheme.

"Long was the man presented to Van Sickle as a supposed proxy for Van Sickle's suicide. Van Sickle was cranky about details. When you told him you had found a man who would kill himself in Van Sickle's place, whose body could easily be mistaken for Van Sickle's, so that Van Sickle might collect on his own insurance, Van Sickle insisted upon seeing that proxy. Since the proxy was merely a fiction in the mind of your boss, you, Tanko, had to find some criminal friend of yours who resembled Van Sickle in

some way. So you brought Long to Van Sickle and told Van Sickle that this man was the proxy.

"Van Sickle insisted upon Long wearing one of his suits—a suit later found in Long's house in Hoboken. Van Sickle also noted that Long didn't have any teeth. So in order that there would be no hitches in identifying Long's body as that of Van Sickle, Van Sickle had his own teeth pulled.

"Poor Van Sickle! All that unnecessary preparation, when all you really intended to do was to murder him as soon as he had written his suicide note and transferred his insurance so that two agents of the murder machine could collect. Those agents were Patsy Moore and Mrs. Kurtzner!"

I switched off the ultra-violet light, and Merry, with her death mask, disappeared. Out of the closet came Glenn Saunders, and he was wearing a mask which closely resembled the face of Van Sickle as it had been in life. When I turned on the ultra-violet this time, Theo Quinn uttered a harsh cry.

"This has gone far enough!" he shouted. "I—I'm not going to stand for any more of it."

"You'll stand for it, Quinn," I whispered into the mike in the Ghost's voice. "You'll listen to the story of Leonard Van Sickle. Because it's the Van Sickle case that upsets the criminal apple cart. Van Sickle believed what the criminals told him so completely that he prepared every detail for his future life after death—or after the death of his proxy. He and Mrs. Kurtzner were going to Europe, Van Sickle thought. He even bought the steamship tickets—bought them in the name of Fabian Deeming. And so sure was he of the sincerity of the plan you murderers put before him, that he had certain stocks of his, which he thought were due to boom, transferred to the name of Fabian Deeming. Hugo Wayne knows all about that, isn't that so, Wayne?"

"I—I tell you you got me all wrong,"

Wayne gasped. "I'll come clean. Sure, I took the stocks out of Van Sickle's safe after I heard that he had died. Since there wasn't any real Fabian Deeming so far as I know, I thought I could cash in on the stocks. But I didn't have anything to do with Van Sickle's suicide—or murder, whichever it was."

"Shut up, Wayne," I went on. "Listen to what the spirit of Van Sickle has to say. He will tell you all the truth. He will tell you how he was murdered, after he had been led to believe that someone was to take his place in death."

**I** PAUSED briefly, changed my voice, impersonating that of Van Sickle as closely as possible.

"They came to me that night, thoth killerth, to talk over the complete plan, tho they thaid. They thought up an excuth to get me to the window, when they knew that I had tranthferred the inthurance polithies so that they could collect. I had written the thuthide note at their requetht. Onth near the window, they threw me out. It wath murder."

I switched lights, vanishing Van Sidde. Again I spoke in the voice of the Ghost.

"The master criminal helped with the murder of Van Sickle. He was in the Cronner Hotel that night. And he was also in Van Sickle's suite. I know that because he left behind him a little spiral of wire which served to identify him. I picked this piece of wire out of the ash tray and carried it away. When the master mind found that the spiral was gone, he sent Tanko to look for it. But I had taken the spiral from Van Sickle's room. Tanko followed me down into the lobby of the hotel. He cornered me with his gun. Tanko said: The grill, Ghost,' and I naturally thought he wanted me to go to the grill room of the hotel. But Tanko was talking about the spiral of wire. That spiral of wire is a *grid*

which might be called a grill, I suppose.

"But," I went on, "it was something that occurred just before the murder of Jonathan Marvin that gave me my final clue."

Again I switched on the ultra-violet light, and Joe Harper, wearing the mask of Jonathan Marvin was standing in front of the mirror so that the reflection of the ghostly mask could be seen in the living room.

I spoke into the mike in the voice of Jonathan Marvin as I had heard it over the phone in Taylor Owens' office:

"I fell for the criminal plot, too. I didn't know I was to be murdered. I simply thought that I was to be involved in a swindle. That bothered my conscience, for I was ah honest man. As the time for what I supposed to be my faked death approached, I became more worried until finally I decided to call my friend Taylor Owens and tell him the entire truth. I called Owens at his office. That is, I *thought* I was talking to Owens. But it was the Ghost, impersonating Owens. I knew—"

In the living room, a shot crashed out. The mirror that reflected my "spirits" was shattered, for the man with the gun was simply firing at a reflection. I jammed the third switch on my switch board. This turned on the ultra-violet lamps in the living room, and, I hoped, marked the murderer. I sprang into the living room, dark, of course, because the ultra-violet lamps shed only black light. But in that black light, I hoped something would be illuminated.

As I sprang into the room filled with confused and frightened people, I saw the hands of the murderer, glov/ing in the darkness! The trap had worked! Here was complete proof of guilt, for, acting on my instructions, Standish had treated the money the criminals had collected from the Hurst murder with naphthionate powder. Naphthionate glows in ultra-violet light just as ultra-violet paint does. The glowing

hands proved that here was a man who had handled the money!

BECAUSE of the glowing hands, I marked the master criminal easily in the darkness, and in another moment I had him by the throat with one hand while the other hand twisted the gun from his grasp. The man was broken. He had tried to kill Jonathan Marvin's "spirit" with a gun!

"Lights!" I shouted.

Back in the kitchen, Glenn Saunders heard the cry, turned on the switch that brought on the regular living room lights. The murderer was struggling in my hands, trying to break that hold on his throat, gurgling out his denials. But when he saw my face close to his in the light, saw that it was the face of the very man he supposed he had had Tanko kill that night, fear made him submissively limp.

Still holding on to Taylor Owens' neck, I thrust him into the hands of the police. "Take your killer," I said, "with the compliments of the Ghost."

All eyes in the room were upon me. For here I must have appeared as Stephen Perkins, and they had just seen me, a little while before, to all appearances dead. Theo Quinn, pompous in spite of his fright, shouted:

"I won't stand for it! You're dead! I'll sue you. My health will never be the same. You ought to be under that sheet!"

I backed toward the door.

"What sheet?" I asked.

For in all the confusion, it had been very easy for Glenn Saunders to go down the basement, pull the gimmicked sheet through the trap in the floor, close the trap. There wasn't even so much as an "X" on the spot where the "body" had been. I laughed at the gasps of astonishment, and as I went through the door, I said:

"You see, there's a t'fick to it!"

I ran across the front lawn, the black garb I wore fluttering out behind. In the car parked at the curb, Merry

White, Joe Harper, and my double, Glenn Saunders, waited for me.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### *Three Questions*



QUIET reigned. Merry White and I were alone in the Ghost's rectory. The clock was well around to ward one in the morning. We were just enjoying being together, Merry cuddled up in my arms. When the back door opened and Ned Standish came down the basement steps. He looked haggard and older than his years, but the bright fight of triumph glowed in his eyes. Merry got out of my arms to go and fix him a drink. Standish sat down slowly.

"My congratulations," he said. "And you'll be glad to know that Taylor Owens confessed. We haven't calculated the exact amount the criminals collected through their several agents, but Owens says his lion's share is well over a million. He seemed to want to drag all the others in after him, too."

"How were my reconstructions of the crimes?" I asked.

"Perfect. You'd have probably got the Marvin killing all right, too, if Owens hadn't broken and spoiled your show. Owens simply walked in on Marvin, offered him a friendly drink which Owens poured out of his own flask. The drink contained poison. Marvin died almost at once. He had already written his suicide note, and Owens placed it beside the body together with a bottle of the poison which had been in the drink. But what I want to know—"

Merry skipped across the room and tickled Standish pa ei the chin.

"You want to know how my sweet man figured it all out."

Standish stroked his black square of

mustache and blinked.

"That's it, I guess. He said that he based his case on three points. The first was the question: what was that wire spiral found in the ash tray at Van Sickle's."

"It was," I said, "just about what Tanko called it when he tried to get it from me in the lobby of the Cronner. Tanko was asking me for the grill, not telling me to go to the hotel grill. He really meant the grid. I got the idea from Merry, though I don't suppose she knows it. I had heard of a pipe grid, and had Tanko asked for the grid instead of the grill, I might have recognized the wire spiral as a pipe grid. This particular one was a kind I had never seen before, hence I didn't identify it for what it was when I first saw it. Owens probably brought it back from his last trip to Europe."

"What's a pipe grid?" Merry asked, sitting on the arm of Standish's chair.

"It's a wire screen or grid made to fit into the bottom of a tobacco pipe. I double-checked with my tobacconist over on East Forty-Fifth. With a pipe grid in your pipe, your tobacco smokes dry right down to the bottom, leaving a dry gray ash. Without a grid, you have something pipe smokers don't like—a wet, soggy heel."

"But," Standish objected, "some other smoker might have had one."

"True," I said. "But I *knew* Owens had one. When he visited me the night of the Van Sickle job, the ashes he knocked into my ash tray were gray and dry. At the time, that fact meant nothing. But it was to mean something later, looking back.

"Every time I saw him *after* the Van Sickle job, he was digging soggy, wet tobacco from the bottom of his pipe. So it looked as though he might have lost it at the scene of the murder. Which he did. Knocking out his pipe into Van Sickle's ash tray, he lost the grid."

"The second point," Standish said, "was that you knew the murderer was

in the Cronner hotel that night. How did you know that Owens was in the hotel?"

"Because at the dinner Ken Vickers gave at Charles' Restaurant the following night, Owens asked for Braumier Pilsner beer, an imported brand which made its debut in this country for the first time at the Sky Room of the Cronner the night that Van Sickle was killed!

"I checked on that, too, and learned that the Cronner had a sample shipment, just large enough to try one night at the Sky Room. Evidently Owens was there, drank some of the beer, and liked it enough to ask for it at a place where he couldn't get it the next night. But that second point only became significant in the light of the first—the grid."

"THK/FTERRY giggled. "Isn't my man XTJa. bright? Question three coming up\*\*"

"Yes," Standish said. "How did Tanko know that Dr. Stacey and the Ghost were one and the same person?"

"Nobody but Owens could have told him," I said. "That's why Owens went haywire at that spot in our show tonight. You see, I was in Owens' office disguised as Dr. Stacey when Marvifi called, to spill the whole plot to Owens. I got Miss Rice, Owens' secretary, out of the office, called Marvin back, impersonating Owens' voice. I was trying to get some information out of Marvin. Marvin was talking to me, addressing me as Owens, and suddenly he stopped. He said: 'This is impossible' and hung up. Why? Simply because the real Taylor Owens called at Marvin's at that time, probably to arrange for Marvin's death! There Marvin was, thinking he was talking to Owens, and suddenly he *sees* Owens!

"Marvin saw something was wrong, but he still thought Owens was his friend. He didn't know Owens was mixed up in the insurance swindle at all. Owens, having heard Marvin ad-

dress someone on the phone as Owens, asked questions. Marvin told him that he was calling Owens' office. Therefore someone was impersonating Owens from the other end of the line.

"Owens simply called Tanko, who was hiding out in the building across from his murder partner, Owens. Tanko used field glasses, looked into Owens' office, saw me, as Dr. Stacey. Since Dr. Stacey was doing the impersonating, Dr. Stacey was probably the Ghost. And the Ghost had to die because he had the wire spiral which could incriminate Owens."

"And then," Ned concluded, "after he had put Tanko on your trail, Owens knew he had to kill Marvin at once. He offered him a friendly drink of poison."

"Nice man," Merry said.

"And goodnight," I said.

Standish looked puzzled. "Good-night, who?"

"You," I said.

Standish looked at Merry. He grinned and took the hint.

"I'm so glad you're George Chance again," Merry said when Standish had gone.

"I'm glad too," I said. "Even a ghost gets tired." /

"And yet," Merry murmured, her lips close to mine, "if Ned Standish were to call you up ten minutes from now with another case for the Ghost, you would go."

"Wouldn't you want me to?"

Merry sighed, then laughed.

"I'd go with you," she said.

"Well worry about the next time if the next time comes," I said.

"It will," Merry said. "It will."

And I knew it would . . . .

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*He fired from the hip*

# PAYOFF IN LEAD

**By JOHN S. ENDICOTT**

*Author of "Marked for Evidence," "No Way to Die," etc.*

**T**HE man behind the wheel of the sedan drew up about a hundred yards from the entrance to the State Penitentiary for Women. At precisely seven o'clock the big gates swung open and a woman walked out. She had a cheap suitcase in her hand. She paused only a moment, spotted the car and walked briskly toward it. Now and then she turned her head as if she expected to see someone she

feared.

The car door opened. The girl peered inside and made sure it was occupied by only one man.

"Are you Terry Black?" she asked in a hoarse whisper.

"That's me. Hop in and let's get away from this joint. I don't like prisons."

She got in beside him, studying his rather good-looking features, though

his hard-boiled tagmark was pretty plain. He was, she judged, about twenty-eight or nine, slender and well dressed.

"Neither do I like prisons," she said, with a smile as they sped away. "You ought to spend three years in one. Then you'd really hate 'em."

He took a quick look at her. Joan Powers was not hard to look at—not even after three years of prison work. Her blond hair needed a permanent, but she had arranged it attractively enough. Her features were regular and her lips vivid.

"This is great," she sighed, "riding in a car again. Three years is a long time. I'm glad you got my letter. I worried about that, with the prison censors."

Terry Black shrugged. "They're a bunch of dopes. I got it okay and I knew what you meant. Tell me the rest of it."

**S**HE looked at him steadily, wondering if she could trust this man. Private detectives were usually not above taking everything they could lay hands on. Yet she had to chance it.

"Three years ago, as you know, I drove a car that was used in a stickup. The boys grabbed three hundred thousand dollars, tossed it in the car and we made a run for it. But the fools had killed two people in the bank and the cops came like a swarm of bees. The boys got out, trusted me with the money and separated."

"Then you drove somewhere, hid the dough and tried a getaway that didn't work," Terry Black said without turning his head. "You refused to squeal—said the boys must have hidden the money, and you took a three year rap. A dame like you would have got six months at the most if you'd talked."

"You're psychic," she said, and smiled. "Tell me more."

"The dough is safely cached. No-

body but you knows where it is and you want me to protect you until you can lay your hands on it. Which means the cops will be watching you—and so will the boys of the mob. What's there in it for me if we grab the stuff and get clear?"

"Ten percent," she replied. "That's not bad—because you're only half right. The cops think I told the truth about the rest of the mob having the money. I got the stretch because I wouldn't tell who they were."

Terry Black, hard-bitten private detective looked down at the girl and smiled.

"It takes nerve to go through with a thing like that," he said, admiringly. "I'm on your side, Joan. Where do we go from here?"

"I like the way you handle things and I trust you—Terry Black. Maybe we can really do some business with that money. Three hundred thousand isn't so bad. Or is it?"

Black stepped on the brakes and pulled off the road.

"You didn't answer my question," he said flatly. "What's the next move? So far as I'm concerned, we're partners in a deal. My take is ten percent—as usual. I'm no hijacker."

He reached for the brake and tensed. A car was slipping up behind them—a small car with only one man in it. He was already climbing out and a gun glistened in his fist. Terry Black moved fast. He reached down beside the wheel and grabbed a gun from a spring holster fastened under the dash. With the same motion he flipped off the safety, pushed open the door and vaulted out. A gun cracked and the bullet smashed into the fender of the car.

Black fired—three rapid shots. The approaching gunman spun on his heel, swayed a little and then plunged to the road.

"Wh—who is he?" Joan asked breathlessly. "Wait! I'll come out."

Black reached out his hand to help

her out of the car. They made certain no other traffic was coming along the lonesome road and then stepped cautiously toward the man who lay on his face in the dirt. Black kept his gun ready, taking no chances. He turned the man over and grunted as he slid a hand under the fallen man's shirt.

Joan drew back a step with a little cry of fear.

"Know him?" Black asked her. "He's dead, so don't worry about him if he's one of the mob."

"I—I never saw him before in my life!" Joan cried. "I—I don't think he's one of the boys."

**B**LACK placed his gun on the dead man's chest and began searching the body. He grunted again and straightened up, taking the gun along.

"You dope," he growled at the girl. "This guy was a copper. See the badge? A detective-sergeant. Now we're in for it! He must have tailed us, and how do we know he didn't report the car—or me too, for that matter? We've got to get out of here."

"And—and leave him there—like that?" Joan pointed a trembling finger.

"What do you want me to do?" Black demanded irascibly. "Lift him up and do a Lambeth Walk? He's dead, I tell you, and there'll be more of his breed along any minute. Get in that bus."

She popped into the car and they drove off with a clashing of gears. For two miles neither said a word. Then Joan eyed Terry Black with a cunning look.

"How does it feel to be a cop killer?" she asked pointedly.

"I don't feel any different. And what are you asking crazy questions for?"

Joan pushed blond hair up under her hat.

"Maybe you'll do just as I say—or the cops flight get a nice little phone call. You going to play ball?"

Black grimaced. "Did I say I wouldn't? But listen, Joan, don't take me for any sucker. You're a paroled convict. Any crime you commit isn't petty and because you were in this car with me, you'll burn, too—if they land us. Swallow that and shut up."

Joan's hand shook enough to extinguish the match she had raised to a cigarette.

"I was only kidding, Terry. I—I wanted to see how you'd react. Listen! You and I have three hundred thousand dollars—three hundred grand! We can get it and jump the country. How does that sound?"

"Until the dough is in my hands and we're on a boat five hundred miles from port, it sounds crazy. I . . . Duck!" Black ground out the last word. "There's a bus pulling out of a side road. I might have known those mugs would lay in wait for us."

Joan all but swallowed her cigarette as she slid beneath the dash. Terry Black laid his gun on the seat beside him, grasped the wheel with both hands and gave the car every ounce of speed she had. The car following rolled along, losing little ground.

Ahead of them city lights created a rosy glow against the cloudy sky. Black wet his lips, took the next corner on two wheels, zigzagged madly and tramped on the brake. He turned sharply, drove up on a newly mowed lawn, made a complete sweep and headed out again.

The pursuing car swept around the corner at full speed. It rocked dangerously, landed back on all four wheels and the brakes began to screech. Terry Black shot away from that yard, headed toward the city. He turned out of the side street and before the pursuers' car could turn, he was within the limits and making fancy turns to throw anyone off his trail.

"Boy!" Joan said fervently. "That was driving. We steered 'em off all

right. That was Mar—" She bit her lip in exasperation. "That was the boys. They're after me and they'll stick. What are we going to do, Terry?"

"Run for it to a neat little hideout I've picked. I figured this might happen, so I rented an apartment."

"You think of everything, don't you? It's all right with me. We need a hideout."

And Black added grimly: "One error now means either the chair for both of us, or a blast of lead from the guns of your former pals. You positive you know where that dough is hidden? Nobody could have grabbed it during those three years you were cooped up?"

"I'm positive I know where it is and I'm ten times more positive that it hasn't been found," she answered quickly.

**TERRY BLACK** spoke without looking at her.

"Another thing. We can't visit this hiding place where you put the money until we're certain we're not watched. It's going to be tough fighting the cops and those hoods too. Trouble is, somebody may have snitched. Did you talk in prison?"

"Not much. A girl's got to talk, Terry, I only said I was getting a good private detective to protect me. Maybe I mentioned your name once or twice."

Black groaned. "Then we're in for it. They'll have checked on me, perhaps found I rented this apartment. They'll pay us a visit if that's the case. But with three hundred grand waiting, I'll leave those birds, far behind. Here we are."

He parked the car in a dark section of the street, helped Joan out and led her toward a large, fifteen-story apartment building. He started her through the revolving doors, paused outside a moment and looked around carefully. Then he went in.

When they reached the apartment, Joan surveyed it with wide eyes. It was nice! Terry Black had a reputation for doing things the whole way. Furnishings were new and of the best. There was food enough in the kitchen for a month.

Joan studied the private detective a moment. "Terry—you're worried. Do you think things are as bad as that?"

"Worried?" Black grimaced. "Not me. Not after having just knocked off a cop and taken a powder from three or four of your old playmates. Now let's get down to business."

"What's the hurry?" she asked.

He reached up and took her hand. "We've got to make a try for the dough. This hideout is only in case we can't connect right away. Why not get started now?"

Joan stood up. "What's the rush?" she asked idly. "I've thought it all out. When you have three years to concentrate on one subject, you generally get it straight. If we don't make a move, the boys will think I got the money and escaped. After awhile they'll relax. The cops will stop looking for you and we can walk out, pick up the money and get away clean. Meanwhile this is a perfect spot. You don't know how perfect because you haven't spent thirty-six long months in an eight-foot cell. And stop worrying. The wrinkles are half an inch deep in your forehead."

He began pacing the floor.

"I can see your side of it," he mumbled, "and I give you credit for being smooth enough to think it up. But me—I've got to have action. I just can't wait around. If the cops ever track down this place, our number is up. I'm worrying about you, too. They won't give you the slightest break. When I got this place, I didn't figure on killing a cop. How about it? Let's get going."

She shook her head and lit a cigarette.

"No, Terry. I've been cooped up too long not to enjoy this place. We're perfectly safe here and we'll stay—until I give the word. I'll promise you this: If anything happens, I'll take you to the hiding place in thirty or forty minutes."

He glared at her and then shrugged. "You hold all the cards. I'm nothing but a stooge for a blonde."

"But a beautiful blonde," she purred and smiled up at him.

He laughed at that one as he walked over to the window and stood staring down at the street through a slit in the curtains.

**J**OAN flung her cigarette down angrily and arose.

"Anybody would think I was poison!" she raged. "Stop worrying, will you, or you'll have me wearing out a path in the rug."

"Quiet!" He held up his hand, checking any further flow of irate words. "There's a bus just pulled up

—a big black one just like the sedan we got away from. Joan, when you talked in prison, you spilled too much. Those hobs checked on me—found I'd hired this place. Now they've spotted my car. We've got to—"

"Turn around and grab yourself a chunk of ceiling," a voice rasped from behind them.

They turned swiftly. Two men were inside the room. They had opened the door with some kind of a pass key and accomplished it so noiselessly that neither Terry nor Joan had even heard the scrape of metal against metal.

The larger man was a huge fellow with bristling eyebrows and thick, wide lips. His companion was small, seemed almost shriveled beside him. His mouth was a gash cut through milk-white flesh. There was absolutely no color to his lips.

Terry and Joan raised their hands.

"Marco!" Joan cried with forced

*(Continued on Page 104)*

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# GUNS DON'T LIE

By OWEN FOX JEROME

Author of "The Golf Club Murder," "Doubling for Deaths" etc

**M**A RTIN KEBLER, BALLISTICS

expert, adjusted the light above his binocular microscope. His face was grim as he surveyed the little row of fired bullets with their anonymously identifying tags. He smiled bleakly as he picked up the fourth pellet, the one at the end, marked "death bullet."

He hefted it in his palm before plac-



Martiu Kebler

ing under the microscope. "Jowls" Rittner, killed by that bullet, had been a king of rats. He had richly deserved to die. But the law couldn't look at things that way. So—if Homicide had grabbed the right suspects—the owner of one of those guns whose test bullets were marked so simply from one to three, was doomed to pay whatever penalty the court meted out.

Kebler knew all about the case. Who didn't? The slaying of the wealthy night-club owner, Rittner, had been

plastered all over the tabloids for three days. The ballistics expert had become acquainted with the rouse in the old days when Kay Lamarr sang torch songs in his Zero Club. Kay was a swell girl. She had been fond of Martin, too—before she met his kid brother, George Kebler, the lad Martin had been putting through college.

Kebler sighed as he placed number-one bullet in position to compare the markings with the death bullet. It seemed a century ago, but it had only been five short years. Nothing had happened at first; things like that came about gradually. It had just been a few months ago that Kay told him she was in love with George, and there wasn't anything she could do about it. There wasn't anything Martin could do, either. George was a good kid—one of the best—and he was already making a name for himself at textile designing.

After a lapse of time Kay had gone back to work for Jowls Rittner in his new Crystal Slipper. And that was when trouble started. Martin recalled his last conversation with Kay.

"Mart, I can't stand it any longer," she had said. "If that overstuffed sausage doesn't quit pestering me, IH—I'll—blow up."

"Why don't you quit, Kay?" he had suggested. "You don't have to work, you know. George will soon be on his feet, and—I'll help."

"You're such a dear, Mart," she had responded. "I feel like a dog already. And Rittner has me under contract. I'm not a quitter."

"I know that," Kebler had assured her. "I'll speak to Rittner for you"

"No, don't! George has done so. They—they had a bad quarrel last night in Rittner's office. Maybe things will be all right now."

Martin Kebler, Master Bullet-Reader, Traces  
a Death Weapon to an Unexpected Source I

But they hadn't been all right. Jowls Hittner had been found on the floor beside his desk, his black blood raining his Turkistan rug from a hole in his shirt front directly over his heart. Gripped in his right hand was his own .38 automatic, from which one bullet had been fired. The paraffin test proved that he had fired that shot himself. But the slug was never found. Either his killer had carried it away, or j& had ricocheted out the open window.

Martin Kebler stiffened slightly and began re-counting the minute rifling marks on the second specimen. It matched perfectly with the slug extracted from Rittner's heart. Number two, therefore was from the death gun! Nevertheless, Kebler methodically removed it and inserted bullet number three for a check.

One gun, Kebler knew, had been Rittner's. One had been that of "Slats" Delaney, Rittner's plug-ugly body-guard. The third had been a .38 automatic the detectives had found in—Kay Lamarr's handbag.

The third bullet didn't check, and the ballistics expert slowly removed it. He was alone in the laboratory, and now his face was suddenly old and drawn and gray,

He got up and went to another table where three .38 automatics laid, all tagged and numbered. Number one was Rittner's gun. Number three belonged to Delaney, who languished in a detention cell, awaiting vindication or condemnation. Number two—was the gun taken from Kay Lamarr.

It was the gun he had given George a couple of years ago when he had purchased a pair of Colts. Kay had got that gun from George. Before or after the killing?

Kebler's actions then became peculiar. He went back to his workbench and opened a drawer. From this he drew an automatic, the twin to the death gun.

Carefully he changed the barrels of the two weapons. It took all of his skill with weapons to make both of them function properly, but he was something of a gunsmith as well as a ballistics expert.

This having been done, he put the incriminating barrel in its new housing back into the drawer. The death gun, with his own barrel, he loaded with one cartridge and calmly fired it into a huge bar of compound.

Digging out the bullet, he cleansed it and substituted it for number two. This done, he took the telephone and called for the captain in charge of the Homicide Squad. Captain Richards came in almost at once, his face beaming with expectancy.

"Well, Kebler," he asked briskly, "what's the verdict?"

The ballistics expert indicated the three guns and the four bullets.

"Nothing, Richards," he said in an even tone. "You've drawn blanks." Then, as the captain's face registered incredulous disappointment, he went on. "There's no use holding out any longer. You'd finally get around to me, anyway. Here's the death gun. Check it yourself."

E pulled open his drawer and took out his own weapon.

"Yours?" demanded Richards in disbelief.

"Mine," answered Kebler in a weary voice.

"Hell!" said Richards. "I would have sworn it was going to be the dame's gun. But—but, you t Why did you do it—if you did do it?"

"Ballistics don't lie, Richards."

"But—but why? The woman would have got off on a manslaughter charge. I knew you knew her, that she was going to marry your brother—but what made you tangle with Rittner?"

"She is my wife/ Martin Kebler said simply.

*Coming in the Next Issue*

## THE GHOST STRIKES AGAIN

A Complete Book-Length Mystery Novel

PAYOFF IN LEAD  
(Continued from Page 101)

eagerness. "Am I glad to see you! Terry Black has been trying to find you for the last week. I wanted things to be all set when I got out, so we could get the money. Gosh, Marco, it's good to see you again."

"Yes it is!" Marco drawled sarcastically. "You'd rather see anybody in the world but me. And don't try the hokum, Joan. You pulled that plenty when you ran with my boys. You two-timed us and it's going to get you one nice hot wad of lead—unless you talk."

Terry Black stepped forward and Marco slugged him with the barrel of his gun. Black calmly wiped blood off his face.

"You and your gunnie are a pair of fools!" he told Marco. "Joan's on the level. We even had to knock off a copper so there wouldn't be a trail for 'em to follow. The dough is safe and ready for a split. How many ways I don't know, because Joan hasn't told me how many of your boys were in that stickup."

"Nice little place you got here, Joan." Marco disregarded Terry's words and looked around approvingly. Then he snarled: "Come on, Black, spill it! Where's the dough hidden?"

The detective shrugged. They were getting careless now. Only that flour-faced mug by the door worried him. Terry Black had a hunch that hood would shoot and would glory in the sight of his victim slumping to the floor. Marco was too busy watching Joan to be as great an immediate danger as White Face.

"Well?" Marco demanded of Black. "Do you talk or do I let Smalley blow your damned head off?"

"I don't know where the stuff is," Black said steadily. "Joan didn't tell me. In fact, she refused pointblank. Said she wouldn't talk until you got here. This is a fine way to show your appreciation, Marco. We could have lammed after we left you high and

dry down that side street."

"Why didn't you stop then?" Marco snapped.

"Smart guy," Black derided. "In the first place I had just bumped a copper. How'd I know that car wasn't filled with more cops? And you wouldn't have listened to reason then anyway."

Marco relaxed still more but Smalley, by the door, just listened with a scornful expression. Terry Black leaned against a table, putting the flat of his hand on its smooth surface. Three inches from his fingers was a plaster statuette of a giraffe, a crazy monstrous caricature, but heavy and easy to grab.

**M**ARCO was standing close to Joan. Smalley was looking their way now and Black went into action. The giraffe went sailing across the room. Before it landed against Smalley's startled face, Terry Black was lunging for Marco.

Marco tried to get his gun up. Black kept it down, pointed at the floor. He brought up his right fist in a beautiful arc. It clipped Marco on the chin and the big man reeled backward. Black snatched the gun from his hand, seized Joan's arm and propelled her toward the door.

Smalley was trying to get up off the floor and fumbling for his gun, which had dropped from his limp hand. The private detective stopped long enough to kick him under the chin. Then he and the blonde girl raced into the hallway. Footsteps on the stairs warned them others were coming. Joan peered down.

"Two more of Marco's mob!" she whispered. "We can't go that way."

"Up!" Black urged her. "Up the steps. Never mind the elevator. There'll be a man in each one. We've got to reach the roof. It's our only chance."

They ran up the stairs until they reached the top floor, panting. A nar-



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PROF. ANTHONY BARKER  
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row stairway leading to the skylight wad fully exposed and a man was half-way dow\$ the steps. Marco had blocked every exit!

The guard on the steps saw Black and Joan instantly. A gun in his fist exploded and the bullet tore a chunk of plaster out of the wall. Black fired from the hip. The gunman dropped off the steps and landed with a hard thump.

Black was at his side in a moment. His quick eyes had already noted an empty apartment door open and he dragged the man inside. He was quite dead.

Below, they could hear the others running up while Marco's voice urged them on. Someone stepped out of an apartment to register a protect at the racket. A gun banged and a man screamed. Marco was not stopping at anything now.

"Get into that closet, Joan!" Terry Black ppointed across the empty apartment. "Stay there until I tell you to come out."

Joan obeyed and Terry was ripping the necktie from his collar before she had closed the closet dogr. Ripping off his tie he knotted it to the cravat of the dead man, pushed the apartment door half closed and stepped behind it. pe held the end > of the necktie in one hand, his gain in the other.

Marco barged by the door, skidded to a halt and came back, Jerry 2|lack tugged on the necktie and the dead

(Continued on Paee 106)

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(Continued from Page 10S)

man's body rose slightly, as though he was resting on one elbow. It was an astonishingly real tableau in the semi-darkness.

"Roof!" Black croaked. "Got away—over—roof. I'm—all right."

"Okay, Joe," Marco answered. "We'll be back for you."

The rest of the mob followed Mario to the roof steps. Black sped across the room, motioned to Joan and they ran lightly into the hallway. The elevator was on the floor level, the door open. Apparently one of Mario's boys had taken care of the operator. Joan clung to Terry's arm as they shot toward the street level.

"That was wonderful!" she told him. "Only you should have plugged Marco. Then we'd have no more trouble."

There were several people in the lobby, but none paid any attention to Slack and Joan as they hurried to the door. One minute after they stepped to the sidewalk, a policeman ran by them. He looked over his shoulder queerly, but dashed on into the building.

TERRY BLACK jumped behind the wheel of his car and Joan clambered into the seat beside him. They pulled away from the curb, took the next corner, straightened out after they hit an avenue and the hard-toiled private detective let her roll.

"Did you see the way that copper looked at me?" he asked. "One more second and he'd have recognized me. They're wise. Now do you see we must get the money and run for it?"

"I—I saw him." Joan shivered. "I'm sure he knew you. They'll have an alarm out in a minute. We got away from Marco all right, but I don't like cops any more than you do. Okay, Terry, follow my directions and we'll have the dough in a few minutes."

He headed for the outskirts under her orders. Joan talked, mostly to keep her nerves composed.

"The day of the stickup Marco had me drive the car because a good-looking blonde at the wheel of a car parked outside a bank isn't as suspicious as some ratty-looking mobster. It was my idea, but Marco thinks it was his. We made our getaway, but those radio cars got on the job almost at once, and they began to cut us off. Marco and the boys got out, one by one, and slipped away. Soon as I was alone, I knew I had to hide the money. So I kept looking for a likely spot and luck was with me. I found the best little safe deposit vault in the world. Cops and Marco's boys have searched three years to find the stuff and I'll bet they were only two feet away more than once."

Black grunted something unintelligible. Joan gripped his arm.

"If you don't stop worrying," she chided, "you'll have me in a stew too. See that cemetery? Park outside the gates. The dough is right there."

"In a grave?" Black asked thunderstruck.

"No, you fool! They'd have looked into any graves that were newly dug the day of the stickup. The cops knew I had been around the cemetery. That fence is made of cement, Terry. It's two and a half feet thick. The day I rode by, workmen had just dumped fresh cement to make that wall. I buried the bag of money in the soft cement. Next day they poured some more on it and after it had hardened, they took away all that wooden framework—and there was my dough, nice as could be."

Terry Black grinned at her. "Boy, was that smart! But we've got to work fast now. Once I thought a car was tailing us, but it disappeared. I'll bust the lock on the gate, duck inside and swipe a sledge hammer or a pick. You find the section of wall where you buried the stuff and I'll dig it out."

He left her there so she could examine the wall and determine the exact hiding place. Inside the cemetery, he

*(Continued on Page 108)*

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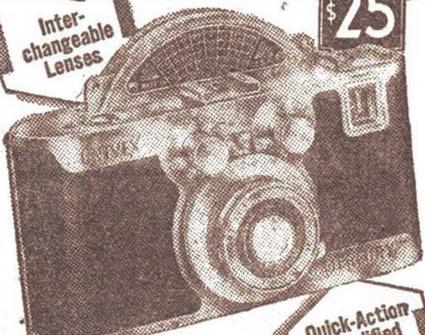
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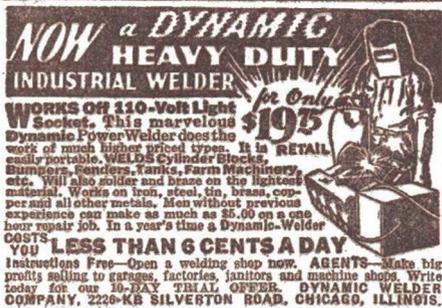


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(Continued from Page 107)

ran across the lawns, skirted tombstones and located the tool shed. He broke the lock easily, took out a pick and a heavy hammer. When he returned, Joan was waiting, watching the road nervously.

"It's right here." She pointed to a section of the wall. "Hurry! I—I'm afraid, too. You've got me as-worried as yourself."

Terry Black hefted the sledge hammer and let go. But the cement was adamant. He used the pick, swinging mighty blows for they were necessary.

They were far from any house and the noise he made meant little. Twenty minutes passed before the pick sank through a layer of cement and cut the sides of a leather bag. Joan gave a cry of exultation.

**T**HE detective dug faster until he had cut away the whole section. But the bag was imbedded fast. He slit the sides of the leather container, scooped out sheafs of bills and Joan picked them up from the ground. She made two trips to the car with her arms full of cash. She was picking up another load when Marco's voice startled them.

He and four of his men had slipped quietly through the cemetery gates. They were lined up now, guns covering Black and Joan.

"Nice work," Marco gloated. "Keep going, Black. Soon as you get every bill out of that wall, we'll pay you off—in lead."

Terry Black raised his hands. Joan shivered and babbled something. In her mind revolved only the thought that three years of silence had served her nothing. At the moment when safety and success seemed nearest, defeat had come like a bombshell.

"You fooled me once," Marco told Black. "I give you credit—only you weren't so smart on the getaway. We had a guy parked in a car outside. He saw you leave, trailed you here and then phoned me. We slipped into the

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cemetery by climbing the fence down the street. You were so busy hacking away at the wall that you didn't see or hear us. Come on—use the pick some more. Be sure there ain't any dough left in that wall."

Black bent down, grasped the pick and estimated his chances of hurling it. There just were not any chances. Not when five guns covered him and the men behind them were extremely watchful now that they had recognized the detective's slippery nature.

Marco walked up to Joan and grasped her arm roughly. She gave a little cry of pain. Marco laughed.

"Aw, don't be so scared. If it wasn't I liked you, Joan, I'd line you up against the wall with that rat and blast you down. That's his finish. You going to behave?"

Joan did not reply. She could not, for her lips were paralyzed with terror. She knew, too well, that her own life would pay for the run around she had given the gang.

"It's all out," Terry Black said calmly. "Every bill."

"Walk ten paces to the left," Marco ordered. "Then stand like you're made of cement too. Smalley, grab the dough. Put it all in our buggy. Snap it up before somebody comes along and we have to do some more killing."

Smalley obeyed promptly. Then Marco signaled his men. They drew close together in one line. The detec-

*(Continued on Page 110)*

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(Continued from Page 109)

tive, his back against the cement wall, found beads of sweat running down his face. Marcd laughed raucously.

"Just like they do in war, huh, Black? Stick you up against a wall—and blooey, you're dead! Ready to take it, sucker? Boys, shoot all at once and then lam. Five guns will make a heti of a lot of noise. Keep squeezing thfc trigger until you've fired three or four times. We want to be sure this guy is stone dead."

The five guns came up and centered. Joan, still gripped by Marco's brawny arm, thrust her face into his coat and began to scream.

"If you're making it look like the Shooting of a spy," Black Said, forcing calm into his voice, "why not do it all the way through? They give a man about to be shot a cigarette, or a drink, or at least a blindfold. I don't want any of those. All I ask is half a minute with Joan. I—£ fell for her, see? I—I just want to—kiss her—good-by."

**T**HE drama of that appealed to Marco's warped senses. He clucked his tongue in mock sympathy, gave Joan a hard shove and sent her reeling toward Black. She could hardly stand and her makeup shone like gaudy paint on a white canvas.

Terry Black took her into his arms. She put her own about his neck. He moved his lips toward hers and then spoke in a whisper.

"When I say 'duck,' drop flat. Hear me? It's the only way."

He kissed her then and slowly turned her around until his back was toward the gang. Marto and his four men eyed the proceedings with relish. It made them feel as though they were great humanitarians, giving the condemned a last moment with his beloved. It was like the movies and they gloried in it for, after all, they were the foremost participants. Then, too, the car was loaded with three hundred thousand dollars worth of currency

that could be spent freely, for none of the bills had been listed.

"Okay," Marco growled. "Joan, come back here."

"Duck," Terry ground out and put all his weight against Joan.

They dropped to the ground and a second later the night silence was filled with the din of exploding guns. Marco seemed to be almost cut in half as he pitched to the ground. Smatley's body jerked as bullets tore into him. The others merely slumped sideward.

From the cemetery gate streamed a horde of blue-uniformed men, led by a captain.

"Man, that was close!" The police captain wiped the sweat from his face. "I thought we'd have to let the girl have it too."

Joan was staring at the score of police. Her eyes ran along the top of the cemetery wall to the gate where eight men with rapid-fire rifles had watched the proceedings. Other policemen were examining the firing squad.

"Smalley's dead—so's Marco," a sergeant reported. "The other three are wounded, but I'm afraid they'll live."

"Here come the ambulances," the captain said and sirens shrieked closer and closer.

The first car to stop was a coupe. A man jumped out.

"Hey, Tommy, it's a boy! Eight and a half pounds. A boy!"

Terry Black gave a whoop of delight. He kissed Joan, almost kissed the captain and threw both arms into the air.

"Wow!" he shouted. "A boy! That's swell! Ain't that swell, Captain?"

Joan suddenly seized both of Terry Black's arms and looked up at him.

"You're a stool pigeon," she snapped. "You're nothing but a rotten, low-down squealer."

Terry Black, alias Tommy Dolan, did not lose his wide grin.

(Continued on Page 112)

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(Continued from Page 111)  
 "No I'm not. I'm a cop—a detective-sergeant. Your letter was picked up by the censors\* We stowed the real Terry Black away and I took his place. Joan, did you hear that? It's a boy! Hot dog!"

"Terry—or whatever your name is,"—Joan shook him—"have you forgotten—the cop! The one we left in the road?"

A husky-looking man laughed loudly and moved forward. Joan saw him in the light of many flashlights. She gave a little cry and wilted.

"It—it's—him," she moaned and pointed a shivering finger. Then her eyes were clear again. "So it was a plant! You didn't plug him at all. Terry, you're still a rat."

**T**HE ertsw while Terry Black laughed.

"That was just to make you hurry things along. I figured if you thought you were in on a cop kill, you'd want to get the dough as quickly as possible. The apartment was just a spot for us to go for a few minutes while the rest of the boys picked up our trail. I didn't figure on Marco, although we wanted him, too. We never were sure who pulled that stickup\*"

Joan sighed deeply. "Okay. I know when I'm licked. I know why you were so worried, too. Your wife in the hospital and a kid coming and all." She reached up and patted his cheek. "Never mind. I'm only jealous of that woman who is the mother of your son. And Terry—or whatever your name is—thanks for saving me. I know now that it was jUst a trick, that saying good-by, so I'd be clear when your men started to shoot."

Terry Black lost his smile for a moment. She was just a woman who stood before him. A woman still beautiful and brave in defeat.

"Sorry, kid," he said gently. "You'll have to go back to prison, but not for too long, I hope. So far as the mur-

**BEST FUN, FICTION AND FOTOS**

ders during the stickup are concerned, the D. A. won't press that now—if you'll talk. I'm sorry I had to fool you."

She threw both hands into the air and laughed a little hysterically. Then she walked up to the captain.

"Okay, skipper, take me away. Put me behind bars where there are no men. Me—who kept the boys on a string for years and years—getting taken for a nice little ride by a new papa. Prison will look good to me."

*Qominq. VbzxL Qaaial*



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28x4-17-19	2.45	28x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
28x4-17-20	2.55	28x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-20	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-21	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-22	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-23	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-24	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-25	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-26	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-27	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-28	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-29	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-30	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-31	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-32	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-33	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-34	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-35	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-36	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-37	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-38	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-39	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-40	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-41	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-42	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-43	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-44	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-45	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-46	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-47	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-48	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-49	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-50	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-51	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-52	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-53	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-54	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-55	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-56	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-57	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-58	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-59	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-60	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-61	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-62	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-63	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-64	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-65	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-66	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-67	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-68	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-69	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-70	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-71	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-72	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-73	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-74	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-75	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-76	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-77	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-78	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-79	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-80	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-81	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-82	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-83	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-84	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-85	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-86	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-87	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-88	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-89	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-90	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-91	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-92	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-93	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-94	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-95	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-96	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-97	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
30x4-20-98	2.55	30x4	2.35	30x4 1/2	2.45	30x4	2.45
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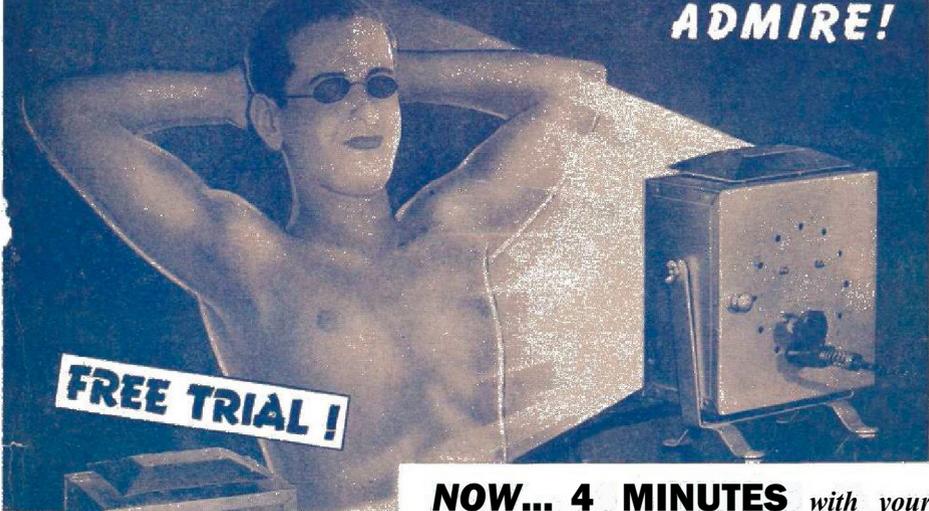
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