

SEPT.

THRILLING

MYSTERY

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**BEST ACTION
DETECTIVE STORIES**

A THRILLING
PUBLICATION

**BUY WAR BONDS
AND STAMPS
FOR VICTORY!**

FEATURING
**THE
CASE OF THE
MURDEROUS
MERMAID**

A Complete Green Ghost
Mystery Novel
By G. T.
FLEMING-ROBERTS

**SHADOW
OF THE KILLER**
A Colonel Crum Novolet
By **JOHN H. KNOX**



New! SPECIAL EVEREADY FLASHLIGHT TRADE-MARK FOR CIVILIAN WARTIME USE!



Made of special 5-ply fibre, new laboratory-tested design saves copper, brass, nickel, chromium and other metals vital to war use!



STRONG! . . . Made of special fibre sheets, tightly laminated in 5 layers, the tube is tough and hard. It will give long years of service!



WATER-REPELLENT! This new "Eveready" flashlight is protected by a special water-proof coating which seals out moisture.



LONG LASTING! . . . Drop it on concrete floor—this flashlight case can "take" ordinary abuse. It's actually more durable than millions of flashlights now in use.

METALS HAVE GONE TO WAR!

But metals or no metals, America needs flashlights . . . at home, in business, on the farm, in the factory . . . needs them for a thousand vital civilian uses.

And America shall have them!

This national need—made more pressing than ever by wartime emergency conditions—has been answered by the world's largest

flashlight-and-battery laboratory.

Here it is—the new "Eveready" flashlight made of tough, 5-ply fibre—tested and proven under severest laboratory conditions.

Yet it is made virtually *without* the use of metal. Soon available at all dealers!



NATIONAL CARBON COMPANY, INC.
30 East 42nd Street, New York, N. Y.

Unit of Union Carbide and Carbon Corporation



The word "Eveready" is a registered trade-mark of National Carbon Company, Inc.



Keep flashlights loaded with dependable fresh DATED "Eveready" batteries—and have an extra set on hand for your light in case of long-continued use.

FRESH BATTERIES LAST LONGER . . .
Look for the **DATE-LINE**

With the
United
States
at



WHAT ARE
YOU
GOING TO DO TO
HELP?



**I Am Ready to
HELP YOU
Help
WIN THE WAR**

J. Edgar Hoover
Director

**EASY TO LEARN
AT HOME!**

*Turn those precious hours
you may be idling away
around the house into price-
less knowledge which will
serve you all your life.*

**FREE "BLUE BOOK OF
CRIME"**

Gives the case histories of famous crimes and how they were solved by experts. This book has been an "eye-opener" to thousands. It told them how they could prepare themselves at small cost and in short time to fill good-pay, responsible positions in Identification Work. Send for it FREE today, stating age.

**This May Be Your Opportunity for
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You're a good loyal American; you want to do your part! All of us can't be soldiers, or sailors, or air pilots, but we can serve. One way to do it is to master a trade or vocation which will help win the war and at the same time prepare you for a good position after the war is over.

CRIME IS AN ENEMY

Training which enables you to thwart crime within our own borders will help to win the war with the Japs and other foreign foes. You'll get such training through the I.A.S. Course in Finger Printing and other Crime Detection Methods, and you can *learn right at home*, in spare time, at small cost.

For 26 years the I.A.S. has been preparing ambitious men to fill responsible positions in Identification Bureaus throughout America. Today over 43 per cent of all the Nation's Identification Bureaus are run by our graduates.

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Scientific crime detection offers excellent opportunities now . . . and the future promises even greater possibilities. A recent Gallup poll shows that 69% of America's population wants every one in the U.S. to be finger printed right now. Hundreds of Defense Plants are now finger printing employees. The potential value of finger print training grows day by day.

NOW'S THE TIME TO START

Now . . . when the demand for our graduates is greater than ever before . . . when new Bureaus and National Defense are finding need of more and more trained finger print experts . . . makes the present time the ideal time to get into this pleasant, profitable, thrilling work.

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Gentlemen: Without obligation, send me the "Blue Book of Crime" and complete list of over 840 bureaus employing I.A.S. graduates. Also give me information regarding cost and terms.

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Name..... Age.....
Address

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• EVERY STORY BRAND NEW •

THRILLING MYSTERY

Vol. XIX, No. 2

September, 1942

Price 10c



A Complete Green Ghost Mystery Novel

The Case of the **MURDEROUS MERMAID**

By G. T. FLEMING-ROBERTS

George Chance, Magician-Detective, Adopts the Role of the Green Ghost to Help Ex-Circus Pals when a Mysterious Brutal Killer Runs Amok! - - - - - 13

A Complete Colonel Crum Novelet

SHADOW OF THE KILLER - - - - - John H. Knox 56

The Mystery of a Fifteen-Year-Old Kidnaping Leads the Midget Detective Straight to a Grim Political Crime and Blackmail Set-up!

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AMATEUR DEATH - - - - - Lansing Stebbins 50

An "Accident" Turns Out to Be a Well-Planned Murder

HIS GRAVE WAS DEEP - - - - - C. G. Tahney 77

Lambert's Perfect Crime Would Baffle the Police, But—

CURSE OF THE COBRA - - - - - Henry Kuttner 87

Disaster Comes to Those Who Would Arouse the Wrath of Yakamwa

PREMIUM FOR MURDER - - - - - C. S. Montanye 96

Detective Bannon Can't Take it Easy when a Desperate Killer Plays Possum

and

MYSTERY-SCOPES - - - - - Chakra 102

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PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.



EARN A RADIO TECHNICIAN'S PAY

IF you still have a low pay job—if the War has cut instead of jumped your pay—or if you now have a War job that you know won't last—take a tip from the hundreds of men who have jumped their pay by training at home in spare time to become Radio Technicians. Today these men enjoy good civilian and military jobs in a field with a bright peace-time future.

Here is a Tested Way to Begin Earning More Money Quickly

Radio offers you the opportunity to make \$5, \$10 a week extra fixing Radios in spare time a few months from now and to prepare for good full time Radio jobs paying up to \$50 a week. **MAIL THE COUPON.** Get the facts about how to learn jobs like these at home.

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

The Radio repair business is booming because manufacturers have stopped making new home

and auto Radios and the country's 57,400,000 sets are getting older, requiring more repairs, new tubes, parts. This is opening new opportunities for full time and part time Radio Technicians to get good jobs, or to open their own Radio repair businesses. Radio Technicians and Operators hold good jobs in the country's 889 Broadcasting Stations and in Aviation, Police, Commercial, Marine Radio, Loud Speaker Systems give good jobs to many. The Government is calling for Civilian Radio Operators and Technicians. Military orders for tremendous quantities of Radio equipment are keeping Radio factories busy, opening more good job opportunities. Men who know Radio are in line for extra rank and pay in the Army and Navy. Radio developments such as Television and Frequency Modulation, held back by the War, make Radio a live-wire field for the future.

Beginners Soon Learn to Earn \$5, \$10 a Week Extra in Spare Time


Due to the boom in the Radio repair business, practically every neighborhood offers opportunities for a good part time Radio Technician to make extra money fixing Radios. I

give you special training to show you how to start cashing in on these opportunities early. You get 6 Rich Kits of Radio Parts and instructions for conducting experiments and building test equipment to help you do better, faster Radio repair work. My 50-50 method—half working with the Radio parts I send you, half studying my lesson texts—makes learning Radio at home interesting, fascinating; gives you valuable practical experience.


Find Out How I Train You at Home for Good Pay in Radio

MAIL THE COUPON. I'll send my 64-page Book FREE. It tells about my Course; the present and future jobs in different branches of Radio; the many calls for Radio Technicians today. Read letters from more than 100 men I have trained so you can see what they are doing and earning. **MAIL THE COUPON** in an envelope or pasted on a penny postal.

J. E. SMITH, President
Dept. 2J09, National Radio Institute
Washington, D. C.



**EXTRA PAY IN
ARMY, NAVY, TOO**



Men likely to go into military service, soldiers, sailors, marines, should mail the Coupon Now! Learning Radio helps men get extra rank, extra prestige, more interesting duty at pay up to several times a private's base pay. Also prepares for good Radio jobs after service ends. **IT'S SMART TO TRAIN FOR RADIO NOW!**

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THIS FREE BOOK HAS SHOWN HUNDREDS HOW TO MAKE GOOD MONEY

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Mail me FREE, without obligation, your big 64-page book about present and future opportunities in Radio and how you train me for them.

Age.....

Name.....

Address.....

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





Plays on Radio

"I am happy to tell you that for four weeks I have been on the air over our local radio stations. So thanks to your institution for such a wonderful course."

• W. H. S., Alabama.



Found Accordion Easy

"I've always wanted to play the piano accordion," writes "H. E. from Canada. "But thought I'd never learn it. Then I read about your lessons. I don't know how to express my satisfaction."

* Actual pupils' names on request. Pictures by Professional Models.

DO YOU PLAY?

Say "Yes" Next Time They Ask!

Surprise your friends! Learn to play the piano or other musical instruments this quick, easy way. First lesson starts you playing real tunes.

IF YOU'VE often been asked that question: "Do you play?" Everybody looks at you expectantly, waiting for you to sit down at the piano and entertain the crowd. Are you compelled to embarrass yourself and throw cold water on the party by saying "No"?

What a difference it would make if you could say "Yes". Think of the good times and popularity in store if you could only play the piano or some other musical instrument—the guitar, violin, accordion, saxophone or whichever one happens to be your favorite.

Well, you CAN. You can learn to play any musical instrument you please. You can do it by a method that's EASIER AND QUICKER than you perhaps ever thought possible. It takes only a few minutes a day at home, at your own convenience. You save the expense of a private teacher, so the cost is trifling.

Thousands Now Play Who Never Thought They Could

Does it sound too good to be done? Then remember this: Thousands have learned to play by this amazingly easy method. Thousands of men, women and children in all walks of life—in all parts of the world. People who had never played before, who knew nothing about music and had no special talent.

Imagine their joy, when, in a remarkable short time, they found themselves actually PLAYING! Imagine the astonishment of their friends! No wonder the fame of this amazing method spread, until today, over 500,000 people all over the world have enrolled for it.

Music Made Easy as A-B-C

How is it possible to learn music so easily? What is this famous U. S. School method of home instruction? Here is the secret: this modern, short-cut method skips the tedious drudgery of old-fashioned methods. Instead, it starts you playing—a simple, popular tune in your very first lesson, another in your second lesson and so on. Fascinating print-and-picture lessons make everything clear. You see what to do—you can't go wrong.

Send For Booklet With Print and Picture Sample

If you would sincerely like to play a musical instrument, you will be thrilled by the free illustrated booklet and Print and Picture Sample that tells how easily you can learn. Mail the coupon or write for them today, mentioning the instrument in which you are interested. (Instruments supplied when needed, cash or credit.) Address: U. S. School of Music, 2949 Brunswick Bldg., New York, N. Y.

Forty-fourth year. (Established 1898)

U. S. SCHOOL OF MUSIC,
2949 Brunswick Bldg., New York City.

I am interested in music study, particularly in the instrument indicated below. Please send me your free booklet, "How to Learn Music at Home," and your Print and Picture Sample. (Do you have instrument.....)

Piano	Saxophone	Cornet
Violin	Trumpet	Piano Accordion
Guitar	Trombone	Plain Accordion
Cello	Tenor Sax	Hawaiian Guitar
Mandolin	Ukulele	Other Instrument

Name

Street

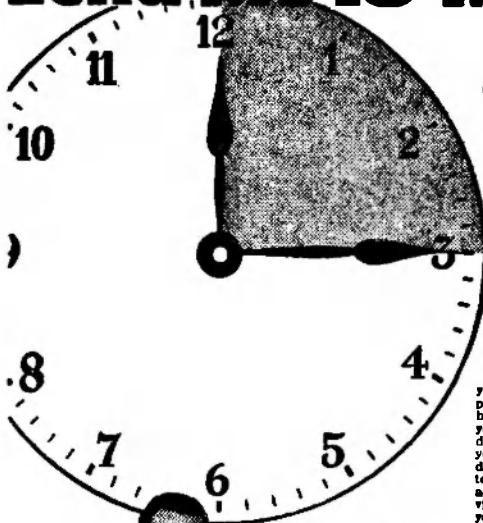
City..... State.....

NOTE: If under 18 years of age, parent must sign coupon.

Save 2c—Stick coupon on penny postcard

Lend Me 15 Minutes A Day

*..and I'll prove
I can make you
a NEW MAN*



I'M "trading-in" old bodies for new! I'm taking men I who know that the condition of their arms, shoulders, chests and legs—their strength, "wind," and endurance—is not 100%. And I'm making NEW MEN of them.

I don't care how old or young you are, or how ashamed of your present physical condition you may be. I can add **SOLID MUSCLE** to your biceps—yes, on each arm—in double quick time! I can broaden your shoulders, strengthen your back, develop your whole muscular system **INSIDE** and **OUTSIDE**! I can add inches to your chest, give you a vice-like grip, make those legs of yours lithe and powerful. I can shoot new strength into your old backbone, exercise those inner organs, help you cram your body so full of pep, vigor and red-blooded vitality that there's not even "standing room" left for weakness and that lazy feeling! Before I get through with you I'll have your whole frame "measured" to a nice, new, beautiful suit of muscle!

What 15 Minutes a Day Can Do For You

Are you **ALL MAN**—tough-muscled, on your toes every minute, with all the up-and-at-'em that can lick your weight in wildcats? Or do you need the help I can give you—the help that has already worked such wonders for other fellows, everywhere?

In just 15 minutes a day, right in the privacy of your own home, I'm ready to prove that "Dynamic Tension" can lay a new outfit of solid muscle over every inch of your body. Let me put new, smashing power into your arms and shoulders—give you an armor-plate of stomach muscle that laughs at punctures—strengthen your legs into real columns of surging stamina. If lack of exercise or wrong living has weakened you inside, I'll get after that condition, too, and show you how it feels to **LIVE!**

I Was a 97-lb. Weakling

All the world knows I was **ONCE** a skinny, scrawny 97-pound weakling. And **NOW** it knows that I won the title, "The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man." Against all comers! How did I do it? How do I work miracles in the bodies of

FREE THIS FAMOUS BOOK THAT TELLS YOU JUST HOW TO GET A BODY THAT MEN RESPECT AND WOMEN ADMIRE

Almost two million men have sent for and read my book, "Everlasting Health and Strength." It tells you exactly what "Dynamic Tension" can do. And it's packed with pictures that **SHOW** you what it does. Beauties it has produced for other men. **RESULTS** I want to prove it can get for **YOU!** If you are satisfied to take a back seat and be pushed around by other fellows weak-in, weak-out, you don't want this book. But if you want to learn how you can actually become a **NEW MAN**, right in the privacy of your own home and in only 15 minutes a day, then man!—get this coupon into the mail to me as fast as your legs can get to the letterbox! **CHARLES ATLAS, Dept. 77-Y, 115 East 23rd St., New York City.**

MAIL THIS COUPON NOW!

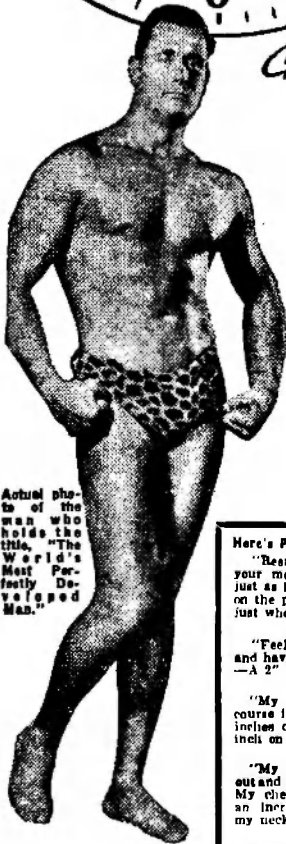
**CHARLES ATLAS, Dept. 77-Y,
115 East 23rd St., New York City**

I want the proof that your system of "Dynamic Tension" will help make a New Man of me—give me a healthy, husky body and big muscular development. Send me your free book, "Everlasting Health and Strength."

Name (Please Print or Write Plainly)

Address

City State



Charles Atlas

America's Greatest "Builder of Men"

Among all the physical instructors and "conditioners of men" **ONLY ONE NAME STANDS OUT.** That name is **Charles Atlas!**

In every part of the country Charles Atlas is recognized as "America's Greatest Builder of Men." Almost two million men have written to him. Thousands upon thousands have put their physical development into his hands!

And now that the call is for men capable of helping America meet and conquer any national emergency, many thousands of others (even those already in their country's Army and Navy) are calling upon Charles Atlas to build the kind of men America vitally needs.

Here's **PROOF** Right Here!

"Results come so fast by your method that it seems just as if some magician put on the pounds of solid muscle just where you want them."
—**W. L., Missouri**

"Feel like a million dollars and have a 44" normal chest—**A 2" GAIN!**"
—**L. A. S., Illinois**

"My doctor thinks your course is fine. Have put two inches on my chest and 1/2 inch on my neck."
—**J. L., Oregon**

"My muscles are bulging out and I feel like a new man. My chest measures 38 in., an increase of 5 in., and my neck increased 2 in."
—**G. M., Ohio**

Actual photo of the man who holds the title, "The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man."



LET'S GET THIS STRAIGHT



THIS WAR is being fought by a big Army. It's an army that is called the United States.

Millions of us are in uniforms and many more millions are not, but how we happen to be dressed isn't what's important.

What is important is whether every one of us is in this fight, giving it everything we have. Any less won't win.

Whether you're a soldier on the firing line, or are backing him up as a soldier on the production line, you're fighting for the same things.

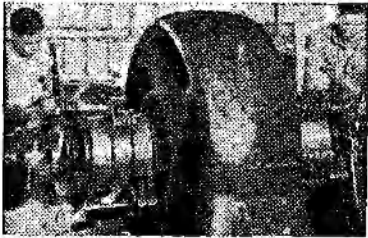
The decision, whether or not we are to live in a decent world as free men in the years to come, is in the making now. It's up to you, Soldier.

A Robert G. ...

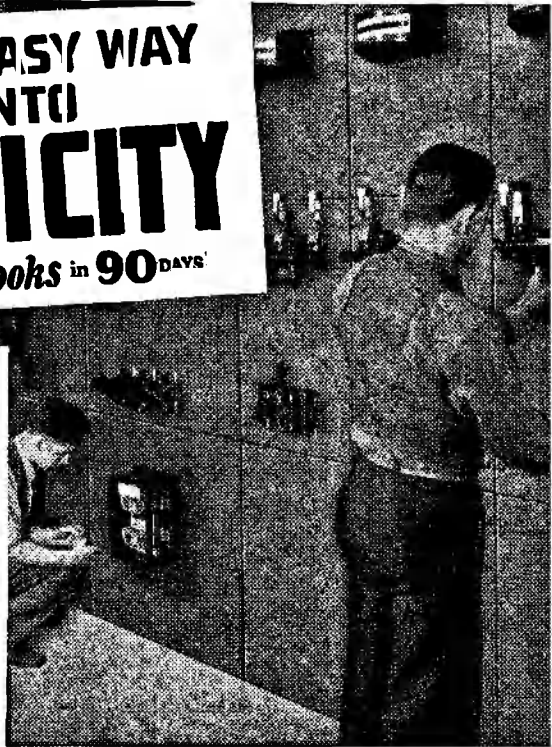
Colonel, G.S.C.
UNITED STATES ARMY

AMAZINGLY EASY WAY TO GET INTO ELECTRICITY

Learn Without Books in 90 DAYS



Electricity is the mighty power behind our Victory Program. Trained Electrical men are needed. PREPARE FOR YOUR PLACE this amazingly easy way. "Learn By Doing" in 12 weeks. You don't need much money—I'll finance your training. READ EVERY WORD OF MY MESSAGE ON THIS PAGE AND SEE HOW YOU CAN DO YOUR PART EITHER IN THE ARMED FORCES OR INDUSTRY.



How Can You Best Serve Your Country Now? How Can You Best Serve Your Country After the War?

IF YOU'RE DRAFTED

If you enter the Army as a trained electrical man, you are eligible to apply for higher rating and bigger pay. In both the Army and the Navy, rated Electrical Workers hold mighty important jobs—just as skilled Electrical Workers hold vital jobs in civilian life. AND THIS IS IMPORTANT: There will be a TREMENDOUS NEED for trained Electrical men after the war. By getting your Electrical Training NOW, you will be ready for a BIG PAY, BIG FUTURE JOB after your service in the Army is over.

IF YOU'RE DEFERRED

Everyone cannot serve in our Armed Forces . . . Some may be too young . . . others too old . . . others with dependents . . . and others with some physical defect. If you cannot serve, don't be discouraged. FROM 16 to 50, EVERYONE WITH PROPER TRAINING CAN SERVE IN WAR INDUSTRY . . . turning out weapons and materials. And remember: Electricity in war time is essentially no different from Electricity in peace time. After the war you'll be an all-around SKILLED ELECTRICIAN ready for a good-pay Peace-time job.



H. C. Lewis

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NOW . . . PAY FOR
IT LATER!**

Coyne Training is EASY, PRACTICAL! You LEARN BY DOING. No dull books. No baffling charts. No reciting. Don't let lack of money stop you. You can get training first—then pay for it in easy monthly payments after you graduate. If you need part-time work to help out with living expenses, I'll help you get it.

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This school is 43 years old—Coyne training is tested and proven. Mail the coupon and let me send you the big, free Coyne book. This does not obligate you. So act at once. Just mail coupon.

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500 S. Paulina St. Dept. 62-84 CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

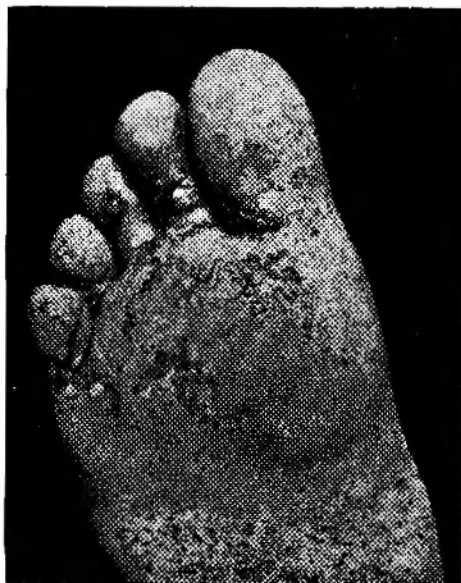
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Send me your Free Book and tell me about your plans to help me.

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY STATE



FOOT ITCH

ATHLETE'S FOOT

*Send Coupon
Don't Pay Until Relieved*

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.

DISEASE OFTEN MISUNDERSTOOD

The cause of the disease is not a germ as so many people think, but a vegetable growth that becomes buried beneath the outer tissues of the skin.

To obtain relief the medicine to be used must first gently dissolve or remove the outer skin and then kill the vegetable growth.

This growth is so hard to kill that a test shows it takes 15 minutes of boiling to destroy it; however, laboratory tests also show that H. F. will kill it upon contact in 15 seconds.

DOUBLE ACTION NEEDED

Recently H. F. was developed solely for the purpose of relieving Athlete's Foot. It both gently dissolves the skin and then kills the vegetable growth upon contact. Both actions are necessary for prompt relief.

H. F. is a liquid that doesn't stain. You just paint the infected parts nightly before going to bed.

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.

814 Perdido St., New Orleans, La.

Please send me immediately a bottle of H. F. 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.....

don't **Worry** about **Rupture**

• Why put up with days . . . months . . . YEARS of discomfort, worry and fear? Learn now about this perfected invention for all forms of reducible rupture. Surely you keenly desire—you eagerly CRAVE to enjoy life's normal activities and pleasures once again. To work . . . to play . . . to live . . . to love . . . with the haunting Fear of Rupture banished from your thoughts! Literally thousands of rupture sufferers have entered this Kingdom of Paradise Regained. Why not you? Some wise man said, "Nothing is impossible in this world"—and it is true, for where other trusses have failed is where we have had our greatest success in many cases! Even doctors—thousands of them—have ordered for themselves and their patients. Unless your case is absolutely hopeless, do not despair. The coupon below brings our Free Rupture Book in plain envelope. Send the coupon now.

Patented AIR-CUSHION Support Gives Nature a Chance to CLOSE the OPENING

Think of it! Here's a surprising yet simple-acting invention that permits Nature to close the opening—that holds the rupture securely but gently, day and night, at work and at play! Thousands of grateful letters express heartfelt thanks for results beyond the expectation of the writers. What is this invention—How does it work? Will it help me? Get the complete, fascinating facts on the Brooks Automatic Air Cushion Appliance—send now for free Rupture Book.

Cheap—Sanitary—Comfortable

Rich or poor—ANYONE can afford to buy this remarkable, LOW-PRICED rupture invention! But look out for imitations and counterfeits. The Genuine Brooks Air-Cushion Truss is never sold in stores or by agents. Your Brooks is made up, after your order is received, to fit your particular case. You buy direct at the low "maker-to-user" price. The perfected Brooks is sanitary, lightweight, inconspicuous. Has no hard pads to gouge painfully into the flesh, no stiff, punishing springs, no metal girdle to rust or corrode. It brings heavenly comfort and security—while the Automatic Air Cushion continually works, in its own, unique way, to help Nature get results! Learn what this patented invention can mean to you—send coupon quick!



C. E. BROOKS,
Inventor

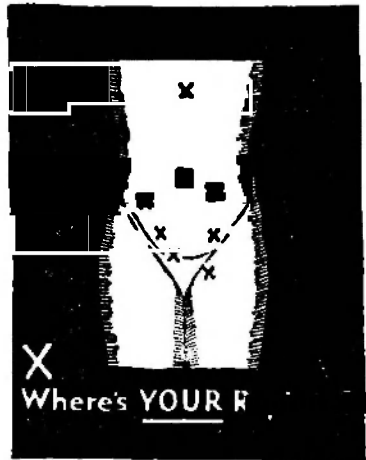
SENT ON TRIAL!

No . . . don't order a Brooks now—FIRST get the complete revealing explanation of this world-famous rupture invention. THEN decide whether you want the comfort—the freedom from fear and worry—the security—the same amazing results thousands of men, women and children have reported. They found our invention the answer to their prayers! Why can't you? And you risk nothing as the complete appliance is SENT ON TRIAL. Surely you owe it to yourself to investigate this no-risk trial. Send for the facts now—today—hurry! All correspondence strictly confidential.

FREE! Latest Rupture Book Explains All!

Sent You in Plain Envelope. Just Clip and Send Coupon →

Brooks Appliance Co., 182D State St., Marshall, Mich.



PROOF!

Proof of the value and outstanding merit of the BROOKS APPLIANCE is clearly shown by the fact that over 9000 doctors have ordered it for themselves or their patients. One doctor alone has ordered for his patients over 400 Brooks Appliances. Follow your doctor's advice! If he says you have a reducible rupture and advises a proper-fitting support, don't subject yourself to further delay, which may prove dangerous, but send us your name and address immediately. Stop Your Rupture Worries! Enjoy the comfort, freedom of action and physical security which this made-to-order appliance will give you.

Mail This Coupon NOW!

BROOKS APPLIANCE CO.
182-D State St., Marshall, Mich.

Without obligation, please send your FREE Book on Rupture, Proof of Results, and TRIAL OFFER—all in plain envelope.

Name _____

Street _____

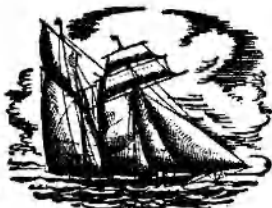
City _____ State _____

Send whether for Man Woman or Child



Capt. Turnbull (1806-1900) — like other old salts of his day — rocked a keg of whiskey under his rocker. Its roll recaptured the motion of the wave-tossed ships on which he'd mellowed many a barrel of whiskey.

**From Mellow Whiskeys
"Rocked in the Keg" came the
Idea for Rocking Chair!**



Mr. Boston knows rocking mellows a whiskey's flavor. So he achieves Rocking Chair's richness by controlled agitation in his special blending process.



Get acquainted with Rocking Chair's smoothness! Buy a bottle—enjoy the mellow taste that made keg-rocked whiskeys so famous. The price is low!

85 Proof (90 Proof in some States)
75% Grain Neutral Spirits
Ben-Burr, Inc., Boston, Mass.



OLD MR. BOSTON
BRAND
ROCKING CHAIR
BLENDED WHISKEY



It would take a college education to know 'em all



**I Went Nuts
in Liquor Stores**
— by *don herold*

I used to go crazy in liquor stores, trying to decide which brand to buy. So many brands! The confusion is terrific for the layman liquor layer-inner.

Then a friend told me his system. He said "I've settled on Old Mr. Boston as MY brand —no matter what type of fine liquor I want."

Me—I have too, now.

It turns out that Old Mr. Boston is the one brand name under which you can buy almost every known type of fine liquor. Other big companies make many liquors, but they give them many different names. It's baffling! It's bejuddling!

In the Old Mr. Boston line you can buy 30 different liquors, all under the one name, and all easy on the palate and pocketbook.



You know Boston. And you know its fine old reputation for craftsmanship. Well, you can smack a taste of the old town's 300-year-old reputation for quality in every drop of every Mr. Boston product.

So why not try the Old Mr. Herold plan and use Old Mr. Boston "as a handle by which to call your shots" when you want fine liquors?



"Drop your guns, coppers, or I'll make a fine pair of banshees out of you!"

The Case of the **MURDEROUS MERMAID**

By G. T. FLEMING-ROBERTS

*George Chance, Magician-Detective, Adopts the
Role of the Green Ghost to Help Ex-Circus Pals
When a Mysterious Brutal Killer Runs Amok!*

CHAPTER I

Murder in Miniature

AT DUSK the gray sedan flashed across the invisible line that separated Fulton Heights from one of its sister suburbs. The blond man at the wheel cocked a slate-blue eye at the clock on the instrument-board.

"Seventy minutes from Manhattan," he said to the girl beside him.

She was a pretty little thing with clear green eyes and hair that was nearly black. Her figure would have met Rockette specifications, and theatrical booking agents had always measured her personality in kilowatts.

"Proving the value of the elevated highway," she taunted. "Or were you intimating that you could have been

A COMPLETE GREEN GHOST MYSTERY NOVEL

The Green Ghost Races into Action and

a champion race driver as well as the world's greatest magician and a super-duper detective, darlin'?"

A smile twitched at the corners of the man's mouth. He had a lean face with prominent cheek bones and a nearly straight nose. There was a good deal of leg room in the front of the big sedan, and he needed all of it.

"Oh, I'm Johnny-On-The-Spot when one of my friends is in trouble," he said. "That's all it proves, Merry."

Miss Merry White, the woman interested in the life of Magician George Chance, just as she had formerly been in his magical reviews on the stage, wriggled around on the cushions so that her back was to the door.

"George Chance, you inscrutable creature!"

The petulant expression on her face was pure fraud.

"What have I done now?" he asked. "Inscrutable? Thought you read me like a book."

"You told me that you were taking me to a circus. You deliberately led me to believe that you were going to devote one of your precious evenings to me. Now it turns out somebody's in trouble."

GEORGE CHANCE chuckled. He removed a piece of yellow paper from the pocket of his tweed coat.

"Read this telegram."

"I won't!" she said. "You—you gay deceiver of innocent and motherless girls!"

"Then I'll recite the telegram from memory. Begin quotes: 'Please take in show. I am in trouble. Need help. Urgent. Martin Hess.' End quotes."

"Who's Martin Hess?"

"Owner of the circus," Chance explained. "A follower in the footsteps of Barnum. A millionaire whose family would gladly disown him."

Merry whistled.

"Nobody ever disowns a millionaire."

"The Hess family would like to—and still hang on to old Martin's dough. It's the circus background. The family is ashamed of it."

"That kind of people, huh?" Merry

sniffed contemptuously. "What's wrong with rooting a family tree in circus sawdust? Your pop was an animal trainer and your mom a trapeze artist. And you're nice people."

"Thanks, Merry," he said, laughing.

"You couldn't have become the world's greatest magician if you hadn't learned tricks from a side-show wizard at the tender age of eight. And if you hadn't become a magician, you might never have met me."

"That would have been tragic."

"And if it wasn't for your circus background you couldn't go around alias that super sleuth, the Green Ghost. You couldn't play the part of the Ghost if you didn't know makeup, impersonation, ventriloquism, knife-throwing—all those things you learned in a circus."

"And if it weren't for the Green Ghost," he added, "we probably wouldn't be going to the circus tonight. Another thing I didn't tell you, Merry: No less a personage than Police Commissioner Edward Standish suggested that the Green Ghost take a look at the Hess Circus before it moves into Madison Square Garden."

"What's the matter with the show?" Merry asked "Got a fan dancer in it?"

"According to Standish and certain authorities of the United States Treasury Department, the Hess show has a counterfeiter in it. It seems that just about every town the show lights in is flooded with counterfeit money. The T-men have a notion that this money is manufactured in Canada, picked up by the circus when it tours the Dominion, and then distributed in this country."

"Could be," Merry said, "that Mr. Hess' trouble has something to do with this counterfeiting."

"That's what I'm thinking. Standish says that the T-men believe the counterfeit notes are the work of one Max Conrad, a notorious criminal who's had some experience in that line."

"Conrad!" Merry's green eyes widened. "Why, I've heard of him! Five years ago, the G-men cornered his gang in an Illinois farm-house after

Gets in on a Sensational T-Man Cleanup!

a nation-wide search. The house caught on fire during the gun battle, and a lot of the criminals were burned. They even thought Conrad might have been burned to death in the fire."

"But there wasn't any proof, you see. Right now, it looks as though Max Conrad is hiding in the Hess show and distributing his crooked money as the circus moves from town to town—selling the counterfeit stuff to professional 'queer pushers' as they're called."

through the gates.

There was an excited glitter in the eyes of the famous magician. His nostrils dilated as he savored the combined odors of roasting peanuts, popped corn, "hot dawgs," baled hay, and fresh sawdust. This was home-coming to him, and his pulse quickened to match the throb of the bass drum in front of the side-shows.

The raucous voices of the bally spielers seemed to shout a welcome. Yet there were probably only a few now



George Chance

"So that's why we're going to the circus?"

"Right! As a matter of fact, don't be a bit surprised if our pals, Joe Harper and Tiny Tim Terry, are already on the grounds."

CHANCE was compelled to park three blocks from the entrance to the circus grounds. Ten minutes later he and Merry were just another couple walking with linked arms, moving with the human tide that passed

associated with the show who would recognize him, so swiftly had he rocketed to fame and fortune on the magic carpet of abracadabra.

Out of the babel of circus voices, one seemed to originate in the nose of its owner.

"Chance of a lifetime, ladees and gentl'mun! A guaranteed lifetime fountain pen with solid gold point for twenty-five cents—a quarter of a dollah!"

"Good night!" Merry White said. "Look over there!"

Chance was already looking at the owner of the nasal voice. The man stood behind a little pitchman's stand with a tray of fountain pens on top of it. He was wearing a black and white checkered suit and a snap-brim hat that was a particularly nauseating shade of green. A cigarette dangled loosely from his lips, wobbled up and down as he cried his wares.

His face was gaunt, wolfish. His eyes, in the shadow of his hat-brim, looked like black beetles. His name was Joe Harper, and he was a strange sort of parasite who had fastened himself to the Chance household. He was gambler, tout, vaudeville booking agent—in fact anything that offered an opportunity of making money from somebody else's labor. Right now, he was a pitchman, and apparently doing very well for himself.

As Chance and Merry came up to Joe Harper's stand, the pitchman picked up a fountain pen and showed it to them.

"Here's a gent'lmun that knows value, folks!" he yelled for the benefit of the crowd. "He'll buy a pen. Look, Mister, it writes both ways—upside down for a fine line, right side up for a thick one. You can't beat this pen if you pay eight dollars and a half."

"You bet you can't," Chance whispered. "That's my pen you're using as a demonstrator, chiseler!"

"You take your choice, Mister," Harper said. "Every color of the rainbow and each and every pen guaranteed to last as long as you do." And as Chance crowded close to the stand, he whispered: "Better look up your pal, Martin Hess. I think he's got some info for you about the guy with the phony mazuma."

"Right," Chance whispered.

"And the gent'lmun chooses a beautiful green pen, ladeez and gent'lmun!" shouted Harper, and shoved one of the two-bit pens into Chance's hand. Out the side of his mouth he added: "That'll be two bits, sucker!"

Chuckling, George Chance paid Joe Harper the twenty-five cents. Then he and Merry headed for the circus "backyard" where he expected to find Martin Hess in the office wagon.

There a pimpled young man with

tow-colored hair informed them that he hadn't seen Hess for the past thirty minutes.

"He's somewhere on the grounds, that's sure."

"That's nice and definite!" Merry said as they walked away from the pimpled man. "But anyway I want to see a side-show. Can't we look for your Mr. Hess there as well as anywhere?"

THEY returned to the crowded area in front of the side-shows, and there Chance stopped Merry in front of a new looking tent of purple canvas.

"Here's Minnie the Miniature Mermaid," he said. "Remember when I was designing this illusion for Hess? He paid me two grand for it."

The spieler for Minnie's show stepped to the mike on the bally platform in front of the purple tent.

"Hur-ray, hur-ray, folks!" bellowed from the loud-speaker. "Positively the last performance before the big show. And if you miss this, you've missed a lot. It's Minnie the Miniature Mermaid—she lives in a goldfish bowl. Why, yes sir, she's alive! Eighth wonder of the world, exclusive with the Martin Hess show. She'll entrance you with her dance. She's bee-utiful and glorious, this tiny creature only nine inches tall. And I said nine inches and I mean nine inches—"

Chance took hold of Merry's arm and urged her forward to the door of the purple tent. When they reached the ticket seller, Chance simply passed his right hand across the ticket box and said quietly:

"Shill in."

It was the universal password among circus and carnival people. The man in the box gave Chance a wink and a nod, and George and Merry entered the mirror-spangled doorway, climbed wooden steps into a dimly lighted interior. There temporary bleachers were arranged in a semi-circle about a small purple-draped platform.

"You may get somebody's foot down the back of your neck," Chance said to Merry as they seated themselves in the front row, "but I'd like you to get the full effect of this. I think it's pretty good, especially when the bally spieler

comes in and actually moves the bowl while the girl's inside."

"Is she really in the bowl?" Merry said, craning her neck. "I don't see any bowl."

"It's back of that curtain," Chance said. "Wait and see. Maybe you can dope it out."

There were perhaps fifty people in the little tent and more crowding through the door when suddenly the purple curtain was jerked back from the platform. There, in the center of the tiny stage was a round goldfish bowl, not more than a foot and a half in diameter and brilliantly illuminated so that the bubbles in the clear water glittered like jewels.

The mermaid was in the very center of the bowl, her golden hair floating out from her head as though borne on the current of the water. She certainly looked no more than nine inches in height, and she was perfectly formed. A close-fitting gown of green satin and sequins showed beneath the hem of a mannish topcoat which was thrown over her shoulders. But her back was toward the audience.

The audience gasped. So did George Chance. Because there were several things wrong about all this. The topcoat was all wrong, since no mermaid great or small had ever needed a topcoat. The fact that her back was toward the audience was all wrong. Something had slipped up. Chance even doubted if the mermaid knew that she had made her appearance before the audience.

"Somebody's gaffed the act," he whispered to Merry.

IT WAS more than that. The attitude of the tiny figure in the bowl was one of fear—but the sort of fear that stands its ground in the face of deadly danger.

"Just a statue!" somebody behind Chance said. "A fake like all this stuff. You'd think we'd get tired of being played for suckers."

And then, as though to disprove this skepticism, the little mermaid moved one step backward, pulled a flashing something from beneath the topcoat—a gun! The weapon appeared less than an inch in length, but the intent of the

miniature mermaid was unmistakable.

Chance got half out of his seat.

"Down in front!" the skeptic behind him yelled.

And then the gun in the hand of the mermaid crashed. It was a very life-sized sound. Gray smoke puffed from the barrel, clouding the tableau a moment.

A second figure appeared in the goldfish bowl—a man not over ten inches in height. He pitched suddenly forward as though from the side of the glass bowl itself. He fell forward on his face, arms stiffly at his sides, to lie perfectly still on the bottom of the bowl. For just a moment, the tiny mermaid looked back over her shoulder, her lips parted as though to scream.

The lights went out and the bowl was swallowed in darkness. The audience clapped spontaneously, thinking this was all part of the act. But it wasn't.

George Chance seized Merry's arm and pulled her to her feet.

"Come on! That wasn't in the script at all!"

And as he and Merry struggled against the tide of in-coming customers, the voice from the bally platform outside shouted:

"She's adorable! She's bee-utiful!"

She was all of that. And fifty people had just seen her commit murder!

CHAPTER II

In the Dark

"**W**AS it real, darlin'?" Merry White gasped as she followed Chance's interference through the crowd. "Those little people in the bowl—they were really living human beings—"

"And one of them is probably dead," Chance rapped.

The glaring lights from the bally platform found the magician's face tense, his eyes anxious. He drew Merry out of the line in front of the purple tent.

"Go find a cop," he said quietly. "Don't alarm anyone—just get a cop."

And then he turned on his heel, ducked under the ropes that defined the ticket line in front of the show, crossed a little patch of flattened grass, to one of the gaudy, painted drops that linked the front of the mermaid show with that of the Boogie-Woogie Minstrels. He pulled an anchor peg, lifted

of an inverted periscope. Below the stage, was another mirror, much larger, but placed at the same angle. The mermaid performed before a third mirror placed at the other end of the room, but her image was transmitted to the mirror directly beneath the goldfish bowl through a reduction lens, which



The gun in the hand of the mermaid crashed, and

the canvas and crawled through to the back of the purple tent.

The purple tent was taller than it appeared, for it had been especially designed for this illusion. Beneath the raised floor where the spectators sat was a room fully eight feet high. It was in this secret room that the shooting had actually taken place, and not in the goldfish bowl.

A mirror partition in the goldfish bowl, placed at an angle with the horizontal, acted simply like the eye-piece

accounted for the miniature effect of the whole illusion.

Though the idea behind this trick was an old one, its adaptation was new. Chance valued the secret so highly that he had insisted upon a snap-lock being fitted to the door leading into the secret room.

Getting out of the place was a simple matter of turning a latch, but getting in required a key.

The sides of the secret room were constructed of plywood panels, painted

black. Finding which of these panels was the door itself was Chance's first job. After that, it took him a little time to select the right pick-lock from the elaborate collection he always carried.

At last he heard the tell-tale snick of the lock, and the black door yielded to

to make the mermaid's hair appear as though it floated in the water. But his confidence, as well as portions of his anatomy, was shaken in another moment when he crashed into an inanimate object which shouldn't have been there at all. His fingers groped, touched the cool, smooth surface of an



a figure pitched forward from the side of the bowl

slight pressure. He stepped into the dark and closed the door behind him. On the floor above, the feet of the suckers who had paid the admission price pounded thunderously. Jagged slabs of boogie-woogie squealed and blared from the tent next door. The only light in the room came in thin gray slices through cracks in the flooring above.

Chance moved forward quickly in spite of the gloom, confident that he knew the location of the big mirrors and the electric fan which was used

extra mirror which could have played no part in the goldfish illusion.

And suddenly he was aware that he was not alone. In the dim gray light from above, he saw a black gargantuan shape reflected in the surface of this extra mirror. It was a simian shape, hulking and menacing.

CHANCE swung around. His left fist shot out like a piston, sank deep into yielding flesh and coarse, wiry hair. A grunt, and foul, hot breath

exploded in Chance's face. Two thick hairy arms wrapped about the magician's lean body, lifting him to his toes in a mighty embrace that might have crushed the ribs of a man of flimsier makeup.

But the magician's arms were up so that they had escaped that powerful embrace. Fingers of his right hand clawed at hair on the back of the monstrous creature, while his left fist beat down like a hammer into the unseen face.

And those hammer blows hurt! The monster released his hold, plastered a huge, sweating palm over the magician's face, shoved Chance backward to crash into the mirror.

Glass smashed, the whole heavy framework in which the mirror was mounted tottered forward. Possibly the monster actually pulled the supporting framework over on Chance. All the magician knew was that he was plastered on the floor with the mirror support on top of him.

He clawed the earth floor for a hold, wormed his way forward so that his head cleared the wreckage, just as the door of the secret room opened. For a brief instant he saw the broad-shouldered, neckless figure of the monster silhouetted against the light from the outside. But by the time he could clear himself of the mirror framework and reach the door, the simian shape was gone.

"The ape who walks like a man," he mused. "Or more probably the man who walks like an ape. Either way, a heck of a guy to meet in the dark!"

He turned, walked back nearly to the center of the room, then struck a match. The area in which the mermaid had to stand in order to appear in miniature in the goldfish bowl above, was indicated by a whitewashed circle on the bare earth floor. Just inside this circle lay the body of a man.

He had been rather a plump man with pure white hair and a face that had been jovial. The shiny area of the forehead was marred by a single but entirely sufficient bullet-hole.

A pained expression crossed the lean face of the magician. The corpse in the circle had once been Martin Hess,

millionaire owner of the circus.

Chance had known Hess for years. He had been a good friend to the orphaned boy who was later to become George Chance, magician. Hess had been a great showman. It seemed doubly tragic that somebody in the circus which he had loved so well had killed him. Had it been somebody named Max Conrad, because the owner of the circus had discovered something—something that would point out Conrad's identity, or would spoil Conrad's counterfeit racket?

The match burned down to the magician's fingers. He struck another and stepped around the circle, picturing in his mind the point at which the mermaid had stood when she had fired her shot. It occurred to him suddenly that in order to hit Hess she would have had to turn slightly to the right when she had fired.

But had she done that? She had stepped back a little, but had she actually turned?

HE CROSSED to the mirror which the hairy monster had toppled over on him, examined the wood backing of the shattered glass. A bullet had passed through the wood, leaving its slivered hole. It looked to the magician as though the mermaid had shot at the surface of that extra mirror rather than at Hess. Here were two bullet-holes, but there had been but one report.

Somebody was pounding on the door of the secret room—pounding loud enough to be heard above the continual bellowing of the spielers, the trample of feet on the floor above, and the hot licks from the colored trumpeter in the minstrel tent next door.

George Chance moved over to the door and opened it. There were five men outside that door of the room beneath the mermaid's tent, but none of them represented the law of Fulton Heights.

There was a clown in motley pantaloons, his face comically painted in red and white. On one side of the clown was a tall, graceful figure in flesh-colored tights. On the other side was a wide-shouldered, narrow-hipped man

in whipcord riding pants and polished leather boots.

Behind this trio was the young man with the pimpled face whom Chance and Merry had seen at the office wagon. Beside him was a midget wearing a conservative blue business suit of expensive tailoring. An enormous cigar jutted grotesquely from the baby face of the tiny man.

The midget was obviously "Tiny Tim" Terry, close friend of George Chance, and able assistant of that relentless foe of crime, the Green Ghost. But as he opened the door of the secret room, Chance did not recognize a single member of the trio in the foreground immediately. He was a little bit startled as the clown reached out his white-gloved hand to clutch his shoulder.

"George Chance!" the clown exclaimed in a high, thin voice that more clearly inditated his years than did his painted face. "It is George Chance, isn't it?"

"Ricki!"

The magician looked into the faded blue eyes of the old clown and recognized him.

"Ricki, old boy! Still rolling them in the aisle, eh?" Chance's grin was almost as wide as that on the red painted lips of the clown.

Ricki must have been past sixty and still the biggest fun-maker with the show.

"How is he?" Ricki gasped, sending an anxious glance into the dark room beneath the purple tent. "Martin Hess, I mean. I heard that he had been shot."

Chance shook his head sadly.

"He's dead, Ricki."

Something like a sob sounded from behind the clown's painted mask. He made a feeble effort to push past Chance to get through the door, but the magician gripped the old buffoon by the shoulder.

"I gotta see him, George," Ricki said, his voice quavering.

"It wouldn't do any good," Chance said to him quietly. "Where are the police?"

The other men drew closer.

"Is it true then, what Ricki tells us?" the man in the riding pants asked.

HE HAD ink-blue eyes, mahogany-red eyebrows and a hairless head. His nose recalled a ski-jump. His lips were two thin, straight lines, and beneath his lumpy chin was a wide white scar.

"I'm afraid it's true," Chance said. "Ricki, where did you find out about Hess?"

The old clown did not seem to hear. He stopped trying to pull away from Chance, however, and turned to the man in the riding pants.

"George," he said hoarsely, "I want you to meet Gregor Latour, an animal trainer like your dad was."

The man in the riding breeches flushed as he extended his hand.

"Night and day from Ricki I have heard the name of Chance—Chance the animal trainer. And now I meet his son, another Chance, a great magician."

"And this is Harry Marquand," Ricki said, indicating the slim figure in tights. "High-wire walker, backbone of the thrill department."

Marquand was dark, thin-faced. He had a curled mustache, and those black, shoe-button eyes of his peered out of bluish pockets.

"I've heard the name of Chance, too," he said. "They still talk of your mother as the queen of the flying trapeze."

"I hardly rate an introduction," the young man with the pimpled face said, "since I'm not a celeb. I'm just Jerry Haines, and I've helped Martin Hess keep his books straight—sort of a stooge. What I don't understand is why Mr. Hess would kill himself."

"He didn't," Chance said. "It was murder."

"Murder!" Latour's mahogany eyebrows climbed. "But everybody loved Martin Hess! How could it be?"

"Apparently everybody didn't love him," Chance said.

He looked over Latour's shoulder to see two uniformed police officers coming toward them. Merry White was not far behind. One of the cops pulled his flashlight, went straight to the door.

"One side," he said curtly. "Which of you is Mr. Chance?"

The magician stepped forward.

"Okay," said the bluecoat. "What's up?"

"Mr. Hess, owner of the circus, has been murdered."

The policeman nodded toward the door.

"In there?" he asked. "Just step in with me, Mr. Chance."

CHAPTER III

A Job for the Ghost

GEORGE CHANCE and the policeman who had spoken went inside. The other bluecoat remained at the door.

One look at the body and the officer with Chance said:

"Murdered, I'd say. Not that it's my business to say. You discovered the body?"

Chance told exactly what had occurred, not omitting his fight with the Ape-Man and the matter of the extra mirror.

"Fine," the policeman said drily. "But you can save all that theory about what happened for Captain Bushman when he gets here. I'll send out a man to round up this ape freak and the mermaid lady. And I'll have your full name and address, Mr. Chance."

The bluecoat walked briskly out of the secret room, issued orders to his sidekick. Harry Marquand, king of the wire-walkers, stepped up to the police officer.

"You're not thinking Fay McKay had anything to do with this?"

The policeman looked Marquand's slim figure up and down.

"It's not my job to think. Fay McKay the mermaid lady?"

"She is," Marquand said. "And she was one of Martin Hess' closest friends."

George Chance pulled away from the circus people, went over to where Merry White was standing beside Tiny Tim.

"Merry," he said quietly, "did you tell Ricki, the clown, about this shooting?"

"No, darlin'! You said mum was the word, so the word was mum. I just told the copper—that one over there who

thinks he owns the earth with a fence around it."

Merry made a face at the back of the Fulton Heights arm of the law.

"Do you know how Ricki got wind of it, Tim?"

The midget switched his huge cigar to the other side of his mouth.

"Not me, George. I was hanging around the office wagon, talking with that Haines fellow, when the wire-walker came dashing by and said something about Hess getting shot."

The midget stepped closer to Chance, stood on tiptoe, his babylike brow crinkled by a puzzled scowl.

"You got to watch the Haines guy," he whispered. "He packs a gun under his arm."

The magician nodded. He looked back toward the door of the secret room where the bluecoat was standing, surrounded by Ricki, Gregor Latour, and Harry Marquand. The three circus performers were impressing upon the law's representative the innocence of Fay McKay, alias Minnie the Mermaid. Jerry Haines was not in sight.

While the police officer was occupied and before the rest of the Fulton Heights police force got on the scene, it seemed to Chance that now was a good time for the Green Ghost to take over. Because this was definitely a job for the Ghost. He would get a great deal of personal satisfaction out of grabbing Martin Hess' murder—even more than in rounding up the counterfeit ring.

Quietly he slipped back through the canvas drop under which he had passed to get to the back of the purple tent. Out in front, the side-shows were putting on their final efforts to get the crowd to spend their dimes before the big show began.

CHANCE hurried toward the entrance of the circus grounds, and was once again stopped by that well-known nasal voice of Joe Harper.

"Chance of a lifetime, folks! Get your guaranteed fountain pen with the solid gold point."

The way he emphasized the word "chance" gave it a double meaning to the magician who once more stopped

in front of the pitchman's stand. Immediately Joe Harper began the process of selling Chance a two-bit pen.

"I'm not too sure you're not working this overtime, Joe," Chance whispered.

"Don't crab my act," Harper worked out of the side of his mouth. "Choose your pen, Mister. Only a few minutes before the big show. Only fifty cents—half a dollah!"

Business must have been good. Joe Harper had raised the ante. Chance smiled thinly and took out a fifty-cent piece as Harper thrust a red pen into his hand.

"Out on the sidewalk, a gent hiding behind a haystack," the pitchman whispered. "It's your double or nothing." And then aloud for the benefit of the crowd: "And the gent'l'mun knows a bargain when he sees one! Who else wants a genuine lifetime guaranteed fountain pen for only half a dollah? They won't be here tomorrow, folks. They won't be here an hour from now at this phenomenal price."

Harper's whispered message was readily understood by George Chance who immediately left the circus grounds. Among the crowd that thronged the sidewalk, his keen eye picked out a man in overalls and wide-brimmed black felt hat. The "haystack" Harper had mentioned was obviously the man's heavy gray beard that covered cheeks, mouth and chin. It was also obvious to George Chance that the beard was false.

As he passed the whiskered man, Chance gave him a slight nod. Immediately, the whiskered one turned, followed some distance behind the magician as the latter walked up the street toward his car.

Chance stopped at his car only long enough to take a black traveling bag from the back compartment. Then he continued on up the street for another block to a corner filling station. He entered the men's rest-room at the side of the station unnoticed by the attendant.

A moment later, the whiskered man also entered the room and carefully latched the door behind him. He raised his hand to his face, jerked off the false whiskers.

The effect was startling, for the face of the man in the overalls was identical



In front of the Ape-Man, the Ghost's lips pulled back from yellow teeth, his facial muscles frozen

with that of George Chance. More than that, as the man began taking off his overalls it became apparent that his figure was also like that of the magician, and beneath his outer clothing he wore a suit exactly like Chance's. The only detectable difference in the two men was in height. Chance was perhaps an inch taller.

"Good night, Glenn!" Chance exclaimed. "I see Joe Harper rooked you, too."

There was a red fountain pen sticking out of the double's pocket. Glenn Saunders smiled ruefully.

"Some day I'm going to find myself sole owner of the Brooklyn Bridge," he said, "and Joe will have sold it to me."

Not only did the two men look alike, but they spoke alike, had the same mannerisms.

GEORGE CHANCE had found Glenn Saunders years ago, warming a cold bench in Central Park. He had recognized the pronounced likeness between himself and the man on the bench. Plastic surgery had augmented that likeness, providing the famous magician with a perfect double.

The double had enabled Chance to get away with many lightning change magical illusions on the stage. And now that the magician had turned his talents to crime detection Glenn Saunders had proved even more valuable. Whenever Chance decided to adopt the identity of the Green Ghost in order to hunt down some murderer, Glenn Saunders was always at hand to step into Chance's shoes.

In such manner the identity of the Green Ghost and George Chance could always be kept separate, even though Detective Green Ghost frequently employed magic to snare his murderers. So many enemies had the Green Ghost made in the underworld that had he not always been able to protect the secret of his dual identity through the use of Saunders as a double, his life would not have been worth a plugged nickle.

And Glenn Saunders had willingly shucked his own identity to become George Chance's double in exchange for all that Chance could teach him

about the art of abracadabra. For he had become eager student of magic.

Alone with Saunders, Chance began to remove his tweed suit. The coat, pants and vest were reversible, and when he had turned them inside out he had a second suit of dead black cloth that would have looked well at a funeral. From the satchel he had brought from the car, he removed a black silk lining for the coat. The lining could be quickly snapped into place and it contained many secret pockets loaded with magic tricks and gimmicks which he had found useful in his many encounters with criminals.

A clip which had originally been intended as a billiard ball dropper held his little automatic on the inside of the coat, on the right, just above the hem.

A keen-bladed throwing-knife was at home in the special sleeve sheath attached to his right arm.

"All set to take on a mob of counterfeiters, eh?" Glenn Saunders asked.

"More than that," Chance said, as he got into the black suit. "Counterfeiters and murderers. Apparently Martin Hess knew too much about what went on in his circus for his own good, and the mysterious Max Conrad did a thorough and complete rub-out job."

Quickly Chance brought Glenn Saunders up to date on all that had occurred at the circus. Saunders had to know all this in order to take up where George Chance had left off.

"And for heavens' sake, watch your step with the Fulton Heights police," Chance warned. "We don't have the drag here that we have in the big town. Now go on back to the circus and be George Chance. See if you can explain that mermaid illusion to the cops. Demonstrate the various angles involved, and try to get them to see somebody else besides Fay McKay as the candidate for murderer."

As soon as Saunders had left, Chance took his compact makeup kit from his bag. If his old pal Ricki could have watched what transpired he would have realized that what he had taught George Chance of makeup had not been a waste of time.

Two wire ovals thrust into Chance's nostrils, tilted the magician's nose and

elongated the nostrils. A set of celluloid shell teeth that looked as if they were in the last stages of decay were next clipped over Chance's healthy teeth.

He dipped into a box of ordinary brown eye-shadow to darken and deepen the pits of his eyes and the natural hollows of his cheeks. A liquid powder blotted out the color of his red-gold eyebrows. Finally, a generous patting of dry powder gave him a corpselike pallor.

So far as makeup was concerned, when he had put on his black crusher hat, the job was done. He could pass in a crowd without attracting any particular attention. He didn't look like George Chance, but neither did he look like that terror of the underworld, the Green Ghost. But from this basic appearance it was an easy step to assume the ghastly death's head appearance of the Ghost.

"Turning on the Ghost," as he called it, was largely a matter of muscular control. His lips would peel back to reveal those yellow, skull-like teeth. His deep-set eyes would assume a vacuous expression, facial muscles would freeze. A battery-operated light globe of small size was set in the peculiar scarf pin he wore in his tie. At a touch of a switch, a ghastly green light would flood upward across his face.

Makeup completed, he quietly left the filling station and returned his black bag to his car. Then he headed back toward the circus grounds. The hunt for Max Conrad, counterfeiter and possibly murderer, was on.

CHAPTER IV

The Vanishing Lady

ACCORDING to the well-ordered mind of Captain Bushman of the Fulton Heights Police, every murder was composed of certain elements which he called "links." These elements, in order of their importance, were—the corpse, the killer, the weapon, and the motive. The idea was not original with Bushman.

Up until nine-thirty when the show

under the big-top was well under way, Bushman had discovered only one obvious link—the corpse of Martin Hess. That at least fifty other people had made that discovery ahead of him did not spoil the luster of Link Number Three, when Bushman personally discovered the weapon.

Entering the dressing-room tent of Mermaid Fay McKay, who was still among the missing, Captain Bushman pounced upon a nickel-plated revolver. Following him into the tent were two policemen, Wire-Walker Harry Marquand, Gregor Latour, Merry White, and Glenn Saunders. Except for Merry White, no one present had any reason to doubt but what Saunders was George Chance.

"Uh-huh," Captain Bushman grunted with satisfaction, "this is Link Number Three in our murder chain."

Gregor Latour was second to spot the gun. He drew his thick mahogany-red brows together in a scowl and clamped a powerful hand on Bushman's shoulder. Bushman's eyes expressed cold resentment of the animal trainer's action.

"I do not believe anything you say of this business!" Latour exploded. "Every time you turn around, it is Fay McKay she did this or that. I think you decide things too fast. How do you know that is the gun that killed our friend, Martin Hess?"

"She couldn't have killed Martin," Harry Marquand said. "Fay, and Ricki and I were Hess' closest friends in the show business. Hess even promised us he would remember us in his will."

"Which probably constitutes Link Number Four—the motive," Bushman said sagely. "You go walk your tight rope, my friend, and take that lion tamer with you. I'll handle this in my own way."

Harry Marquand gave the captain a black look.

"You might at least listen to Mr. Chance. He's a magician. He knows how that goldfish bowl stunt works and what you could see in the bowl and what you couldn't see."

Glenn Saunders, his voice sounding like a recording of Chance's voice, spoke up.

"I've already tried to point out that there was an extra mirror down in that room below the purple tent. It wasn't required for the illusion. But placed as it was it might easily have reflected the figure of somebody standing *behind* Fay McKay. She might have mistaken the reflection for a real person—for somebody she had reason to fear. The bullet-hole in the back of the mirror support bears out my point."

"That is hokus-pokus," Bushman said.

"It's not," Saunders said stoutly. "What was that ape-man from the freak show doing down in that room?"

Bushman turned to one of his men.

"Any progress made toward getting that fake caveman to talk?"

LATOUR burst out laughing, and Bushman wheeled on him.

"All right, lion tamer, what's so funny about that?"

"You getting Tanko, the Ape-Man, to talk—it is too funny!" Latour's ink-blue eyes glistened. "Ho-ho, you should laugh, too! Tanko is dumb. He only makes grunting noises. You will learn a lot from him, Captain!"

In the shadows outside the dressing-room tent, the Green Ghost heard all of this argument. It wouldn't lead to any startling conclusions. Bushman had made up his mind, and finding what might be the murder weapon had sealed Fay McKay's guilt. Anyone could have planted the gun.

The Ghost's object at the moment was to find Fay McKay before Bushman succeeded in clamping the bracelets on her. He had a hunch he could beat the police to the missing mermaid.

It was more than a hunch. Who was it that had told Ricki that Martin Hess had been shot? Why had Ricki avoided answering that question when it had been put directly to him? Possibly it was Fay herself who had told Ricki of the shooting. Maybe Ricki was hiding the girl somewhere on the grounds. And it was important that the Ghost talk to Fay.

Of all that had transpired in that secret room only what had occurred within that chalked-off circle had actually appeared in the goldfish bowl. There really hadn't been fifty eye-wit-

nesses to the actual crime. There were only fifty persons who *thought* they were eye-witnesses. The only persons who could actually have been eye-witnesses were those in the secret room at the time.

Under the main tent, Ricki and his clown troop had the center ring. It was that old stunt in which a score of clowns pile out of a midget car. Ricki was in there with the others, giving everything he had, making the crowd roar with laughter, while all the time his own eyes were filled with tears of sorrow.

At the rear entrance to the big tent, the Green Ghost leaned against a pole and waited, watching the slap-stick finale to the act, listening to the frenzied music of the band. He watched one clown in particular—a rather small figure in a voluminous costume of multi-colored patchwork. The wearer of the outfit was just a little too graceful about being awkward.

When the band ran the clowns off to make room for Latour's animal act, the Green Ghost kept his eyes on the little buffoon in patchwork. This clown kept apart from the others, passed within a yard of where the Ghost was standing as the act left the tent.

"Just a minute, Patches," the Ghost said quietly.

The clown stopped, sent a frightened glance at the thin man in black, then bolted. The Ghost sprinted along behind. The way "Patches" ran was a dead give-away. The clown was a woman.

She dashed around to the side of the tent, glancing backward at her pursuer. It was during one of these backward glances that she fell over a tent stake. The peaked cap fell from her head and long golden hair came tumbling into full view.

She was on her feet again when the Ghost swooped down from behind her and looped a lean arm around her waist. She twisted around, tried gouging his face with her finger nails. Her tactics might have been effective on somebody who could move less rapidly than the Green Ghost. He caught her tiny wrist and held it in a grasp of steel.

"**C**UT it out, Fay!" he said sternly. "Don't be a little fool. I'm trying to help you out of this mess. Keep up this sort of thing and you'll land in jail. Or maybe the chair."

Her round blue eyes searched the strange, pale face.

"Why—why should you help me?"

"Because you didn't kill Martin Hess."

"Who are you?" she gasped.

"Just a guy you're going to have to trust," he said, his deep-set eyes grave. "You've got the screwy idea you can hide right here with the circus. The cops will find you eventually. What I want you to do is get away from here, go hole-up in a hotel until this mess is cleaned up. Have you any money on your person for a hotel room?"

"Yes," she said slowly.

"Okay. Now, you've got to trust me. You haven't any reason to be afraid of me if you didn't kill Martin Hess."

"I didn't!" she sobbed.

"But when you shot that gun, the spotlight was on in that room beneath the purple tent. At least fifty people who were looking at the goldfish bowl at that time will be willing to testify they saw you shoot Hess."

"I was shooting at Tanko, the Ape-Man," Fay insisted. "I had gone into the room in the dark, because that's the way you have to do or you'll crab the act. I was crossing the room to take off the topcoat when suddenly the lights came on. I don't know who turned them on. That was ahead of schedule."

"And right in front of you, you thought you saw the Ape-Man."

"That's right."

"But you didn't. That was a reflection. One of those extra mirrors they carry with the act, in case one of the regular ones breaks, was in front of where you were standing and a little to one side—the left side, to be exact. You saw Tanko's reflection and shot at it."

"I don't know about the reflection," she said. "But I shot at what I thought was Tanko. Then I heard a movement in the dark just outside the circle, near where that big fan was going. I saw Martin Hess topple forward out of the dark. But there was somebody else there—somebody in the dark behind Hess."

"Somebody pushed Hess into the circle as you shot," the Ghost said. "I think Hess had been killed beforehand. To the spectators above, it may have looked as though you shot Hess, but if you were aiming at that mirror you couldn't have hit him from that angle. But why did you want to shoot Tanko?"

Fay McKay drew a long, tremulous breath.

"Last week when the show was at Albany something happened. Tanko told me that if I ever let this out he'd kill me—"

"I thought Tanko couldn't talk," the Ghost interrupted.

"He can't. But he writes what he wants to say on a pad of paper. He's a former wrestler who was hurt in an accident. Most of that hair on his body is faked. But he's terrible-looking and I'm afraid of him."

"Go on," the Ghost urged. "What happened in Albany?" [Turn page]

NO FINER DRINK...



THE girl shuddered, then went on talking hastily.

"Tanko was leaving the circus grounds one night after the show was over. He had a worn suitcase in his hand. The latch of the case came open and whatever was in the suitcase fell out. I went over to help him pick up what he had spilled, and it was money—lots of money stacked in little packages. He didn't want me to see it, wanted me to keep away, but then he couldn't tell me what he wanted.

"He forced me against a tent wall and wrote on that pad he carries that if I said anything about the money he'd kill me. He repeated that same warning the next day and the day after. I began to get more afraid of him than ever. I began carrying a gun with me wherever I went. Tonight, when I saw him down there in that dark room with me, he had a knife in his hand. I know he intended to kill me. I drew the gun and fired."

"And the money in the suitcase—it looked like new money?" the Ghost asked.

"I think so."

The Ghost nodded. Counterfeit money, in all probability. Being unable to talk, Tanko would have made a good messenger to deliver the counterfeit money to the agents who "pushed" it. Or then again, it was possible that Tanko was Conrad.

"One more thing," he said. "Tanko and presumably Hess were in that room beneath the purple tent tonight. There was also a third man, somebody who pushed Hess into that circle?"

"Yes," the girl replied. "Someone ran out of the room just before I did. I was too stunned by the sight of poor Mr. Hess to know just what was going on. I didn't see the man's face, but it wasn't Tanko. I think Tanko was still in the room after I left. I could hear him fumbling about, trying to find the door in the dark."

The Ghost looked over the top of Fay McKay's golden head. A uniformed policeman was standing at one end of the big-top. He wasn't listening to the blare of the circus band nor to the roar of the big cats in Latour's animal act. Rather, he was moving stealthily toward where the Ghost and

Fay McKay were standing.

"Oh-oh!" The Ghost seized Fay's hand. "We'd better scam. Here comes one of Fulton Heights' finest!"

CHAPTER V

Death's-Head

FAY and the Ghost dashed down the side of the big tent, keeping close to the canvas wall. The Ghost knew the policeman would scarcely risk shooting directly at them for fear of hitting some of the spectators on the other side of the canvas.

All the shooting the policeman did was straight up in the air. At the same time, he blasted on his whistle, though it was doubtful if it could have been heard because of the noise inside the big tent.

At the end of the big-top, the Ghost shoved Fay toward a canvas spreader that connected the side-show string with the entrance to the main tent. The Ghost's knife flashed, ripped through the cloth. He pushed Fay through the opening, followed her as one of the officer's bullets plopped through the spreader just above the Ghost's head.

Through the opening, the Ghost saw Fay streaking through the thinning crowd in front of the now deserted bally platforms. He sprinted after her, caught her by one wide sleeve. Maybe she hadn't noticed, but there were two bluecoats on the other side of the side-show area and they had just spotted her. They started running abreast to head the girl off, but just then something happened that gave the Ghost and Fay a break.

It didn't just happen. Rather it had been planned on the spur of the moment by Joe Harper, the Ghost's pal. Harper, lugging his pitchman's stand loaded with two bit fountain pens, just managed to get between the police and Fay McKay. The pitchman stumbled over the folding leg of his stand, fell directly beneath the feet of one of the policemen. In doing so, he pushed the stand in front of him and "accidentally" spilled the second officer.

The Ghost sprang toward the door of one of the side-show tents, dragged Fay McKay after him. The spangled banner above the tent entrance lauded the ability of one Lester the Great, who was the circus magician. A smile twitched the thin lips of the Ghost as he and Fay entered the doorway.

Somebody in white tie and tails, presumably the Great Lester, tried to stop them. There was no hocus-pokus about the left jab that flattened Lester to the earth, but it was quite effective.

"On the stage, Fay! And hurry! They'll find us in a couple of shakes."

The little stage was draped in black. In the center and a little to the rear was a wooden cabinet, open at the top and front. A black velvet curtain, the height and width of the cabinet front, was suspended from the top of the tent. By means of a windlass at the left side of the cabinet, this curtain could be lowered to close the front.

"Pull up your sleeves, arms bare to the elbows," the Ghost ordered the girl. "Then jump into the cabinet, put both arms straight up, and grasp that horizontal bar ten inches above the top of the cabinet."

Utterly bewildered, yet trusting this strange man completely, the girl obeyed.

"As I let the curtain down in front of the cabinet," he directed, "you must lower your arms, but only under cover of the descending curtain, understand? When the curtain is all the way down, crouch on the cabinet floor facing the back. You'll get your chance to get into the clear. And here—"

THE Ghost's agile fingers flicked to a pocket of his black vest and brought out a plain card on which was lettered a telephone number.

"When you're finally holed-in, give me a ring at that number."

He stuck the card between the girl's lips. Her teeth clamped on one end of it. Possibly she would have tried to thank him, except that at that moment two policemen came in the door of the magician's tent. They saw the Great Lester stretched out on the floor, then looked toward the stage.

The Ghost pressed his hand to the right side of his black coat. His little

automatic dropped into the palm of his hand. He turned the gun on the girl standing in the cabinet, her hands raised.

"You're covered, babe," he said harshly. "Come on, coppers, I got her cornered for you!"

For just a moment, he thought that Fay McKay was going to give the whole stunt away. Perhaps his acting was too realistic. Perhaps it had even convinced Fay that he was about to hand her over to the police. But as the two bluecoats came running down the aisle between the folding chairs intended for the audience, the Ghost touched the windlass that allowed the curtain to drop in front of the cabinet. He managed to catch Fay's eye. He winked.

"Remember!" he whispered.

"Grab her!" one of the bluecoats shouted as he bounded onto the stage.

"Oh, she can't get away," the Ghost said lightly as the curtain settled in front of the cabinet. "You can still see her hands sticking out of the top of the cabinet, can't you?"

They could see the two hands and about six inches of bare arm. The hands were hooked onto the horizontal bar above the open top.

"She won't get away," the Ghost assured them, "unless one of you utters the forbidden magic word!"

"Magic word, huh?" the second cop roared. "What kind of a shenanigan is this?"

The Ghost's hand dropped down the side of the cabinet, touching a secret spring. His little finger caught and hooked onto a black thread which was scarcely visible even when you knew where to look for it.

"That was a very grave mistake," he said soberly. "You could scarcely believe it, but 'shenanigan' happens to be the magic word which I was about to caution you *not* to say. An unfortunate coincidence."

He stepped back from the cabinet as he said this, gave the invisible thread a slight jerk. The hands and arms that had reached out of the top of the cabinet vanished. One of the policemen yanked the black curtain aside with one hand and turned the muzzle of his gun toward the interior of the cabinet.

The cabinet was empty.

The Ghost's patter, brief though it was, and that moment of stunned surprise the police got from the mysterious vanishing act, gained precious seconds for both Fay and the Ghost himself. When the police turned toward the man in black, a second surprise awaited them.

THE magician-detective's lips had drawn back from his shell teeth. His eyes stared vacantly. A ghastly aura of green light spread upward across his face. Because his black suit was virtually impossible to see against the black background, it appeared as though that ghastly death's-head floated in mid-air.

"Drop your guns, coppers, or I'll make a fine pair of Irish banshees out of the both of you!"

The Ghost's voice seemed to come from the depths of a coffin. There was mockery in it, but not the sort that pulls any laughs. The Ghost's little automatic, turned on the two police, was not particularly funny either. Two Police Positives plunked to the floor of the stage.

The Ghost was moving backward across the stage, his slim body interposed between the two policemen and one of the Great Lester's magic tables. It was entirely possible the police officers had not seen what appeared to be a human skull sitting in the center of the magic table waiting for the Great Lester to perform the "Talking Skull" routine.

The Ghost's left hand went behind him, grasped the skull. His right, still holding the automatic, raised suddenly to the brim of his black hat. Just under the hat brim was a carefully folded veil of black silk held in place by an elastic band.

The Ghost twitched the elastic. The black veil fell across his face. At the same time, he brought the skull off the table and around over his left shoulder. He flung the skull straight at the two astounded bluecoats.

So perfectly synchronized were these two movements and so swiftly did he execute them, that there was scarcely any lapse of time between the blackout of the Ghost's face and the appearance

of the skull. To the police, it must have appeared as though the Ghost had taken off his head and tossed it at them.

Taking full advantage of this surprising move, the Ghost sprang to the back of the tent. Magically, it seemed his fingers traded the automatic for his knife. He ripped a doorway for himself and leaped through the opening. Given this much of a head-start, he felt confident that he could out-run the police.

His only regret was that he had spoiled one of the Great Lester's tricks. The police would eventually investigate the cabinet from which Fay McKay had vanished. They would discover the secret trap at the back and the chute that led to the back of the tent from the trap.

They would discover that the two arms they had seen sticking through the top of the cabinet were fakes. They would learn that these artificial arms and hands hooked automatically to the horizontal bar as the curtain was lowered. And they would discover that a jerk on a certain black thread released the fake hands from the bar and allowed them to fall back into the pocket sewed on the back of the curtain.

The Ghost paused in his flight to look out across the stretch of darkness beyond the circus "backyard." If Fay McKay was out there somewhere, temporarily beyond the reach of the law, he didn't mind sacrificing Lester's vanishing trick so much. The general public wouldn't learn it anyway.

CHAPTER VI

Murder Multiplies

DURING the time the Ghost had been engaged in making fools out of a pair of the Fulton Heights' Police, that stalwart arm of the law, Captain Bushman, had not been idle. Acting on information obtained from Glenn Saunders, whom he supposed to be George Chance, he had turned his attention to Tanko, the Ape-Man of the freak show.

Glenn Saunders had accompanied

Bushman to the freak tent where Bushman's underlings were holding Tanko. The Ape-Man was an ugly brute, had been ugly even before the accident that had broken his back. He had a barrel of a torso with short legs and long, bowed arms. His nose was crushed flat against his face and his forehead was peaked and receding.

Stripped to the waist, his broad expanse of chest looked like a fur rug. Not all of the hair that covered his body had been faked.

Saunders had frequently heard of police questioning a criminal who wouldn't talk, but this was the first time he had ever witnessed the grilling of a man who couldn't talk. Had it not been for the sincere and perspiring efforts of Captain Bushman, Saunders would not have been able to suppress his laughter.

Tanko squatted on a low stool, his pad of paper on one hairy knee. When Bushman would fire a question at him, he would blink, scribble something on the pad. Since most of Bushman's questions could be answered by "yes" or "no," the answer side of the grilling was finally reduced to Tanko simply holding up a sheet of paper that had the word "yes" or "no" written on it.

While the grilling of Tanko went on and on, over by the menagerie tent, Tiny Tim Terry came out from behind a water barrel in time to catch Merry White's skirt as she headed for the entrance to the big-top.

"Where you going, Frail?" he demanded in a voice that might have been surly had it not been pitched so high.

Merry had a bag of peanuts. She popped one, let the shucks fall on Tim's hat.

"I'm taking in the show, Small, Dark and Rancid. I've been looking for counterfeiters, and up to now no luck. What does a counterfeiter look like anyway?"

Tim put a finger to his lips and pulled Merry back of the water barrel.

"Shsh!" he warned. "And bend down. He'll see you."

"Who?"

"Quiet, Frail!" Tim whispered angrily.

A man moved stealthily along the side of the menagerie tent. As he cut



Glenn Saunders

across in front of the entrance to the main tent, his face was momentarily visible in glaring light. It was the pimply Jerry Haines who had been Martin Hess' assistant.

"He was fooling around the animal tent," Tim whispered to Merry. "He packs a gun in a shoulder holster. We got to watch that guy."

Jerry Haines ducked under the canvas spreader between the main tent and the side-shows. Tim and Merry came from around the water barrel and followed. Inside the big-top, the band was playing "The Skaters' Waltz."

Merry said, "Darn crime, anyway! I'll bet Harry Marquand is waltzing across the tight wire, and I'm not inside to see him and have nervous fits."

JERRY HAINES walked along the side of the main tent. At the end of the canvas wall, he cut across the "backyard" toward the office wagon. Tim and Merry would have followed except for the unforeseen intervention on the part of a circus roustabout who came bounding from the rear entrance to the big tent.

"Hey, Major Tynamite, what's the idea of walkin' out on the act?"

The roustabout pounced on Tim, seized him by the back of the coat



Joe Harper

collar, and lifted him off the ground.

"Here, you let him go!" Merry said. "His name's not Major Tynamite."

"Well, I didn't think that was his real name," the man said. "I ain't that dumb. Anyway's he's the midget that walked out on the act, and he's under contract—"

"I'm not with the circus!" Tim protested.

"Tell it to the Marines!" The man laughed. "What would a midget be doing on the grounds if he wasn't with the circus?"

"He—he isn't even a midget," Merry said, trying desperately to get the man to release Tim. "He's my own little boy, and I'll have you arrested for kidnaping, that's what I'll do!"

The roustabout laughed, jerked Tim out of Merry's grasp.

"Lady, you should oughta teach your little boy better than to smoke cigars. They'll stunt his growth."

Tim kicked his captor in the stomach. The man changed his grip, got Tim under one arm as though he was a sack of flour.

"Cut it out, Shrimp, or I'll tan your leather for you." And then he hurried through the back door of the big tent.

All of this was pretty humiliating for Tiny Tim. He was getting along toward middle age and he prided him-

self on his dignity and poise. He had retired from the show business, because he had resented being laughed at, to live on a comfortable income to which he had fallen heir.

By the time he had been carried to the interior of the big tent, he had worked himself up into a rage. The air about him was tinted a faint blue by his profanity. He was plopped down beside a nice-looking midget lady who promptly stuck her fingers in her ears.

"That isn't Tynamite!" the midget lady squealed.

"You're danged tootin', it isn't!" Tim yelled. "You can't do this to me, you bums!"

The roustabout looked at the manager of the midget troop.

"The only runt I saw out there," he explained. "All these here shrimps look alike anyway, so why don't we use this one?"

The manager, a man with a nose like a beet, stooped over Tim.

"Listen, little man, you've got to help us out in this dollhouse act. I guess Major Tynamite took on a skin-full or something. We'll make it right with you."

"There's nothing could make it right with me!" Tim said indignantly. "And if you don't stand aside, sir, I'll punch you one on the sniffer."

The manager straightened, taking his beet-red nose out of Tim's reach.

"There's the run-on music now," he said, then added something in a whisper, intended for the ears of the roustabout alone.

TIM tried to make a dash for the door. He was caught around the waist, lifted high. The manager of the midgets had raised the roof on a miniature house and the roustabout dumped Tim into the doll house where he came close to landing on top of the lady midget. Somebody put the roof back on the house which was promptly pulled out in front of the audience by a couple of circus ladies dressed up like little girls.

"Act like a doll," the manager yelled at Tim. "Queenie will tell you how."

"Queenie" presumably referred to the midget lady who was sitting on the floor of the doll house beside Tim.

The little woman spread out her hands appealingly to Tim.

"Please help me," she said, her blue eyes brimming with tears. "My husband's tight. If you don't help me put this act across, we'll lose our job."

"Don't try to work your feminine wiles on me," Tim said. "I won't do any song and dance out there in front of that mob."

The little lady's eyes were changeable. Right now they flashed fire.

"I'm not trying to work any wiles on you. Why, you're old enough to be my father! Now you listen to me. You can't back out now. When we get in the ring, the two girls will open the front of the house. We're supposed to be seated like a couple of dolls. Stiff like, see? They'll take us out and play with us. You keep stiff just like a doll, only help the girls a little when they start to take your coat off."

"Take my coat off?"

Tim's eyes were actually popping with boiling anger and amusing embarrassment.

"Why, sure. Then after a while, the two girls go to sleep and we come to life and do a dance—"

Tim switched his big cigar over to the other side of his mouth. He struck a match on the seat of his pants and relighted the cold perfecto.

"No girl large or small is going to make a strip-tease artist out of me," he informed Queenie firmly.

The midget lady tried to drag Tim down into a chair.

"The act is on!" she said. "You're a doll."

"I am like—"

And Tim broke away just as one of the "little girls" on the outside opened the front of the doll house. Tim dashed for freedom. The "little girl" tried to shove him back into the house, and got the palm of her hand burned on Tim's cigar.

He darted out of the house and raced for the back door of the tent. The audience roared with laughter, which did Tiny Tim no good at all. By the time he had reached the entrance where the manager of the midgets was waiting for him, Tiny Tim was mad as the proverbial hornet and his cigar was the hornet's sting.

Behind him the band was playing furiously to cover what was obviously a serious slip-up in the performance. The manager of the midgets crouched to tackle Tim, but Tim's cigar gouged at the man's face. The manager went over backward trying to avoid that hot Havana.

Tim detoured his fallen foe, ran between the spread legs of the big roustabout. He was free then, but he kept running until he heard Merry's voice calling him.

The little man came to a quick stop. He was panting, but not too out of breath to be unable to blame Merry for his humiliation.

"Why didn't you stop them? Didn't you see what they did to me? I'll never live this down. Never!"

"Oh, stop it," Merry said.

"Do a strip tease and get laughed at!"

"Tim, listen to me! He's been shot!"

"Take off my coat. Treat me like a doll. I—" Tim stopped sputtering. "What did you say, Frail? Who's been shot?"

"That man you told me to follow. That man Haines."

"Where?"

"He's lying over there beside the office wagon. The shot came from behind one of those big vans."

"Is—is he hurt badly?"

"He's dead," Merry said in hushed tones. "He practically died in my arms. And, Tim, I'm scared—scared half out of my mind!"

CHAPTER VII

Garden of the Past

THAT Jerry Haines they shot last night was a Treasury Department man."

In these words Police Commissioner Edward Standish of New York City broke the news to the Green Ghost the following morning as the two men drove out to Martin Hess' Long Island estate.

The Green Ghost bore no resemblance to either George Chance, his

prototype, or the skull-faced phantom who had made life miserable for the Fulton Heights police on the night before. His thin nose had been widened with putty. Plastic plumpers inside his mouth filled the hollows of his cheeks. He wore a bushy red toupé over his own hair. His present role was that of Detective-sergeant Hammel of the New York Police.

Standish was driving. He was a man of medium height, heavy from the waist upward, spindle-shanked. He had close-set eyes that had a way of boring into a man's mind, and rather thin lips beneath a black square of mustache.

"I wondered if there wasn't a T-man on the job somewhere," the Ghost said. "It was pretty tough for Merry. She saw the flash of gun flame, saw Haines fall. The man was gasping his last when she got to him."

"Did Haines say anything before he died?" the commissioner asked.

"All I could get from Merry was something about somebody named Madge being funny. That's how Merry repeated it to me—that Haines said Madge was funny."

"Who's Madge?" Standish asked.

"You've got me. Might be anybody around the circus. I haven't had much of a chance to check on that. Nor have I pumped Merry thoroughly on just what she saw and heard. The poor kid was rather upset this morning. Captain Bushman, of the Fulton Heights Police, asked her so many questions last night that she's going around in circles."

"Bushman is going around in circles, too," Standish said. "I talked with him on the phone this morning. It seems one of his chief suspects is a mute."

"That's Tanko the Ape-Man," the Ghost said. "I just wonder if he can't talk or whether that's an act."

Standish said that he had thought of that himself and had told Bushman he ought to have a doctor look at Tanko.

The commissioner turned the car into the winding drive of the Hess estate. Carved on the stone gate posts was:

THE GARDEN OF THE PAST

"I suppose you've been here before?" Standish asked. "It's a beautiful place. Hess was quite a nut on prehistoric animals. Maybe he'd liked to have added a few dinosauri to the circus menagerie."

Standish referred to the life-size restorations of prehistoric beasts placed here and there on the grounds of the big estate. These were cement plaster statues depicting the fearsome monsters of the past posed among the great hardwood trees.

To the left of the drive as they rolled along was a statue of a saber-toothed tiger crouched to spring upon a plaster replica of a hairy mammoth. And farther along a tyrannosaurus battled with a long-necked "thunder beast" that must have been a story and a half in height.

THE estate grounds were open to the public three days out of the week and many a zoology class had visited the place to study the replicas of these monsters that once had trampled the earth.

The house itself was placed back on a wooded slope that commanded a view of the strange garden. It was a great white structure that copied the pillar-fronted mansions of the old South. There the bachelor Martin Hess had made a home for his sister, an aged uncle, two orphan nephews, and any other member of the Hess clan who decided to spend a week, a month, or a year with the wealthy showman.

Miss Margaret Hess was receiving visitors in the drawing room, a servant informed Standish and the Green Ghost.

The magician-detective was rather anxious to find out just what the Hess family planned to do with the circus that had brought all these riches. It had always been Martin Hess' wish that the show should go on, but if the Ghost knew Margaret Hess she wouldn't be apt to respect her brother's wishes.

She was a tall, bony woman with high-piled white hair above a thin, immobile face. She greeted Standish and the red-haired "Sergeant Hammel" distantly.

"The police?" she said. "But my

poor brother's death did not occur here."

"But perhaps you can enlighten us by answering a few questions," Standish said.

She sighed. "Perhaps I may."

As the Green Ghost followed Standish and Margaret Hess across the huge drawing-room, he saw that she had not been alone. Seated in three chairs that formed a little semi-circle in a bay window, were Ricki, Harry Marquand, and Gregor Latour—all from the Hess circus. The Ghost guessed that Margaret Hess might have found their presence a little humiliating except that she probably considered policemen quite as far beneath her as circus people.

Ricki was scarcely recognizable without his grease paint makeup and putty nose. His own nose was rather small. There were hundreds of tiny wrinkles at the corners of his eyes and mouth. His pale yellow hair was thin and flecked with silver.

Harry Marquand was quite as graceful and dapper in street clothes as in tights. But Gregor Latour in a rugged Shetland suit looked something like a big outdoor man in a florist's hothouse. Embarrassment had flushed his face and the long scar beneath his chin was contrastingly white.

"To your knowledge," Standish began to Margaret Hess, "did your brother ever have any dealings with a man named Max Conrad?"

Miss Hess shrugged.

"A foolish question to ask me, Commissioner. I know absolutely nothing of my brother's business dealings. We were in worlds apart, my brother and I, bridged only by the most slender of family ties. It is no secret that I did not approve of his association with people of the circus."

"Yeah, and where would you be now if it wasn't for the circus?"

It was Ricki who asked this question.

MISS HESS elevated her nose and turned her back on the old clown.

"And Martin Hess never mentioned any sort of trouble that he was in—any trouble that might have occurred



Merry White

at the circus?" the Green Ghost put in.

"I never discussed the—the show business with my brother at all," Miss Hess said. "I thought I had made that clear to you."

"Then I think you'd better start discussing right now," Ricki said. "I guess we ain't much so far as having any class goes, Miss Hess, but we do know the circus—I and Latour and Marquand do. If you don't want to have anything to do with the show, it's all right with me. All you got to do is appoint a manager and sit back on your—and sit back and rake in the chips."

"I have already told you of my intention to sell the circus at auction, just as soon as I can do so."

"It's none of my business, of course," Marquand said smoothly, "but you are throwing away a very nice income in doing that."

"I am the best judge of that, Mr. Marquand," Margaret Hess said. "I am determined that the circus shall be sold, split up into smaller units if that is necessary to get rid of it. And I shall not permit the name of Hess to go with any part of it."

Latour looked bewilderedly from Ricki to Marquand.

"But you cannot do this, Miss Hess. You cannot. The Hess show is like an American institution—like the Statue

of Liberty, you could say, or—George Washington. Think of the children who would be so disappointed if the greatest show on earth should die with Mr. Hess!"

"I am thinking of present necessity, Mr. Latour," Margaret Hess said coldly. "The circus will be sold."

"You mean you need money?" Marquand's black eyes stared at the woman incredulously.

Miss Hess' lips thinned.

"I do not care to discuss such matters with you. I believe you three gentlemen have consoled me sufficiently for the loss of my brother, and that you may go now."

Miss Hess stood, tall and straight, her slipped foot patting the floor impatiently. And then she seemed to remember something.

"But wait," she said as Ricki, Latour, and Marquand stood up. "My brother bequeathed you something in his will—a little keepsake. It was intended for Mr.—er—Ricki, Mr. Marquand, and a Miss Fay McKay. Undoubtedly you know of this Miss McKay and can give her a rightful share in this little keepsake."

She rang for the servant while the three men from the circus looked at one another dazedly. When the servant appeared, Miss Hess said:

"Bring me the Da Vinci sketch from the library, Huston."

The servant bowed and went out. Miss Hess returned her frigid glance to the showmen.

"This—this keepsake, I feel it my duty to inform you, is valuable. One collector offered Martin two thousand dollars for it. When you sell it, as you undoubtedly will, I do not want you to be cheated."

"Sell a keepsake Martin Hess left us?" Ricki said. "We'd as soon cut off our ears, Miss Hess."

Miss Hess smiled woodenly.

"You may do as you please, of course, I fail to see just how an original sketch from the pen of Leonardo Da Vinci would fit into the scheme of things when one is traveling with a circus."

A SUPERIOR smile on her lips, Miss Hess crossed the drawing-room to the cased opening into the hall.

There were long gilt-frame mirrors on either side of the doorway, and it was evident from the glance Miss Hess gave her own reflection that she was quite well pleased the way she was handling these "circus people."

"Excuse me," the Green Ghost said, "but did I understand you to say this was an original Leonardo, Miss Hess?"

"A sketch," she replied. "Not a work of art. The great Da Vinci was an inventor, military engineer, mechanic, and scientist as well as an artist. This is merely the sketch of some strange contraption which Da Vinci dreamed about in an inventive mood. A drawing of an airplane, I believe. My brother purchased it for his collection as art treasures some time ago."

Commissioner Standish looked at Miss Hess as though he doubted her sanity.

"As I remember it," he said, "Leonardo lived in the Fifteenth Century. It could hardly be a drawing of an airplane."

"He lived in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries," Miss Hess said. "And it is an airplane. Or perhaps you would call it a flying machine. Leonardo actually invented a flying machine, according to authorities, though of course the thing was a failure. He modeled it after the birds of the air."

The servant returned, carrying a yellowed piece of parchment which was carefully preserved in a sealed picture frame. Miss Hess took it, extended it toward Ricki. The old clown came forward, stood in the drawing-room doorway, and stared at the relic. Harry Marquand and Gregor Latour lined up behind him. Latour got a glimpse of himself in the mirror and his color heightened. He put big, awkward fingers up to straighten his tie.

"What's all this writing along the side of the thing?" Ricki asked.

"Da Vinci's own incomprehensible notes," Miss Hess assured him.

Ricki shook his head bewilderedly. He passed the thing to Harry Marquand who blinked his pocketed eyes at the strange legacy and then showed it to Latour. The animal trainer took his turn of staring at it and handed it back to Marquand.

"It is very nice," Latour said, "but I don't know what it is."

The Green Ghost asked if he might see it. Marquand shrugged, handed the framed sketch to him.

Together the Ghost and Standish examined the drawing. The great Leonardo's idea of an airplane seemed to be a pair of wings to be strapped to a man's shoulders and flapped with the arms. In all the sketching on the piece of paper there was no complete drawing of the machine. It was composed, rather, of numerous detail drawings, the largest of which looked like the right wing of a bat.

The Ghost handed the thing back to Ricki who stuck it under his arm, thanked Miss Hess, and left with his two friends. Miss Hess asked Standish if there were any more questions.

"Yes, if you don't mind," the commissioner said.

The Green Ghost excused himself.

"I think I'll take a walk around the grounds. Unless you need me, Standish."

"Go right ahead," the commissioner said. "I'll meet you at the car."

horn-rimmed glasses staring at the monster, his head cocked critically on one side. He and the Ghost exchanged greetings.

"Ugly-looking beast, isn't he?" the Ghost commented. "Or I should say, wasn't he?"

The flying reptile had a short, thick body, a head that faintly resembled that of a crocodile, and ribbed, membranous wings that stuck out from its shoulders.

"Supposed to be a pterodactyl," the young man said. "Supposed to be, that is."

"What's the matter with it?" the Ghost asked.

The young man snorted.

"Fossil skeletons of the pterodactyl prove the wing was connected between the body and an enormously developed fifth digit on the front claws. You can see that on this statue the wing sprouts right out of the shoulder and isn't attached to the digit at all. And I can't understand the error. Every other statue in the place is as nearly accurate as restoration from the skeleton can make it."

"We can't always be right," the Ghost said.

"But this error is unpardonable. It's glaring. Ruins the worth of the entire collection. Of course, if one isn't well versed in the subject—"

The young man was well versed in the subject. He turned out to be a professor of zoology, and he was not content until he had given the Ghost a good-sized chunk of his learning.

When the Ghost rejoined the commissioner, he learned a startling bit of news.

[Turn page]

CHAPTER VIII

The Dummy Talks

HALF an hour went by while the Ghost wandered over the grounds, gazing at the strange beasts of bygone centuries. He was not the only sightseer; for, as he approached a small pool beside which was poised a white statue of some dragonlike flying reptile, he saw a young man in

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"I pumped Miss Hess dry," Standish said. "Even if she didn't want to, she'd have to sell the circus to meet Martin Hess' debts. The old man mortgaged everything he owned except the show itself—mortgaged all his property to the hilt. The Hess family inherited nothing but a batch of debts."

The commissioner chuckled.

"So it could be that Ricki, Marquand, and Fay McKay came out the big end of the horn. At least, they can sell that Leonardo sketch for a couple of grand."

The Green Ghost remained thoughtfully silent until finally Standish asked him if his walk around the grounds had brought any information.

"Oh, yes, Ned," the Ghost replied. "I'm now pretty well versed in the anatomy of the dinosaur. Did you know that the wing of the pterodactyl is spread between the body and its little finger—or what would be its little finger if the little finger was about two hundred times larger than the other fingers?"

"What in all creation is a pterodactyl?"

The Ghost laughed.

"As I understand it, the critter was the last thing you'd want to meet if you happened to be a caveman."

THAT afternoon, the Green Ghost went to a public library where he obtained a book on the life of Leonardo Da Vinci, illustrated with the reproductions from his sketchbook. In it he found a copy of the identical sketch which Ricki, Marquand, and Fay McKay had inherited from Martin Hess. He borrowed the book, took it to a famous New York art dealer.

From the art dealer, he learned that the top price a collector would pay for such a piece was about five thousand dollars.

"Two thousand or five thousand," the Ghost thought, "it's still a darned funny legacy to leave to three circus performers. It certainly hasn't any sentimental value to them, either."

At a previously appointed time, he telephoned a hotel at Fulton Heights and got in touch with Glenn Saunders. Saunders, Merry White, Joe Harper, and Tiny Tim had kept close to the circus night and day in hope of picking

up some sort of lead.

"Captain Bushman has been making a little progress," Saunders reported. "Whether it's in the right direction or not, I don't know. Anyway, his cops found the bullet which had pierced that extra mirror in the room beneath the purple tent where the Hess killing took place."

"That's the bullet which Fay McKay fired at the reflection of Tanko," the Green Ghost asserted.

"Well, anyway, it didn't come from the murder weapon—the revolver which Bushman found in Fay's dressing-room tent. Bushman now has the idea that Tanko is the murderer. He's not taking Tanko into Headquarters however. Tanko's still at the show, but he's being watched by plainclothes men."

"Bushman's working under the theory that if he gives Tanko enough rope he'll hang himself," the Ghost said. "You might try to get Bushman to see that there was only one shot fired at the time of the killing—the shot fired by Fay McKay at the reflection of Tanko."

"Then the killer must have shot Martin Hess sometime before Hess made his sudden appearance in the goldfish bowl," Glenn said.

"Exactly. The killer was holding the body upright back in the dark somewhere. When Fay McKay shot at Tanko's reflection, the killer pushed Hess' body forward, let it fall in that chalked circle, so that it appeared to the audience above as though Fay had shot Hess. Therefore, Tanko might be an accomplice of the killer, but it appears as though his only reason for being in that room was to scare Fay into shooting at him—or rather at his reflection."

"I'm doing what I can to make Bushman see things your way," Saunders said, "and also I'm trying to be a good alibi for you."

At nine o'clock, just as the show under the big-top was well underway, the Ghost put in a surprise appearance in front of the tent of the freak show. He was dressed in the same black suit which traditionally identified him, and his makeup was the same ghostly face he had employed the night before. But as he slipped under a flap of the freak

show tent, the Ghost was "turned off," as he expressed it.

WITH the exception of Tanko, the freaks had all gathered at one end of the long tent. The fat lady the dog-faced boy, the India-rubber man, the fire-eater, the human pincushion—all had congregated, waiting for the crowd to get out of the main show. A side-show performer didn't have much time off, what with two appearances before and after each show under the big-top.

Tanko was sitting on a box at the opposite end of the tent; sitting there in comparative darkness, his ugly head buried in his hands. The Ghost approached quietly, stood directly in front of the Ape-Man.

As the Ape-Man raised his head, the Ghost's lips pulled back from those yellow shell teeth, his facial muscles froze. That pale aura of greenish illumination spread upward, highlighting the sharp cheek-bones.

The effect on Tanko was nothing short of miraculous. He sprang to his feet, and wonder of wonders, he spoke. He said that he would be blessed—in reverse. He even went so far as to say how he would be blessed.

And before he could recall the startled oaths that had given him away, both he and the Ghost were surrounded by the freaks from the other end of the tent. And from somewhere appeared a policeman—one of those officers who had witnessed the Ghost's vanishment of Fay McKay on the night before.

As soon as Tanko had spoken, the Ghost switched off the green light that illuminated his face and allowed his facial muscles to relax. But that was not enough to prevent the bluecoat from recognizing him.

"It's the shenanigan man!" he exploded triumphantly, laying hands on the Ghost.

"Here, you don't want me," the Ghost said. "You want him." He pointed to Tanko. "He talked. Didn't you hear him?"

"He talked, all right," said the India-rubber man. "We all heard him. He cussed."

Tanko was showing signs of wanting



Tiny Tim

to leave for parts unknown. The officer punched him one in the jaw which sat him down upon the box, then blew a blast on his whistle which immediately brought in Captain Bushman and a pair of detectives. Tanko was hopelessly cornered. The Ghost, too, was cornered—but not hopelessly.

"Okay, you freaks," Bushman said, "get on down to the other end of the tent."

One of the policemen herded the excited crowd of human oddities to the end of the tent, and Bushman turned his hard eyes on the Ghost.

"Who are you?" he demanded.

"I'm a doctor," the Ghost said insolently. "I go around making dumb people talk. I'm wonderful."

"I'll tell you who he is," said the bluecoat who had first entered the tent. "He's the man who sneaked the McKay woman out from under my nose last night."

"Hold him!" Bushman ordered. "Better handcuff him, if he's that slick."

HANDCUFFS that meant practically nothing to the Green Ghost were clamped on the magician-detective's right wrist, linking him to the policeman. And Bushman turned his attention to Tanko.

"You're going to talk and talk fast. Up to now you've had it easy, see, because we thought you were a dummy. We haven't tried anything to *make* you talk, see?"

Tanko didn't say anything. Neither did he attempt to write on his pad. He simply sat there, head bowed on his hairy chest, his tiny eyes glowering at them. Bushman hit him alongside the mouth, but the ex-wrestler could take all that and more.

"I'll bet he'll say 'ouch!' when he sits down in the electric chair," the Ghost said. "And he'll fry all right. He killed Hess and you can prove it."

Fear brightened Tanko's piggy eyes. "I did like sin!" he said. "Conrad killed Hess. He killed him back of the shooting gallery so nobody heard the shot. I don't know a blamed thing about how he got the body into that room below the purple tent. All Conrad told me to do was get down in that room and put the scare into Fay McKay."

Tanko was talking—talking fast and desperately.

"That's the straight of it. Hess found out some of us who were pushing the queer out of the circus. The same with Jerry Haines—he figured where Conrad stashed the phony dough. Now you flatfeet get me out of here in a hurry before Conrad finds out I've talked."

"Who's Conrad?" the Ghost demanded.

Tanko moistened thick lips.

"You'll find out. I'm not even sure I know. Just get me out of here. Take me to a nice tight jailhouse!"

Three reports, so close together that they constituted one continuous roar, sounded just outside the tent. Tanko sat bolt upright, mouth open, eyes staring. He pitched forward to the earth. Three slugs had drilled the canvas behind him and plumped into Tanko's back. He must have been dead before he hit the ground.

The policeman who had been linked to the magician-detective suddenly found himself dangling an empty cuff. The Green Ghost sprang to the tent wall. His knife was a bolt of lightning that ripped a six-foot slit through the

tent wall. He stepped through the canvas, sighted the dim figure of a man sprinting through the gloom.

Police burst out of the tent like peas from a pod. The Green Ghost pointed to the flying figure of the killer who at that moment raced out of sight around the end of one of the sideshow tents.

"Scatter, men!" Bushman roared. "Get that guy or I'll nail your hides to my wall!"

He wheeled on the Green Ghost.

"And I want you, Mister. You've got a few questions to answer."

"I don't know any answers," the Ghost said. "I've never rated so much as a package of cigarettes on a radio quiz."

And then he landed a blow to the point of Bushman's chin which carried the police captain back through the hole in the freak tent. And by the time Bushman got over that, the Green Ghost had vanished.

Leaving the circus grounds in a hurry, the Ghost passed Joe Harper who was reaping a harvest at his pitchman pen racket. He dropped a tiny slip of paper on the tray which held Harper's wares. On it was written a brief message:

Follow Me to Rectory

If the police had been on Joe Harper's trail he could not have closed shop more rapidly.

CHAPTER IX

Treasure

ON East Fifty-fifth Street in Manhattan was a square brick house that crouched in the shadow of an old church. At one time the house had been a rectory attached to the church that was its neighbor.

But tragic death had come to two successive ministers who had lived there, and the place had been abandoned, its windows boarded. It was said that the moldering walls included within their boundary a chorus of old ghosts who could be heard howling

down the chimneys on windy nights.

Few knew that the present owner of the haunted rectory was George Chance. It was in the basement of this pile of crumbling brick and mortar that the Green Ghost made his headquarters. It was a surprisingly comfortable apartment which often had to serve as home when the famous magician deserted his real identity to become the Green Ghost.

And it was here that he and his aides met for consultation.

When Joe Harper and the Ghost arrived at the rectory that night, they found Tiny Tim Terry and Merry White awaiting them. Glenn Saunders was still at the circus, doubling for George Chance.

"I'll tell you, George," Tiny Tim said soberly, "this investigation at the circus is getting me down."

"Yes, isn't it, Tim?" Merry said, her green eyes bubbling with laughter. "There's a midget widow there who has designs on you. Must be your money."

The little man glared fiercely at Merry.

"All right. Have your little joke, my good woman! How would you like to be hauled out into the middle of a circus ring to be made a fool of?"

"Stop bickering, you two," the Ghost said. "Our best lead to Conrad's identity just went the way of all leads. Tanko was shot tonight, and just after I'd scared him into talking."

"The further you go in this investigation the closer you get to a nice hard slab in the morgue, looks like to me," Merry said. "Nobody's happy but Joe. He's been pulling in the suckers and nice hard money, too."

Joe Harper dropped into a chair and cocked his heels on the top of a coffee table. His cigarette drooped dejectedly.

"Okay, Babe," Joe said. "But my dogs are killing me."

"Just where are we getting with this thing, George?" Tiny Tim asked, putting a match to a fresh cigar.

"Well," the Ghost said, "we've got Fay McKay in the clear. She phoned me last night that she was holed-up at a hotel here in town. Just before Tanko

died, he put the blame for the Hess killing on Conrad.

"So another innocent gal is saved from the clutches of the law," Joe Harper said sarcastically. "Question is, how we going to find Conrad before he finds us—with a bullet."

The Ghost looked at Merry.

"What about those last words of Jerry Haines, before we go any further? Haines was a government agent out after this counterfeit mob. He died because he knew too much. Therefore, we might suppose that his last words were pretty important."

"He said something about a girl named Madge," Merry said, wide-eyed. "He said Madge was funny. He could have been talking about his wife or girl friend—"

Joe Harper snorted.

"That's a screwy conclusion. A man about to kick off wouldn't make a crack like that about his wife."

"How would you know?" Merry retorted. "You never had a wife, and you never kicked off."

THE Ghost went over to the studio couch and sat down beside Merry. He took the girl's slim, pretty hand.

"Now listen, dear, I want you to think hard and recall Haines' exact words. Did he just lie there on the ground and with his last breath say, 'Madge is funny!'"

Merry shook her head vigorously.

"He was dying," she said. "'Course he didn't say it that way. I just caught the words 'funny' and the name 'Madge.' He was gasping, and it was all awfully horrible."

The Ghost frowned, shook his head.

"Still no sense to a remark like that. Let's leave it for now. Commissioner Standish discovered this morning that the Hess family is broke. It seems Martin Hess mortgaged everything he owned except the circus, and his sister will have to sell the show to pay off the debts. She'd have sold it, anyway, I suppose. The funny part is that nobody seems to understand why Hess would do a trick like that. What did he do with the money he borrowed?"

Nobody had an answer for that one. The Ghost told them of the Leonardo



Commissioner Standish

sketch which Hess had willed to Fay McKay, Ricki, and Harry Marquand.

"Anybody see anything remarkable about that?"

"Sure," Tim said. "Hess figured that Ricki, Fay, and Marquand could sell the Leonardo and that way get enough money to buy the circus from Margaret Hess. That would not only be nice for Hess' three friends, but it would keep the Hess show going."

"Not on five thousand dollars," the Ghost said. "That's top price for this Leonardo sketch. But that does give us a hint of what might have been in Hess' mind, Tim. Suppose the Leonardo sketch was a clue to the hiding place of the money Hess had borrowed. That money, in the hands of Ricki, Marquand, and Fay McKay, could be used to buy the circus and keep it going, as you suggested."

"But golly, darlin'," Merry protested, "why not just leave the money to Ricki and company? Why go through all that mystery of hiding the money and leaving a puzzle to work out? It's silly. Martin Hess knew that his sister would sell the circus, anyway—"

"Silly?" Joe Harper scoffed. "Then you don't know the courts and the shysters and people like Margaret Hess

as well as I do. It's just plain sense. It's the only possible way in which Martin Hess could have willed his money to the people he wanted it to go to. And at the same time, he could go to his grave feeling that the Hess show would go on."

"Joe means," the Ghost interpreted, "that if Martin Hess had willed all that money to Ricki, Fay, and Marquand, Margaret Hess could take the will into court and have a swell chance of breaking it and taking the money for herself. I think we've got something there. Especially, when you stop to consider that a statue of a pterodactyl on the Hess estate is zoologically an error."

The Ghost's three aides exchanged glances.

"Do you feel all right?" Joe asked.

The Ghost smiled thinly.

"Perfectly all right, my friend. And I've got an idea that maybe you and I ought to go out on Long Island and dig for treasure."

MERRY WHITE suddenly leaned forward and rocked her pretty head in her hands. Joe Harper turned his black-beetled eyes on the girl.

"Has everybody gone nutty? The Ghost starts talking Greek and Merry has a fit. If this is a game, let Tim and me play too."

"Darlin', darlin'!" Merry groaned. "You've got a dope for a girl friend. A perfect dim-wit dope."

"At last you've found that out, have you?" Tiny Tim said.

Merry ignored the little man's thrust. She sprang to her feet and faced the magician-detective.

"He didn't say 'funny'. He said 'queer'. And 'queer' is slanguage for counterfeit money, which makes everything perfectly all right. You associate counterfeit money with a T-man like this Jerry Haines. That's what Haines meant when he gasped out those two words. He meant either that somebody named Madge has the counterfeit money, or maybe knows where it is."

"You're sure of this, Merry? You're certain that Jerry Haines said 'queer' and not 'funny'?"

"Sure and certain, and cross my heart."

"Good!"

The Ghost stood up and began pacing the floor, rubbing his palms together. Finally, his mind made up, he turned to Merry.

"You and Tim get back to the circus. Merry, you can drive to Fulton Heights and get there before the show closes. Try and find out who Madge is. Joe and I will swing over to Long Island and see if my hunch about where the Hess money went is any good."

Five minutes later, the haunted rectory was haunted only by the phantoms of the past. The Ghost of the present was on his way to the Hess estate, accompanied by Joe Harper.

"It's like this, Joe," the Ghost explained as they neared the Hess place. "Martin Hess willed this Leonardo sketch to Ricki, Fay, and Marquand. The sketch is a detail drawing of a flying machine invented by Leonardo. The wing mechanism and the wing itself is modeled after that of a bird, or maybe a bat."

"So what?" Joe said.

"So, throughout the Hess estate are lifesize statues of prehistoric animals. These statues are accurate reconstructions, with one exception. The statue of the flying reptile known as the pterodactyl isn't a reconstruction from the actual skeleton of the extinct creature. The wing of Hess' pterodactyl is copied after the wing of Leonardo's flying machine as pictured in the sketch bequeathed to Ricki, Marquand, and Fay McKay."

"And you think the Hess fortune was hidden somewhere around this flying whozis," Harper said. "You think Hess fixed it that way so that his pals of the circus could get the dough, save the circus, and so his relatives would inherit nothing but debts."

"Sounds reasonable, doesn't it?"

"Sure," Joe Harper agreed. "There's only one thing that worries me. When you came out of the rectory, you were carrying a trench shovel with you. I never was designed for a shovel artist."

"Not even if there's a fortune at the bottom of the hole?" the Ghost laughed.

Harper snorted.

"A fortune belonging to somebody else? Not interested."

TOGETHER, they climbed the fence that enclosed the Hess estate. In moonlight and shadows, the strange beasts of the garden of the past became fearsome things.

"Gives you the heeby-jeebys," Harper whispered, as he stared upward at the gaping jaws of some fierce dinosaur. "Whole place is like a graveyard, sort of. Only somebody ought to bury these monsters."

"A good job for you," the Ghost said. "You like to dig so well."

Reaching the pool beside which stood the pterodactyl, the Ghost stepped beneath the reptile's wide-spread right wing. He took a flashlight from his pocket and cautiously directed the tiny beam toward the earth.

The sod had been newly cut and replaced. There was a sprinkling of damp earth on the blades of long grass.

"Looks as though somebody's been doing some digging here pretty recently," the Ghost commented.

He took his little shovel, lifted the sod and began digging away the soft earth beneath. Harper, in spite of his dislike for digging, took his turn. Forty-five minutes later, they uncovered a steel box. One of the Ghost's pick-locks opened the lid.

"Dough!" Joe Harper gasped as the lid was thrown back. "I never saw so much lettuce in my life. Must be a million bucks!"

He got down on his belly beside the hole, began taking out packets of new bills. The Ghost crouched beside him, turning his flashlight on the money as his assistant scooped it out.

"How about a ten per cent cut on this stuff for you and I, huh?" Harper demanded. "After all, that's no more than a collecting agency ought to have, and we're collecting this stuff for Hess' circus pals, aren't we?"

"Sure," the Ghost said quietly. "Sure, I guess you can have ten per cent. Of course, you'd go to jail if you spent any of it. Maybe the owners would be glad to let you have the whole treasure."

Harper rolled over on his side, his hard black eyes searching the Ghost's face.

"You mean it's phony?"

The Ghost turned his flashlight beam

into the strong-box. The ray glinted on several plates of bright metal resting up against the side of the box.

"The plates for printing this junk, Joe. It's counterfeit, all right. A million bucks worth of nothing!"

"Well, I'll be blowed!" Harper exploded. "What's the next move—bury this stuff again?"

"I think it's been buried enough," the Ghost said. There was a grim look in his eyes. "This Conrad has blocked us at every turn, and we still don't know a thing about him except that he works out of the circus. Our best bet is to head back to Fulton Heights. This is the last night the show camps there. They knock down after the show tomorrow night."

"It'll be after midnight before we get there," Joe said.

"That won't make any difference. Maybe Conrad talks in his sleep!"

CHAPTER X

After Midnight

JOE HARPER and the Green Ghost burned up the highway to Fulton Heights, while Merry and Tim hunted the circus for the person named Madge to whom the dying Jerry Haines had referred, and Glenn Saunders was unwittingly digging himself in behind the eight ball.

George Chance's double had remained on the circus grounds day and night as a special guest of Ricki the clown. While George Chance had known Ricki for years, Glenn Saunders had known Ricki for only a little more than forty-eight hours.

Ricki seemed to be in a reminiscent mood that night. After the show was over, he got Glenn Saunders to go with him into the "backyard" where the big trucks and vans, that carried the circus on tour, were parked.

"Times sure have changed, since you and I were together, huh, George?" Ricki said.

There was nothing for Saunders to do but agree. One thing led to another, with Ricki talking about circus people Glenn Saunders knew nothing

about the Ghost's double trying to make appropriate answers.

"You take that man Willy Scales, for instance," Ricki said. "He was just real careless around the animals. You remember Willy, don't you?"

Saunders thought a moment, wondering whether he really ought to remember this Willy Scales or not. He had never heard the name before.

"Yes, I think I do," he replied.

"Sure you do," Ricki said. "You saved his life once, remember?"

Saunders forced a laugh.

"Oh, sure. Funny how even a thing like that will slip your mind."

"Yeah. Willy had been fooling around the monkey cage, remember? And then he went right from there over to clean out the cage of one of the big cats. You know how a cat hates monkey scent. Why, if you hadn't been handy, that big she-lion would have ripped Willy to pieces. But there you were, just a young punk, but brave as brass."

Glenn Saunders didn't say anything. Ricki's pale eyes were watching him closely.

"Remember that?" Ricki asked.

"Sure," Saunders replied.

The clown laughed bitterly.

"Yes, you do! Because it wasn't Willy Scales and it wasn't a she-lion, and you're not George Chance. You're an impostor. And come to think of it, ever since you been hanging around here, we've had trouble from murder on!"

"Now wait a minute, Ricki!"

"Don't you try backing out of it, Mr. Fake. I'm going to set the cops on you!"

Saunders was already on the move. Ricki lunged at him, tripped, fell flat on his face. Saunders sprinted around behind the huge van, ran head-on into somebody crouched there in the gloom. A hand caught him by the throat. A gun jammed into his belly.

"Okay, Green Ghost," a husky voice warned him, "be nice or get it in the belly!"

* * * * *

AS SOON as he had reached the circus grounds, the Ghost headed straight for the managerie tent. He recalled that when Tiny Tim had been

following Jerry Haines, just before the latter had been shot, the T-man had been prowling around the animals in the tent.

There were still lights in the animal show and considerable activity about the tent, though the customers had all left the circus grounds. The keepers of the beasts were bedding them down for the night. None of the men saw the Ghost enter, and it was not until he stopped in front of a cage containing a particularly beautiful leopardess that anyone paid any attention to him.

"What you doing in here, Mister?" one of the keepers demanded. "The show's been closed over an hour. We don't allow no loafers around here."

The Ghost pulled a badge from his pocket and flashed it. It was the badge he used to impersonate Sergeant Hammel of the New York Police. He gave the keeper no time to examine the shield closely.

"Police business," he said. "First time I ever saw a circus go to bed, and I've got plenty of time to kill."

"Well," the keeper said, "don't go fooling around Madge or there'll be something killed besides time. We don't want any dead coppers around here."

"Who's Madge?" the Ghost asked, trying not to sound particularly concerned.

"That spotted baby," said the keeper, indicating the leopard. "Meanest cat in the lot. Latour won't take her in the ring, any more."

So the meanest cat in the show was named Madge. Had Jerry Haines referred to the big leopardess in his last words?

The Ghost said good night to the keeper, turned and left the tent. He went immediately in search of Gregor Latour.

The famous animal trainer had a small wall tent all of his own. A glittering sign bearing his name was hung over the door. A light was burning inside the tent. The Ghost stepped through the opening, saw that the place was deserted. He was about to leave, but on second thought, he dropped the tent flap and crossed to Latour's cot.

He searched the bed clothing care-

fully, turned to the battered metal suitcases that were at the end of the cot. He opened the top case, searched the clothing it contained. There was a compartment for toilet articles in the top of the case. He opened this, saw tooth brush, paste, a cake of soap, and nothing else.

He opened the second suitcase to disclose a pair of riding boots, a whip, and some publicity pictures of Latour and his animals. He returned both suitcases to their former position. There was nothing else in the room that could have contained anything incriminating.

A bit later, crossing the "backyard" where the big vans were parked, he ran into Joe Harper who drew him into the shadow of one of the trucks.

"You've talked to Merry and Tim?" Harper whispered breathlessly.

"No, but I've had a look at the mysterious Madge."

"That can wait. Something's happened to Glenn Saunders. Tim saw four men taking Glenn into the big kitchen van, and they weren't planning any pink tea. Tim heard one of the men call Glenn 'Green Ghost.' Something's gone haywire."

IN THE meantime, when Glenn Saunders found himself surrounded, he put up a brief but stiff fight. He couldn't have possibly avoided that blow he had taken from behind unless he had had eyes in the back of his head.

When he came to, he found himself lying on the floor of the rolling kitchen of the circus. His wrists and ankles had been securely bound. Four men were sitting around one of the work tables.

One of these men wore a triangle of white handkerchief around the lower part of his face. The others were simply circus hangers-on of the type that follows a show, working only when there weren't pockets to pick. They were tough-looking eggs, all of them, and Saunders didn't see anything particularly rosy about his future.

"What do we do with Mr. Ghost when he comes out of his trance?" one of the toughs asked the masked man.

"Work on him," came the muffled voice from behind the handkerchief.

"So far, we've kept ourselves pretty well covered by getting rid of Hess, that T-man, and old Tanko. But we got to find out what the Ghost knows to see whether we can stick with the show or take it on the lam."

One of the toughs got a can of water out of the cooler, went over to Glenn Saunders, threw the water in the double's face. Saunders held his breath, kept his eyes closed. The longer he could feign unconsciousness the better off he was going to be.

"Never knew a guy to sleep so long," the tough chuckled.

"When I sock 'em, they stay socked," said another.

"We'd be doin' ourselves and a lot of other gents a big favor if we just stuck a knife in him," the third said.

"That can come later," the man in the mask told them. "First, we've got to find out just where we stand."

So Saunders lay still and shivered inwardly. Ten slow minutes passed, and then he heard voices outside the kitchen van—loud, happy Negro voices. Saunders' heart sank. At first he had supposed that help was coming. But what could a couple of Negroes do for him?

The two Negroes had evidently seated themselves on the ground just outside the van. Every word that they said came distinctly to Saunders' ears. And as he listened closely, his heart began to beat more rapidly.

"Guess I could eat myself a piece of lunch," one voice said. "How 'bout you? We's mighty handy to de kitchen."

"Not me, no suh!" the other said. "Las' time I sneaked eatments out there I got caught."

"Suppose I does de sneakin' and meets you round behind de big tent."

The man in the mask jerked his head toward Glenn Saunders.

"Better hide him. Soon as we're rid of those fellows, maybe we can get to work."

Two of the toughs got up from the table, went over to Saunders and picked him up. There was a pantry at the front end of the big van. Glenn Saunders was carried into the pantry and the door closed. The toughs returned to the table.

Outside the van, the two Negroes were still talking. For ten minutes or more they kept up a conversation in loud voices. And then one of the men outside the van turned to his leader.

"They going to keep that up all night, Conrad?"

"Go see if you can get rid of them," the man in the mask said. "If food will do it, have them come in and help themselves."

THE man got up, went to the door at the back of the van and opened it. One of the Negroes, a tall, thin man as black as the ace of spades was just outside the door, apparently on the verge of coming in.

"Okay, Sam," the tough said. "Come on in and get your meat hooks on whatever you want. And then get out of here."

"Yas, suh," the Negro said, entering the van. "What all you gen'mens doing here?"

The man in the mask had turned his back to the door so that the handkerchief that hid his face could not be seen.

"Same thing you are, Sam—getting a bite to eat," the tough who had admitted the Negro replied.

The Negro looked around at the four men and then started for the pantry.

"What I wants is back heah, I reckons."

And he reached out for the latch on the pantry door.

Suddenly, the man who had been addressed as Conrad wheeled, lashed out at the Negro with his right fist. The blow landed and the black man hit the floor, rolled, didn't stop until he had hit a flour barrel. Then he lay there, perfectly still, his eyes closed.

"All right," Conrad whispered. "Take a look outside and see if the other one is around."

One of his men obeyed, reported that the coast was clear.

"Now get Mr. Green Ghost out of the pantry and let's get to work on him," Conrad directed.

Two men went to the pantry for Glenn Saunders. When they opened the door, one of them uttered a surprised oath.

"Conrad! Take a look at this!"

Conrad and the other man hurried back to the pantry, and the four men stared through the open door. There on the floor, neatly roped, was the same thin Negro Conrad had just knocked out!

Conrad wheeled around, stared toward the flour barrel where he had last seen the man who now appeared to be in the pantry in place of Glenn Saunders. There, standing beside the flour barrel, a black automatic in his hand, was the Green Ghost, skull teeth grinning, that strange green light illuminating his face.

"I believe this spells 'finis' for you and your gang, Conrad," the Green Ghost said quietly. "Or would you like it better if I called you Gregor Latour?"

Conrad's right hand stabbed for the gun that lumped in his trouser pocket. The automatic in the Green Ghost's hand barked once. Conrad's legs melted out from under him and he hit the floor of the van, his hands gripping at the right side of his chest.

The Ghost, who had never considered himself much of a shot, was surprised.

CHAPTER XI

The Show Goes On

CHANCE set aside the following evening to give a dinner party in his brownstone house on East Fifty-fourth Street. Merry White, who was to act as hostess, arrived early.

Of course, Joe Harper was there; Chance had never been able to shake that Broadway bum out of his guest room. Chance was expecting Tiny Tim Terry, of course, and also Harry Marquand, Fay McKay, and Ricki. The three members of the Hess circus had deserted the show for tonight—the last performance in Fulton Heights.

"You know there's a lot about this case you haven't told me, darlin'," Merry said.

She and George Chance and Joe Harper were sitting in the living room enjoying a cocktail of Harper's own mixing.

"Even I don't get it how you knew Conrad was Gregor Latour," Harper said.

"I didn't know until I searched Latour's tent last night," Chance said. "I was looking for the Hess money among Latour's belongings. I didn't find that. I didn't find anything incriminating. In fact, it was what I didn't find that told me that Latour was Conrad."

"Greek again!" Joe Harper said.

"Not Greek at all. You remember that Conrad had been cornered by the cops five years ago. And his hide-out was burned down to the ground. It wasn't known for sure whether Conrad died in the flames. But it was pretty certain that he had been severely burned. As a matter of fact, he was so seriously burned about the head and face that he resorted to plastic surgery to give him an entirely new face. He was burned so badly that the hair follicles on face and head were destroyed. There's nothing uncommon about that.

"Knowing that ahead of time, when I discovered something missing from Latour's toilet accessories, I knew that Latour was Conrad. You see, he had nothing but tooth paste, tooth brush, and soap in his toilet case. No razor, no shaving brush—nothing that goes with the manly art of shaving. He didn't shave, and yet his face and head were hairless. Except, of course, for those mahogany-colored eyebrows of his. The eyebrows were false."

"Yeah," Harper said, "but why look in Latour's tent for the Hess money?"

"Because when Miss Margaret Hess handed that original Da Vinci sketch to Ricki who in turn passed it to Marquand and Latour, Latour was standing in front of a mirror in the Hess drawing-room. It had occurred to me that if Hess intended the Da Vinci to be a clue to where he had hidden the money he wanted to go to his friends in the circus, Hess certainly would have had some instructions for his friends to follow. The artist Da Vinci had scribbled a lot of notes along the margin of the paper—notes which it is said nobody can read. Somewhere in those notes would have been the ideal place for Hess to include his instructions.

"The instructions were there, all

right, but in what is known as 'looking-glass' writing. I borrowed the sketch from Ricki last night and checked on that. If you held the sketch in front of a mirror, the instructions for digging beneath the wing of the pterodactyl could be clearly made out.

"Da Vinci's writing was still indecipherable. Latour simply happened to be looking into the mirror when he was holding the sketch in his hand. He knew about the buried fortune before anybody else did."

HE paused a moment, nodding soberly.

"What Latour did was, first take the counterfeit money and the engraved plates from where he had them stashed at the circus," he said then. "Then he went to the Hess estate, dug up the treasure, substituted the counterfeit money and the plates. Maybe he thought that Ricki and the others would eventually figure out the riddle, dig under the wing of the pterodactyl, and find the queer money. Either they would recognize it as counterfeit or they would try to spend it.

"Either way, Latour had washed his hands of the phony money. He didn't need it, after all, because he now had three million dollars in real money."

"But where did he hide the Hess fortune?" Merry asked.

"Under the floor of the cage of Madge the ferocious leopardess," Chance said. "That was the same place where he had hidden the counterfeit money. And just about as safe as a bank, when you consider Madge's disposition."

"Okay," Joe Harper said. "I guess we got that. But you're not through yet. We know what happened inside the kitchen van at the circus. You've told us about that. But you didn't say how it happened."

Chance smiled. "It was simple. I was outside the kitchen van putting on a ventriloquism act, using two voices so that I sounded like a couple of Negroes. By means of the mentalists' code, which Glenn Saunders and Merry know just as well as I do, I told Glenn Saunders I was outside in blackface, and that I was coming into the van to

help him out. You know how the code works, Joe—certain key words stand for certain letters. It's the same code most of the vaudeville mind-reading teams use.

"I got into the van and Conrad tried to knock me out when I started for the cupboard where Glenn was hidden. I rode Conrad's punch, pretended I was knocked out anyway. While Glenn was in the cupboard, he wasn't exactly idle. Glenn knows every escape trick that I know, and it wasn't hard for him to get out of his ropes.

"What he did was to pull a cork out of some bottle in the cupboard, burn it with a match and blacken his face. Then he lay down on the floor, pulled up some of the slack in the ropes that were supposed to have bound him.

"Since Glenn and I have features exactly alike, if we both black our faces we still look alike. When Conrad's men looked into the cupboard they were stunned by what they saw. I was lying on the floor next to the flour barrel and their backs were toward me.

"In my pocket I had a skull mask made out of rubber. It fits completely over my head for a quick change to the Ghost's makeup if I need it. I simply put the rubber mask over my blackface get-up, and when Conrad turned around—there was the Green Ghost, waiting for him."

"Must have been quite a shock considering Conrad thought that Glenn was the Ghost," Merry said.

CHANCE nodded.

"Conrad must have overheard that conversation between Ricki and Glenn where Ricki accused Glenn of being an impostor. Conrad knew that the Green Ghost had been on the circus grounds and knew that the Green Ghost is pretty good at making his face look like that of somebody else."

"Well," Joe said, "I wouldn't care to be in Conrad's shoes. He'll get the chair sure. But say—just what *did* happen to the Hess money?"

Chance laughed. "Talk on any subject with Joe and he'll eventually worm the conversation around to money. Why, Joe, I stole the Hess money out from under Madge's cage while the

cops were yanking Conrad and company off to the jailhouse. I've got the Hess fortune here, and tonight I am handing it over to Ricki, Marquand, and Fay McKay—the rightful owners. They'll use it to bid in the Hess circus

when it goes to the block."

"Then the show goes on!" Merry said triumphantly.

"In spite of a snobbish lady named Margaret Hess," Chance said, "the show goes on."




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AMATEUR DEATH

By LANSING STEBBINS

State Police Sergeant Bill Russell Bares the Truth of an "Accident" That Turns Out to Be a Well-Planned Murder

THE Amateur Movie Club of Lakeville met once in a week in the big renovated barn on Don Bosworth's suburban estate. Tonight, they were shooting the final scenes of Don's own masterpiece of the cinematic art, "The Kidnaped Bride." Don himself was acting as director and operator of the expensive and well-gadged Bolex.

"All right, gang!" he called. "We're ready to shoot the big climax scene.

The heroine is supposed to be gagged with adhesive tape and tied securely. The brutal kidnapers are to take pictures of her in that condition—pictures they hope will force her grieving parents and distracted fiancé to kick through with the ransom. Let's get at it."

Laughing and joking, the club members gathered around pretty Marcia Bosworth, Don's red-haired young wife, who was the heroine of "The

Kidnaped Bride." Rope was wound around her slender body, fastening her arms at her sides. A loop of rope circled her smooth throat. Don himself stuck a piece of tape over her soft red lips.

"Stand her up against the wall," he ordered, "and fasten the end of the rope around her neck to that ring in the wall."

Still laughing, the members finished setting the stage. Marcia submitted willingly, her blue eyes sparkling with laughter.

The whole script of "The Kidnaped Bride" was absurd—but it was meant to be.

"An old-fashioned melodrama in modern dress," Don Bosworth had described it.

The club members had entered into the spirit of the thing with a will, deliberately burlesquing the exaggerated situations and plot. It ought to get howls, they thought, when it was exhibited at the big country club ball, that fall.

A still camera was set up on a tripod in front of the bound girl. Flood and spotlights were turned on and club members who were impersonating the kidnap gang watched with exaggerated leers while their "leader" took the pictures that were supposed to induce prompt payment of the ransom.

In the background, other floodlights blazed on them, while Don Bosworth recorded the scene on movie film.

"All right," he yelled. "Cut!"

The lights faded out. A tall good-looking young man in immaculate evening clothes stepped forward in response to Don's beckoning gesture.

"It's your turn now, Bob," said Bosworth. "You have trailed one of the gang to their hide-out, managed to effect an entrance. After a search, you find your betrothed tied up and helpless, fainting with fear and fatigue. At the moment, none of the gang is present. You rush to the girl, cut the rope that circles her throat and then—" he laughed—"then one of the gang enters through another door and surprises you."

Bob Holmes, the "fiancé," nodded and smiled. "And then," he said, "I whip out my trusty automatic and,

holding the fainting girl in one arm, fill the evil mug full of lead. That right? Where do I get the trusty automatic?"

BOSWORTH, a tall, dark-haired, sallow-faced man, reached into the pocket of the sports jacket he wore and pulled out a small .32. He handed it to Holmes.

"That's my gun," he said. "Handle it gently. It's loaded with dummy bullets. Not blanks, you understand, because blanks wouldn't work in an automatic. These are dummies, with wax bullets in them. But be sure not to point the gun straight at the camera, anyway. The wax will melt before it can do any damage. I made the dummies, myself."

It was quite in keeping with Bosworth's character that he should have made his own dummy bullets. He was known as a "gun crank," as well as a sort of amateur scientific and mechanical genius. He had a well-equipped laboratory and workshop in the big house here on his estate and was forever inventing new gadgets and repairing old ones. Before the war, he had been an active radio amateur and had once held a private flyer's license. Some mysterious physical defect kept him out of the armed services.

The still camera was moved out of the way. Bosworth stepped forward and adjusted the lights to give him the effect he wanted when he trained the Bolex on the bound "victim." Off to one side was the door through which her rescuer was to come.

Don Bosworth pointed a spotlight at it, then stepped back to the movie camera.

"I'll shoot a few feet of you, first, Marsh," he said to his wife. "You are sagging in your bonds with your eyes closed, lost to all hope of rescue. Then . . . But wait a minute. You look too—too *unmussed* for all you've been through. Let me fix you up a bit."

He stepped around the camera and moved toward his wife. Reaching out, he ruffled her long-bobbed red hair and slid a strap of her blue evening gown down from a white shoulder. She tried to mumble a protest through her tape gag, but he merely laughed

and the other club members joined him. Then he went back to the camera.

The floodlights blazed on and the Bolex began to whirr.

"Now," Bosworth called after a moment, "you hear a noise outside the door. You open your eyes, glance toward it. The door opens."

It did, and Bob Holmes stood there. Bosworth resumed his directing.

"Your eyes light with hope, Marsh. You are saved—saved. Act, dog-gone it. Act."

Marcia Bosworth had a good bit of acting ability, and she went through the motions of registering joy and hope as well as she could in her bound and helpless condition.

Bosworth rapidly panned the Bolex to show Holmes at the door. Bob Holmes, too, could act and he went through the exaggerated business required by the script, rushing forward with outstretched arms and a glad cry sounding from his lips.

At the camera, Don Bosworth grinned excitedly.

"Fine—fine!" he cried. "Now catch her in your arms a second, release her and get your knife. Cut the rope above her head. Now, Marsh, you see the other door opening. You go rigid, then faint. Fine. Now, Bob, hold her and turn, drawing your gun. Fine. Fine. Now—*Fire!*"

Bob Holmes' finger tightened on the trigger. There was a brilliant flash of fire and a deafening explosion. And then suddenly he released his hold on the girl. He staggered blindly. His knees buckled and he fell to the floor. Marcia, too, collapsed and lay limp and motionless beside him.

White-faced, the club members stood silent for a full minute. Then they all rushed forward, with Don Bosworth in the lead. They stopped again as they reached the two figures on the floor.

A man cursed suddenly, and one of the women fainted.

The side of Bob Holmes' head was half blown away. He was dead. There was a jagged, welling wound in Marcia Bosworth's white throat. The butt, only, of the gun lay near Holmes' outstretched hand.

The rest had vanished.

"The gun!" Don Bosworth gasped. "It—it must have exploded! Quick, someone, run to the house and call the hospital."

He dropped to his knees beside his wife. . . .

SERGEANT BILL RUSSELL of the State Police reached the Bosworth estate a few minutes after the ambulance. He had been at his barracks when the report had come in from the hospital. With a trooper at the wheel, he had sped to the scene in a white-topped patrol car, even though the operator at the hospital had assured him that it was definitely only an accident.

Accidents had to be investigated, however, and the estate was two miles beyond the city limits, which put the affair definitely within Russ' jurisdiction.

He found all the members of the movie club still in the barn. A blanket had been thrown over Bob Holmes' body, and two hospital interns were kneeling beside Marcia Bosworth. They shrugged their shoulders when Russ asked if she would live.

"Toss up," one muttered.

The big sergeant turned to Don Bosworth.

"Suppose you tell me what happened here," he said. "What were you doing with a gun, anyway?"

Briefly, the young man explained the purpose of the gathering. He outlined the absurd plot of "The Kidnaped Bride" and explained what had happened when Holmes had pulled the trigger.

"But I can't understand it," he finished. "That was my gun, in good condition as far as I know, although I haven't shot it for over a year. I made the dummy cartridges myself, and put in a very small powder charge. Just enough, I thought, to work the mechanism of the automatic. But the gun blew to pieces—killed Bob—wounded Marcia. I can't understand it."

Sergeant Russell nodded. He picked up the grip of the gun and pulled out the magazine clip. A second later, he pried off the wax bullet of one of the two remaining cartridges and poured

the powder it contained into his palm.

"If the one that let go didn't have any more powder in it than this," he said, "I don't see why the gun exploded, either."

As a matter of routine, he questioned the other members. Each one's version was substantially the same as Bosworth's. He had the trooper take their names and addresses and told them to go home.

The two white-coated interns stood up suddenly. They had placed Marcia Bosworth on a stretcher and were carrying her toward the waiting ambulance.

"Needs a transfusion," one said. "We'll have to step on it."

Bill Russell turned to Bosworth, who stood white-faced and jittery, near the camera tripod.

"Better go with 'em, Bosworth," said the trooper. "I'll see you later—at the hospital."

Nodding, Bosworth followed the interns through the door. He averted his face as he passed Holmes' blanketed form.

For a moment after the others had left, Sergeant Russell and the trooper moved around the studio barn, their eyes taking in every detail.

"What d'you make of it, Sergeant?" the trooper asked. "Darned funny that gun blew up like that, don't you think?"

The big sergeant nodded. "Darned funny," he answered. "So darned funny that I wonder if maybe—" He broke off and stood frowning at the camera. Then: "Wait here, Jones," he ordered. "I'm going to take a look at Bosworth's laboratory."

He strode up the drive toward the main house. Although he had no definite idea, nothing he could put into words, he had a strong hunch that the explosion of that gun was too "funny" to be an accident. There was something wrong, somewhere. His hunch was strong, and Sergeant Bill Russell had learned that it paid to follow his hunches.

A white-coated Filipino houseboy let Russell into the big house and silently led him to Bosworth's basement laboratory and work-shop. Russ stopped on the threshold and whistled in surprise at what he saw.

The place had all the equipment of a first-class college chem lab. Retorts, bottles of reagents, racks of test tubes, and long white-topped tables gleamed under fluorescent lighting. A door in the opposite wall led into a work-shop filled with power-driven lathes, circular saws and presses. Russ began to believe the stories he had heard about Bosworth's being something of a genius. A smart workman could accomplish a lot with a set-up like this.

THE Filipino faded noiselessly away, and Russ was alone in the lab. He started wandering aimlessly around, his eyes darting keenly over the mass of equipment. He could not have told what he expected to find. He was not sure he expected to find anything. But his hunch was stronger than ever now, and it had him worried.

Finally he stood frowning beside a long white table. Absent-mindedly he pulled a deck of cigarettes from his pocket, put one in his mouth, and struck a paper match. As he blew out the first puff of blue smoke, he flipped the match toward a metal waste-basket at the end of the table.

A second or two later, the thoughtful look vanished from his gray eyes and he stepped swiftly toward the basket. The match had not gone out, and had started a fire in some discarded filter paper.

Russ bent over and pulled out a blazing piece of the absorbent paper. It was burning freely, not as that sort of paper should burn, especially when it was still damp as this was.

He stood staring at the steady green-tipped flame. Something inflammable, he realized, had been spilled on that paper not long ago. His brow furrowed, as his hunch grew stronger. He dropped the still burning paper and stepped on it to extinguish the flame, and as he did so his mind shot back to his college days—to the hours he had spent in the chem lab trying to master the intricacies of formulae, and to a certain lab demonstration that had scared him green.

Half an hour later, after a thorough search of both the laboratory and the work room, Russ rejoined Trooper Jones in the barn. The sergeant's face

was grim and there was a glint in his steady gray eyes.

"Let me see the list of people who were here tonight," he ordered. "I want to ask them a few more questions."

Jones produced his note-book and tore out the page on which he had jotted down the names. Russ took it and turned toward the door.

"Wait here for me," he said. "If Bosworth gets back before I do, tell him I want to see him."

An hour later, the white-topped patrol car rolled to a stop in front of the General Hospital. Sergeant Russell leaped out and started up the steps. As he reached the top, the door opened and Don Bosworth stepped out.

The man's face was white, haggard, in the dim light of the entrance. He saw Russell and stopped, staring.

"How's your wife?" Russ asked.

"They—they think she'll live," the amateur scientist answered dully. "I just gave her some blood in a transfusion. They say there's nothing to do now but wait. I thought I'd get a taxi and go—"

"I'll take you," snapped Russ. "There're a few little things I want to ask you about, and I can do it on the way to your place."

Mumbling his thanks, Bosworth followed the trooper down the steps and climbed into the patrol car. He sat slumped in the seat, not speaking, while Russ tooted it down the drive and headed toward the main part of town.

"My place is the other way, Sergeant," Don said when they made the first turn.

"I know it. But I've got to make a report to the chief of police and I didn't think you'd mind coming along. It won't take a minute."

Bosworth sighed and nodded. "All right," he said. "I suppose the chief will want to see me, too."

"Shouldn't wonder," said Russ, and stepped on the gas.

The chief, a burly, mustached, old-time cop, was properly sympathetic toward Bosworth, the town's wealthiest citizen. He made his questioning brief, and listened without comment to the State Police officer's report.

"Terrible accident, Mr. Bosworth," he said. "I hope—"

"By the way, Chief," Russ cut in, "do you happen to have a thirty-two automatic in the shop? I want to try out something and my gun's a thirty-eight."

The chief nodded and reached in a drawer.

He handed over a small, snub-nosed .32 automatic.

"Took this off a hobo, three weeks ago," he said. "He didn't have a license and we sent him up for—"

"Mind if I fire a dummy cartridge in here, Chief?" Russ interrupted again, as he drew out the clip and then produced a couple of wax-nosed shells from his pocket. "I found these out at Mr. Bosworth's place and just want to see what they'll do in a gun we *know* is all right."

The chief's eyes widened. "Why, no, I guess not, Sarge," he said. "Go ahead."

RUSS quickly loaded the clip, shoved it into place, and jacked one of the shells into the chamber. Then he swung on Don Bosworth, handing the gun to him.

"You shoot it, Bosworth," he said. "I want to watch what happens."

Bosworth half reached for the gun, then swiftly withdrew his hand. His face was dead white in the yellow glare of the station lights.

"You—you say you found those shells at my place?" he asked, his voice not quite steady.

Russ nodded. "Yeah. In the drawer of your lab table. You probably had 'em left over after you loaded the gun you were going to use in that movie. Go ahead."

He shoved the gun forward again. Bosworth drew back. His eyes swiveled wildly, and he moistened his lips with his tongue.

"No! No!" he mumbled. "I won't. You can't make me—"

The State trooper stared at him. "Not afraid, are you, Bosworth?" he asked softly. "There isn't anything wrong with those shells, is there?"

"No—no, of course not!" Bosworth cried. "I, just don't want to—"

"I was just wondering"—Bill Rus-

sell's voice was edged suddenly—"if you'd found out that everybody in your crowd was talking about your wife and Bob Holmes. It wasn't much of a secret. Of course, if you had heard about it, you might have . . . But that's foolish, isn't it? Well, if you won't try the gun, I'll have to."

He shoved the gun forward swiftly so that it was right in front of Bosworth's face, although pointing away from him toward the side wall. Very deliberately, he slipped the safety catch with his thumb. The weapon was not six inches away from Bosworth's staring eyes.

"Stop!" Bosworth yelled. "Don't pull that trigger. It will kill me. Those shells are loaded with nitroglycerine. I'll confess. You know it anyhow. I planned to kill Holmes—and maybe Marcia. They were two-timing me. Everybody was laughing at me. I—I—"

Bill Russell shrugged slightly, and squeezed the trigger. There was a faint

click as the firing pin struck home. But only a faint click. Nothing else.

"I'm not fool enough to carry a pocketful of shells loaded with nitro in my pocket," he said. "All right, Chief. Better lock him up."

Bosworth was staring at the big State officer. Suddenly a wry smile twisted his handsome features.

"Smart work, Sergeant," he said. "Would you mind telling how you found out?"

"Easy, Bosworth," Russ answered. "You spilled some of your home-made nitro on some filter paper in your lab. I accidentally set fire to the paper. I wasn't much good at chemistry at school, and I can still remember how scared I was when the prof set fire to some absorbent paper that had been soaked in nitro. I expected it to blow us all to bits, but all it did was burn with a green-tipped flame. The flame gave me the idea, and a careful search did the rest. It most worked for you, Bosworth—but not quite."

Tommy Martin Tackles the Toughest Crime Problem of His Career When Murder Stalks at a Football Game

IN

BIG GAME KILL

A Baffling Mystery Novelet

By DALE CLARK

COMING IN THE NEXT ISSUE

NO FINER DRINK... for Salesgirl—or Sailor





Colonel Crum
kneelt down to
examine the
corpse

SHADOW OF THE

CHAPTER I

Murder on Schedule

COLONEL FABIAN CRUM, scientist-detective extraordinary, was only four-and-a-half feet tall. But he had a way of making people forget his size. The slender girl with the soft dark hair and impudently pretty face was finding this out as she raised her conscience-stricken brown eyes from the sun-flooded desk to the big banner at which Crum was staring. It read: **LEN WARING FOR DISTRICT-ATTORNEY AND A CLEAN SLATE FOR MIDVALE.**

"But it is important," the girl said defensively. "It's terribly important, Colonel Crum."

The famous midget-detective was on his feet, smiling with thin scorn. Small and dapper, his cane and black homburg in his hands, his dark suit relieved only by the flash of the tiny watch-charm pistol on his vest front, he spoke suavely, but his words carried a real sting.

"Doubtless, Miss Pentland," he said. "But from my standpoint it was a shoddy trick you played me. Your telegram told me that I might prevent a horrible crime if I reached here on time. On the strength of that I pulled my

The Mystery of a Fifteen-Year-Old Kidnaping Leads the Midget Detective Straight to a Murderous Political Crime and Blackmail Set-Up!



KILLER

A Colonel Crum Novelet
By JOHN H. KNOX

trailer-laboratory a thousand miles and rushed here as soon as your office was open this morning. Now it seems that the 'horrible crime' is simply the threat of some illegal violence which may upset the political apple-cart of your employer. Isn't that just about the size of it?"

"About," the girl admitted, "but not quite. Maybe I did word that telegram in a tricky way to get you here. But I do need you terribly. And I can pay whatever you ask."

"I don't work for money," Crum said coldly. "I made all I needed as an industrial scientist before I retired. Now I investigate murders for the good I

can do. I don't hire out as a bodyguard to politicians."

"Oh, but that's not fair!" Leila Pentland protested.

There was real distress in her eyes now. She got up and stepped to the window which overlooked the sun-bathed city of Midvale, nestled in its rich valley.

"Isn't it a horrible crime that this decent, prosperous little city should be at the mercy of a gang of thieving racketeers?" she demanded.

"I'm not a reformer," Crum said. "I'm a murder-specialist."

"Well, there have been murders," the girl said darkly, "and all the other

crimes in the calendar since Graves Eason threw out my father's clean administration fifteen years ago. You might say that Eason began by murdering my father, though he's still alive, the broken shadow of his former self. And year by year, Graves Eason's grip has tightened, until now, at last, the younger generation has rebelled. Len Waring is leading the fight. He's fighting not for money or power, but for a decent place to live in. So am I. For that and"—she paused—"I'll be honest. For that and personal revenge!"

"Hmm," Crum said. "Personal revenge?" He sat down again.

THE girl resumed her seat too. She stared at her nails. The bright flush which had fired her cheeks made her prettier than ever.

"Yes," she said. "Revenge for the ghastly tragedy that knocked my father out of politics fifteen years ago. Revenge for the kidnaping of my baby sister!"

"You mean this political-boss, Eason, did that?"

"I'm convinced of it," Leila Pentland replied, "though it wasn't suspected at first. But it certainly won Eason that election fifteen years ago. My father was county judge, leading a clean political slate. It was a hard fight against the growing power of Eason and his racketeers, but Father would have won. And then, just on the eve of election almost, my baby sister vanished. She was just three; I was five. She vanished into thin air. The grief and horror of it prostrated my father, crushed him. He let politics slide—and this slimy Eason slid into power!"

She paused for breath. Her eyes misted, her hands clenched.

"Oh, we never got the evidence on Eason!" she said. "I don't expect you to be able to do that now. What I'm driving at is that the man who did that awful thing to win an election then, will do as bad again. Len Waring is the first real threat to Eason's power since then. If Eason has to do it to win, he won't hesitate to murder Len or as many others as stand in his way!"

"And what," Crum asked, "do you

expect me to do?"

"Just stay here," the girl said pleadingly. "Just stay here a few days until election's over. You've got a reputation that even Eason will fear. If he knows you're watching our camp, he won't dare resort to murder."

Crum mulled it over. The thing was entirely out of his line. He was no watchdog for politicians. But on the other hand, Leila Pentland had made an impression. He liked her spirit, was even inclined to forgive her for the impudent trick she had played to get him here. Also, there was something about that shadow of a child's kidnaping hanging like a cloud of fear over this election fifteen years later, which challenged his bloodhound instincts.

"And where is your crusader, Len Waring?" he asked.

Leila Pentland brightened, glanced at her wrist-watch.

"He should be here by now," she said. "It's after eight. You will wait for him, won't you? He's grand, and I know you'll be sold on him."

Crum smiled. "Your interest in him doesn't seem entirely political."

Leila laughed. "I guess not. If he ever gets around to popping the question I probably won't keep him waiting. But he's so busy with politics—"

The jangling of the telephone cut her off. She answered it.

"Oh, well, thanks," she said, then hung up, frowning. "That was Len's mother," she explained. "Len asked her to call me when I came in. He had to go to Jock Gilroy's studio and won't be down to the office until later."

"And why does that worry you?" Crum asked. "Who's Jock Gilroy?"

"He's an artist," Leila said abstractedly, "though not a very good one. Father helped him get an art education years ago, but Jock never amounted to much—old-fashioned, photographic. So when Jock got the contract for the City Auditorium murals, Len smelled something fishy. He thinks Jock bought the job outright, from Eason. So he's been trying to pump Jock—" She paused. "But I do wish Len hadn't gone out there alone."

"Aren't you a little too jittery, Miss Pentland?"

"You don't know Eason," Leila said. "It may be a trap. Jock's studio is about a mile from town, off to itself. Eason may have got Jock to lure Len out there—" She paused again. "And there's another thing. Lately Len has been hanging around a girl whom Jock Gilroy's supposed to be in love with, a certain Verda Ivandi, daughter of a fake medium, Swami Ivandi, who's one of the crooks that Graves Eason protects."

"Hold on a minute," Crum said, "why



Colonel Crum

should your young knight-errant, Waring, be hanging around the daughter of a crooked fortune teller—or I suppose it amounts to that?"

LEILA flushed. "That's a part of Len's investigations too," she defended. "He's trying to get evidence for a last minute exposé of Eason's racket connections. The swami is a particularly odorous one. He's the confederate of confidence men and worthless stock peddlers. He uses his supposed medium-

ship to lure the ignorant suckers into their hands. It's a mess."

She got up, snatched a tailored jacket and a pert little hat from a rack.

"Anyhow, I'm going out there to Jock's studio, just in case. Will you come with me, Colonel Crum?"

Crum shrugged resignedly. "All right. I'll go out and meet this Sir Galahad of yours—though I won't promise to stay longer than that."

They took the elevator down to the street where the scientist-detective had left his long and powerful car. Behind it was his gleaming trailer, which contained one of the most compact and complete detective-laboratories ever assembled. In the car, his assistant, the giant Asiatic, Aga Aslan, was lounging at ease.

Leila took one squint at him and let out a whistle.

"Golly! Wish Len had him for a bodyguard. Is he Goliath of Gath?"

Crum introduced her and opened the door for her to get in. Leila said that her car was just around the corner, but Crum urged that they use his. He was thinking that it would be easier for him to get away when he wanted to if he stuck with his own car and trailer.

Leila agreed, and soon the car was speeding out of the suburbs and onto a white highway that wound into the cedar-fringed hills. But they had gone only half a mile, when a red coupé came shooting past them with the hissing speed of a meteor—headed toward Midvale.

"The siren is certainly in a hurry!" Leila Pentland said.

"Siren?" Crum asked.

"Yes," Leila said, "that was Verda Ivandi, the medium's daughter. I'll bet she's been out to Jock Gilroy's place too."

Her eyes, Crum noticed, were anxiously glued to the road now, and her slender fingers were balled in tight fists. A little farther on they reached a dirt road angling off to the right, where a sign with an arrow read:

CEDAR LODGE STUDIO
JOCK GILROY

Aga swung car and trailer into the lane and presently, on a little hillock, a

rambling stone house came into view. Two cars were parked in the drive beside it—a big yellow touring car and a new blue coupé.

"Jock's old yellow showboat and Len's new Ford," Leila said with a breath of relief. "No sign of Eason's crew, at any rate."

Aga parked beside the other cars and Leila and Crum got out. The girl led the way toward the building, a picturesque old farmhouse with certain touches of newness which showed that the artist, Gilroy, had remodeled it to his taste. Leila crossed the porch, then stopped abruptly at the open door.

A long hall, with a staircase on one side, stretched ahead. At its end was the studio proper. It was a big room, flooded with sunlight, and as Crum came up behind the girl, he glimpsed what he supposed had caused her to pause.

It was a rather startling tableau—two lifesize, motionless figures, a French Foreign Legionary and a rifle-armed Arab in a burnoose, confronting each other belligerently. They were, of course, costumed dummies or lay-figures, which the artist was using in place of living models. But why had they caused the girl to stop so suddenly?

THEN she opened the screen door and Crum saw that it was something else which had caused her to pause. Near the back of the studio a man was crouching on his hands and knees. But at the sounds from the hall, he sprang to his feet and whirled. At the same time Leila ran forward.

"Len!" she cried. "Len! What on earth—"

Len Waring, after his first startled jump, stood perfectly still. He was a stocky, broad-shouldered young man with a strong, good-looking face and crisp brown hair. But his tanned cheeks were pasty now and in his frank gray eyes was a stunned look.

Another step and Crum was near enough to see why. A few feet from the young politician, just under the edge of a balcony which ran across the back of the room, lay the body of a man. A paint-smear'd artist's smock

swathed his tall figure, and his head and torso lay in a bright square of sunlight which poured down from the slanting skylight above.

The brilliant light made it doubly horrible because the man's throat had been cut. The raw ugly wound ran from under his left ear and down past his Adam's apple. His right arm was outflung, and across the palm of the open hand lay the handle of a gleaming bayonet-dagger.

CHAPTER II

Killer Into Thin Air

LEILA had drawn up with staggering steps to stare down at the body.

"He's dead," she said huskily. "Jock's dead! Who did it, Len?"

Len Waring swallowed, got his voice.

"But I—I don't know, Leila," he stammered. "You surely don't think I did? Evidently he killed himself. At least he's just as he was when I first saw him. When he didn't answer my knock, I looked through the keyhole. And when I saw him lying there like that I broke the door in."

"The door was locked?" Leila asked.

"Not just locked," Waring said almost defiantly. "It was bolted on the inside."

"And there wasn't anyone else in here?"

Waring shook his head. "Unless Jock killed himself, the killer must have escaped through a window."

Leila glanced at the closed windows.

"Must have—" she said weakly. Then: "Well, Len, this is Colonel Crum. He got here this morning, thank heaven. I'm sure he'll help us clear this thing up."

Crum acknowledged the introduction, then knelt down to examine the corpse. His sensitive fingers grasped a wrist, noted its warmth, its limpness, while his eyes ran over the wounded throat, appraising the state of coagulation of the blood.

"Doesn't seem to have been dead

more than thirty minutes or so," he said. "How long have you been here, Waring?"

"Why," Waring said, "about twenty minutes. Just came out to ask Jock a few questions about certain City Auditorium mural contracts."

"And what was Verda Ivandi doing out here?" Leila asked.

Waring winced slightly. "She wasn't out here," he said.

Leila grabbed his arm.

"Len," she sobbed, "don't say that! She was here. It's some sort of trap they've led you into. Oh, I was afraid of it! If it had happened in town, at least Chief Moberly could have been in on the investigation. He's honest, if he is ineffectual. But out here it's the sheriff's business, and he's just a creature of Eason's!"

"But I didn't kill him!" Waring protested. "He must have killed himself!"

Crum frowned at him, then turned to the girl.

"If you mean, Miss Pentland," he said, "that the evidence here may not be handled fairly, we'd better get a record of this scene before we call the sheriff. Will you ask my assistant to bring my camera in?"

Leila nodded and went out while Crum surveyed the studio. It was a large room, its walls decorated with sketches, and an easel containing the unfinished painting of the Arab and the legionary. He circled it and found its four windows securely locked on the inside.

He stared up at the Spanish style balcony which ran across the back of the room. Beyond its rail he could see two doors leading to upper rooms. He started up, but just then Aga came in with the camera, so he stopped to photograph the corpse. Sunlight slanting past the balcony rail gave an excellent light and he took two shots from different angles. Then he gave Aga the camera to take out.

He turned to Waring.

"The sheriff will have to be notified now," he said.

Waring nodded and went off to the telephone while Crum climbed up the stairs to the balcony. It was low and narrow, and its far end, just under the

skylight's edge, was filled with a pile of rubbish—old easels, broken stretcher frames, paint cartons.

Half buried in the debris, another of the burnoose-clad dummies, like the one downstairs, lay sprawled against the rail. Crum paused long enough to see that the skylight could not be reached from below. Then he opened the door to the first room and went in.

IT WAS a small guest room, but it was empty. Its window was locked on the inside. He came out and entered the second room. This was a store-room, its floor littered with odds and ends of building material. Crum went to the window, the last possible exit from the studio.

It was also locked on the inside, and the screen hooked!

A feeling half uncanny, half suspicious, tingled in Crum's veins. Waring didn't look like a murderer. Had he killed Gilroy after all? Or was he shielding the killer, as Crum had an idea Leila thought?

Crum sniffed the air. On first entering he had noticed a faint smoky odor. He stepped to a closet door, pulled it open and jumped back with a snort as another of the lay-figure dummies, its jointed body unclothed, almost fell on him. He swore at the thing. The whole business was beginning to get on his nerves. He shoved the dummy back, slammed the door and scanned the room again.

This time he found the source of the smoky smell. It was a large square of burned canvas ash lying in one corner and half hidden by a roll of roofing paper. It had obviously been an oil painting and it had been burned just where it lay. All but its center was reduced to ash and that was too scorched and blackened to show any design to the naked eye.

But why had the thing been burned here on the floor—and so recently? With a little time, his science might bring out that burned design, if he could remove the ash before the sheriff got here.

He went out, down the stairs, and through the now empty studio to the front porch. Aga had gone back into

the trailer but Leila and Len Waring were in the front yard. The girl was standing behind Waring's car, staring at the tire tracks in the dust. As Crum appeared she called to him.

"Look there," she said tensely when he had joined her. "Len's not telling the truth. There's the track of a car crossing over his car track. Can't you convince him how dangerous it is for him to lie to us?"

Crum looked, nodded. The girl was right.

"Somebody has been here since you came," he said to Waring. "This is a serious business, Waring."

Waring scowled. Then he suddenly reached out a foot and obliterated the tell-tale track.

"Gilroy killed himself," he said stubbornly.

Crum gave him a sharp stare.

"You're mighty anxious to hang yourself, young man," he said grimly. "Just come back into the house with me."

Waring and Leila followed him back into the studio and he closed the door. He examined the bolt which had been broken from its socket.

"Tell me, Waring," he said, "were you out of this room, after you first broke in, for long enough to let the killer escape, assuming he was in here?"

"I wasn't out at all," Waring replied, "until after you came. But why all this pother? If the windows are locked Gilroy must have killed himself."

"Only he didn't," Crum answered.

"How do you know?" Waring was genuinely startled now.

"The depth of the wound, for one thing," Crum said. "The gash goes clear to the vertebra. That almost never happens when a man cuts his own throat." He stepped nearer the corpse. "Also, notice his left hand."

Waring stared. "I see nothing wrong with it."

"There isn't," Crum replied. "That's the point. When a man cuts his own throat with his right hand, he will almost invariably stretch the skin over the place with his left. But there's no blood on Gilroy's left hand, as there would be if he had done so. And did

you ever hear of a man lying down on his back to cut his own throat? He couldn't have with that long instrument anyhow. Try it. There's not room to move your elbows."

"But suppose he sat down, cut his throat, and fell back?"

"Look at the blood," Crum pointed. "There's a little spattered on the front of the smock. But none has *run* there. None has run down his neck onto his chest. It's all run to the side and puddled on the floor. His throat was cut while he lay there—unconscious, or held securely by his attacker!"

WARING seemed unable to speak. Relentlessly Crum went on:

"And since all the windows are locked on the inside, the killer could only have escaped through this door. Do you still swear that the door was bolted and that no one came out of it after you came in?"

"Yes," Waring gulped. "I swear it!"

He stopped as a voice spoke behind him.

"Then that fixes you, Waring!"

Waring whirled and Leila and Crum turned toward the door. It had opened and three men were stepping into the room. Leila clutched Crum's arm.

"It's Graves Eason, Sheriff Nick Nichols and District-Attorney Ab Catlett," she choked.

"If they heard—"

The man who came ahead smiled at her. He was a bulky man with a fat red face under carelessly rumpled gray hair. The face, curiously, wasn't unpleasant at first glance. It was when Crum saw the eyes, cold and hard as iced diamonds and noted the twist of cruelty and power in the thin lips that he got the man's measure, guessed he was Graves Eason.

"Yes, Miss Pentland," Eason said, "we *did* hear. We thought we might hear something interesting, so we came up quietly."

"And we heard plenty," gloated the scrawny, beak-nosed man, whose country-lawyer look identified him to Crum as the district-attorney. He leered at Waring. "Too bad, kid. The county will have to hang her young political hero now. Just couldn't hold your

temper, eh? And you evidently didn't give poor Gilroy much of a chance either."

Waring glared at him defiantly.

"Don't count your chickens before they're hatched, Catlett. You'll never prove this killing on me!"

Graves Eason stroked his fat chin, chuckled.

"Now, now, boy, you forget that we heard. All we've got to do is to check on what this little gentleman here has just said. He's Colonel Crum, I believe, one of the country's most famous detectives. And we've just heard him prove with brilliant logic, and beyond a doubt, that no one but you could have done it."

He turned to the third man in the group, a slope-shouldered, bull-necked fellow with the broken nose of an expugilist.

"All right, Nick," he said, "you're sheriff. Arrest young Mr. Waring for this murder. And you, Colonel,"—he bowed to Crum—"we're much obliged to you, sir. The county is in your debt. But of course"—his eyes gleamed cold and dangerous—"you realize the case is closed. You won't be needed further."

CHAPTER III

The Burned Painting

CHIEF OF POLICE JIM MOBERLY of Midvale was a short, stocky man with a clipped military mustache and an air of nervous efficiency. He cultivated it painfully to hide his sense of failure and defeat. But this morning, seated in Crum's cottage at the Midvale Motor Courts, the honest if ineffectual man dropped his mask and spoke frankly.

"It's a terrible blow to all of us," he said. "But what can I do? I've got no jurisdiction out there, and I have a hard enough time trying to see a measure of justice done where I do have. When the local voters elected me in spite of Eason, I promised to clean up the town. I haven't done it. I can't—alone. What good is an arrest if you can't get convictions? All the court

machinery is in Eason's hands. I was banking on Len Waring to pull enough votes this time to throw that rotten crew out. And now Len has to go and lose his head and—"

Leila Pentland whirled on him. Seated dejectedly by the window she had been staring out toward Crum's trailer, inside of which Aga Aslan was working to develop the photographs taken in the murder room. Now she glared at the Chief.

"Are you too going to say that Len Waring killed Jock Gilroy?" she demanded.

"Say it?" Moberly flushed. "I wouldn't say it if I knew it. If Len did, he probably had a justifiable motive—maybe self-defense. But by his own testimony, who else *could* have killed Gilroy? You think Len's shielding the Ivandi girl. But could that slight girl have overpowered a big man like Gilroy and cut his throat?" He shook his head sadly, stood up. "If there's anything I can do," he said, "let me know."

After he had bowed himself out, Leila turned her narrowed defiant eyes on Colonel Crum. The little scientist-sleuth sat silent as a Buddha, smoking while he toyed with the tiny pistol on his watch chain.

"Well," Leila challenged him, "do you agree with that?"

"Common sense advises me to," Crum answered frankly. "But there are a couple of things that have stuck like burrs in my mind. One is that burned painting I mentioned finding on the floor of the room upstairs. I keep asking myself why it was there, why so recently burned? And the second thing is that suspected kidnaping of your sister fifteen years ago.

"I can't escape certain curious parallels. That kidnaping let Eason get into power. This crime is liable to keep him there. And there's the odd fact that in both cases the killer never showed his hand at all—assuming that Waring's innocent, of course. In both crimes this cunning killer is a mere hypothetical shadow. Tell me some more about that kidnaping."

Leila mused a moment in silence.

"But there's so little to tell," she said then. "Rosemary was playing in our

yard on the edge of town late one afternoon. Then suddenly it was noticed that she was gone. There was a carnival in town and we thought she had strayed away, attracted by the music. But no one had seen her there.

"The town, the surrounding country was searched. No trace of her was ever found. Had she strayed into the quicksand in the creek bed? Had wolves carried her off? There were some about then. It was the awful horror and uncertainty that broke Father's spirit, killed his interest in the political fight. Only much later, when Eason was already in, did we begin to suspect foul play, suspected he had engineered it."

"And if we assume he did," Crum said, "and then jump to the present crime, we might suppose he chose Gilroy for a victim because he feared Gilroy would squeal about the mural contract. So by murdering him and framing Waring he could kill two birds with one stone. But how does that recently burned painting up there fit into that?"

HE PAUSED as the door opened and the massive figure of Aga Aslan loomed in the doorway, holding a couple of developed photographs in his hand.

"They came out fine and clear, *Effendi*," he said, and laid on the bed the developed photographs which Crum had made of the corpse of Gilroy.

Crum and Leila bent over them, staring. "Funny," the girl remarked presently, "but one of them seems to show more blood than the other."

Crum nodded. It did look a little that way. The head of the corpse had lain near the edge of the bright square of sunlight from the skylight and blood had run out in a dark stain on the floor, spreading mushroomlike as it approached the bordering shadow of the balcony rail.

But in one of the prints the blood seemed to have spread farther—until it blended with the shadow of the balcony rail itself. Leila shook her head puzzledly.

"Had the blood spread more by the time you took the second shot?" she asked.

"No," Crum replied, "and this isn't the second shot anyhow. It's the first one. Rather queer, but maybe it's a defect in the film."

He turned away and began to pace the floor again.

"To get back to that burned painting," he said, "who burned it? Gilroy? I don't think he'd have burned it there on the floor. And if the killer did, why? It suggests some motive distinct from that business about the mural contract. Tell me all you know about Jock Gilroy."

"Well, I've known him all my life," Leila said. "As I told you when he was young Father helped him financially with his art education. In return Gilroy painted horrible portraits of all the family. But his technique is stiff and most of the portraits went to the attic long ago. All except the one of Rosemary, the little sister who was kidnaped. We didn't have a good photograph of her, so Father insisted on keeping her portrait hanging at the foot of his bed."

Crum stopped his pacing, frowned. "I should like to see that painting," he said, "and talk to your father. Could we go to your house now?"

The girl looked at her wrist-watch. "Yes," she said. "He usually sleeps late but it's after eleven now. He should be up. Only I hate to disturb him, stir up those old and awful memories of the shadowy past."

"The shadowy past may hold a clue to the shadowy assassin who killed Jock Gilroy," Crum said. "Let's go."

They drove away, this time in Leila's car, and were soon approaching the big Colonial house of Judge Pentland, standing white and lonely on the outskirts of town.

They drew up in a tree-shaded drive, and Leila led the way into the cool, high-ceilinged hall.

Here they were met by Mrs. Bronson, the bustling little housekeeper who had looked after the judge since the death of Leila's mother. Leila introduced Colonel Crum.

"Is Father up yet?" she asked then. "Why, no," Mrs. Bronson said. "You know he always likes his morning sleep and I never disturb him until he calls for his breakfast."

"But it's after eleven," Leila said. "Come up with me, Colonel Crum."

Crum followed her up the wide stairs and down the hall to a room near its end. Leila knocked on the door.

"Father—Father!" she called.

There was no answer. Nervously she pushed the door open. Then she staggered in with a choked cry. Crum followed, gripped her arm as she stopped, tottering above the gaunt shape of an old man in a nightgown who lay on the floor beside the big four-poster bed.

"Father—Father!" she shrilled distractedly. "Oh God, have they killed him, too?"

"Steady, girl," Crum grated.

HE DROPPED to his knees, laid a hand on the thin old body, moved it a little. A shock traveled through his nerves. The body was cold and stiff. The aged head was flung back, the wrinkled skin had a bluish pallor. The eyes bugged, the tongue protruded between the teeth, the gaunt throat showed purple discolorations.

"But why did they kill him?" Leila sobbed. "And how could they have got in here this morning?"

"They didn't," Crum replied. "He's been dead for hours. It happened during the night, long before Gilroy was killed."

"But why?" Leila cried. "Why?"

Crum turned and stared at the wall facing the foot of the bed.

"Where was the portrait of your kidnaped sister hung?" the little detective asked.

"Why, why, right there—" The girl had whirled, but her words broke off as she stared at the wall.

Distinct on the figured paper was the less-faded square where a picture had hung. But the portrait of Rosemary Pentland was gone!

With the help of the housekeeper, Colonel Crum got the distracted girl downstairs, where she was laid on a divan. The housekeeper pressed a glass of brandy to her lips while Crum went to the telephone. He called Chief Moberly, told him the news, but asked him to keep it quiet as long as possible. Then he returned to Leila.

A little color had come back into her face and she lay there sobbing brokenly. Crum laid a hand gently but firmly on her shoulder.

"Brace up, Leila," he said. "We can't help him now. But we may avenge him—and that little girl he grieved over. I think we can assume that the stolen portrait is the one I found burned in Gilroy's studio. The killer evidently murdered your father while stealing it, then went to Gilroy's studio and killed him. The question is—why should this portrait of a three-year-old girl, kidnaped fifteen years ago, be involved in two murders now?"

"But I—I can't imagine!" Leila answered helplessly.

Crum paced the floor.

"Obviously the painting was stolen so that it could be destroyed," he said. "Did your sister have any deformities?"

Leila shook her head. "You mean something which the portrait would have showed, which might be used to identify her if she were alive today? No, she didn't. No birthmarks, nothing of that sort."

"Was it a full-face view or a profile?" Crum asked.

"Profile," the girl said.

Crum lighted a cigarette and his sardonic face with its domed forehead and piercing eyes loomed through the smoke like some idol rapt in contemplation. Presently he said:

"You mentioned this morning that when your sister vanished there was a carnival in town. Did it occur to you that some of the people with that carnival might have kidnaped her?"

"It did," she said. "But there was no evidence against them. There were no ransom demands. Anyhow, it wouldn't be possible to trace them now."

"I wonder," Crum said thoughtfully. "Something has just occurred to me. A carnival nearly always has its soothsayers and mediums—"

Leila sat up with a gasp.

"An' Swami Ivandi is a medium! And that sirenish daughter of his was out there this morning. If Len's shielding her he may be shielding Father's murderer, too!"

"We mustn't go too far with guesses until we can back them up," Crum cau-

tioned. He took a deep draw on his cigarette and nudged it out. "I think the person I want to see now is Len Waring. Suppose you wait here for Chief Moberly to come, Miss Pentland, while I borrow your car and drive down to the jail."

CCRUM did not like driving, but he could manage it well enough when he had to. Shortly after leaving the Pentland house in Leila's gray coupé, he drew up before the brownstone county jail, got out and hurried in.

The jailer's office was the first door to the right. It was open, and lounging behind the jailer's desk with an air of being proprietor of the establishment, sat Graves Eason.

"Jailer in?" Crum asked. "I'd like to speak to Len Waring."

The swivel chair squealed as Eason leaned back and spat comfortably in a bronze cuspidor.

"I told you your business with this case was finished, little man," he said. "I ain't an officer, of course. I'm just a building contractor, trying to do my bit for the town when I can. But my advice is considered good around here. And my advice to you is to get out of town."

"An open threat is better than a veiled one," Crum said blandly. "You're threatening to kill me or have me killed, are you?"

"I didn't say that," Eason answered smoothly. "But it seems there's elements in Midvale that don't like you. The sheriff hinted to me that if you stay overnight, he may not be able to control these—er—elements."

"In that case," Crum said suavely, "I might be able to help him. The last time I passed through your state capital, I visited with your governor. He wanted to appoint me as a special investigator to look into the handling of state funds and general lawlessness in certain counties. I told him it wasn't quite in my line. But, of course, if things are really out of control here, I might get in touch with him."

Eason's eyes narrowed. "The governor's a friend of yours?"

"Call him long-distance. If he denies it I'll pay the charges."

Eason took a deep bite on his cud of

tobacco.

"Well," he said, after a moment, "don't think you're running any bluff on me, Colonel. But just to accommodate a friend of the governor's, I'll let you see Waring for a few minutes. However the advice about leaving town before night still goes." He called through the door: "Burnsides! Show this man to Len Waring's cell."

The turnkey appeared, a shuffling, obsequious figure, and led Crum to Waring's cell. He locked him in and went off. Len Waring, in his shirt sleeves, sat on the iron cot smoking. He looked pale and haggard.

"No more grilling, please," he said.

"Judge Pentland was murdered last night," Crum announced.

"What!" Waring sprang up. "But why—how—"

"He was strangled," Crum said, "by a thief who was after the painting of his vanished daughter, Rosemary. The same painting, I'm sure, was burned in Gilroy's studio this morning. Does that mean anything to you?"

"Why," Waring faltered, "it doesn't make sense to me."

"I suspect it does," Crum cut him short. "The time for lying is over, Waring." He stepped nearer, spoke lower. "Tell me," he said, "just how you came to suspect that Swami Ivandi was here with that carnival fifteen years ago, that he was the kidnaper of Rosemary Pentland?"

WWARING eyed him, pale and hesitant. Finally he slumped down with a shrug.

"All right, you've guessed it. Yes, I suspect it, and Verda Ivandi herself put the suspicion in my mind. Then I verified the fact that a Swami Ivandi was with that carnival by hunting up its advertisement in the old newspaper files."

"And," Crum put in, "the reason you shielded Verda Ivandi this morning is because you suspect that she herself is Rosemary Pentland?"

"Shhh!" Waring whispered sharply. "If they knew I suspected that they'd kill her. But it's true. Only Verda doesn't know herself for certain whether she's Rosemary Pentland or not. Ivandi has claimed her as his

daughter as long as she can remember. But once she overheard Gilroy make a hint to Ivandi which implied that she was the kidnapped girl, so—

"Gilroy hinted it?" Crum said thoughtfully. "And maybe Verda was out there this morning to ask Gilroy what he knew?"

"That's it exactly," Waring said. "And so was I."

"And the girl quarreled with Gilroy and killed him?"

"She did not!" Len Waring said flatly. "She never was in the room. I found her hammering on Gilroy's door when I got there. That was when I looked in and saw him—dead. The girl got hysterical, cried that she'd never be able to learn the truth from him now. I got her quieted, made her leave. Then I broke the door in."

"You'll stick to that story if it hangs you?"

"I've got to. It's the rock bottom truth I've reached now."

Crum turned away, shaking his head. Waring got up, came over and clutched his arm.

"My God, Colonel!" he said. "Look after those girls. Don't worry about me, but protect them. The reason I lied to shield Verda was, of course, because I believe she's Leila's sister. But I couldn't tell Leila that. Leila's a wonderful girl, and I—I love her."

"Tell her so next time you see her," Crum said.

"What are you going to do now?" Waring gulped.

"I'm going to get that burned painting from Gilroy's studio, for one thing," the little scientist said. "I'll have to wait for night and steal it, but I'll get it."

He rattled the door for the turnkey.

CHAPTER IV

Swami Ivandi

THERE was a moon in a cloud-dappled sky, frosting the cedars, silvering the ridges of the hills. The studio of the dead painter stood silent, lighted only at the front, as two dark shapes, one midgetlike, one bulking

like a monstrous shadow behind it, stole up as noiselessly as Indians and paused under an angle of the roof.

"All right," Crum whispered. "When I get in, I'll draw the stuff up after me. Wait here until I let it down. Then head straight for the laboratory and get to work on it. Miss Pentland will take me in later."

The giant nodded silently and stooped. His huge hands gripped the little detective's ankles, lifted him as lightly as a doll, until Crum's feet were far above the giant's head. Then Crum clutched the window's deep sill, flipped the screen hook loose with a wire, opened it outward, drew himself up with the agility of a human fly.

A thin blade of steel, inserted at the juncture of the window's segments, worked the catch around. Presently Crum was inside the dark upper room, drawing up after him the two large squares of glass bound with a rope.

This done, he tiptoed silently to the door and listened. The studio below the balcony was dark, but through the hall came voices from the front room where the sheriff's deputy was stationed. A girl was sobbing brokenly.

"Aw, don't bawl now, kid," a man's voice was saying. "I can't let you mess around in there, but they ain't gonna do nothin' to you. They got the goods on Waring."

Crum nodded to himself with satisfaction. Verda Ivandi was doing her part. After his talk with Len Waring he had contacted Leila. Leila had contacted the Ivandi girl and brought her to him. Dark and pretty, the girl had been genuinely concerned about Waring, grateful to him for shielding her.

Also, she had been concerned about her own identity, tormented by the question as to whether or not she was the kidnapped Pentland girl. Though fearful of Ivandi, whom she had always regarded with awe rather than affection, she had nevertheless offered to do anything to help them answer that question for her.

When Crum had suggested that she go out and throw a scene to divert the deputy on guard while he and Aga burglarized the studio, she had agreed. Now she was proving a good actress.

Softly Crum tiptoed back to the corner where the burned painting lay. He snapped on a small flash, laid it on the floor and set to work. First he sprayed the thick painted-canvas ash with a shellac and alcohol mixture. When the sticky solution had softened the ash, he took one of the large panes of glass and delicately slid it beneath the burned painting. Then he pressed the second pane carefully down on top until the softened ash was flat between them, and bound them together with the rope. Carefully he carried them to the window and let them down to Aga below.

"Photograph it on an orthochromatic plate and print it on compression paper," he whispered. "I'll be in later. I want another look at that bolted door downstairs if possible."

AFTER Aga had started silently down the slope toward the lane where the big car was waiting, Crum tiptoed back to the door, opened it quietly and stepped out on the balcony. The deserted studio, with moonshine seeping through the skylight and a faint glare from the hall, was a ghostly place.

The two costumed mannikins still stood like a weird guard over the spot where their master had fallen. Silently Crum stole down the stairs.

Reaching the studio door, which was hanging half-open, he explored the bolt lock with his fingers. Here was the mystery that baffled him. Despite his progress with the mystery of Rosemary Pentland, the obstacle of the locked studio remained unshaken.

Waring seemed to be telling the truth now. But he still swore that the studio had been empty, the door bolted inside.

From the lighted room at the front of the hall, the voices of Verda Ivandi and the deputy drifted, still arguing. Crum cupped his hands to shield his flash and snapped it on. He knew all the ruses by which inside locks can be manipulated from the outside. But in this case it simply couldn't have been done. When he snapped his flash off he was ready to stake his reputation on that fact. The killer could not have escaped through this door and then re-

bolted it. And he had already convinced himself that the windows had not been tampered with.

He straightened, stood listening to the sounds from the front room.

"But you see," Verda Ivandi was saying, "Jock Gilroy and I went together and I've been out here lots, and I may have left something—"

"Nuts, girlie," the deputy said. "They got this pinned on Waring and he ain't going to get out of it."

The girl was doing her job to perfection. Crum had started to turn back and go out as he had come in when abruptly the deputy lowered his voice.

"Say, kid," he said, "your old man, the Swami, is makin' good dough. they say, and they say he's got the axe on Eason himself."

Then the words faded so low that Crum could not hear them.

Softly he stepped into the hall, spotted the door of a closet under the stairs and made for it. He opened it, slid in, and closed it to a crack. He was nearer, but still not near enough to hear what the deputy was saying. If he could crawl up under the stairs, nearer to the door—

He snapped on his flash. But as he did, something near the door caught his eye. It was a wadded rag and a small flat jar, shoved in between an upright and the doorsill. But what interested Crum was the fact that a deep film of dust had been disturbed, proving it had been done recently.

He stooped, pulled the rag out. It was a handkerchief, stained with brown grease paint, evidently from the jar. Carefully he moved the jar out, not touching it with his fingers, sprayed it obliquely with light. A close inspection of its smooth surface showed not a fingerprint anywhere.

That was strange. Whoever had put the jar there had carefully wiped his fingerprints from it! Why?

Crum opened the jar, sprayed his light inside. Most of the brown grease paint was gone, but there were the marks of fingers on the residue and on the inside surfaces of the jar. Whoever had wiped it had forgotten that. Puzzling over the significance of his find, Crum wrapped both jar and hand-

kerchief in a handkerchief of his own and thrust them into his pocket. Then suddenly he stiffened, snapping off his light.

THE front door had slammed. Verda, he guessed, had gone. He had given her a specified time to stay, had not realized the time was up. And the deputy who had closed the door did not seem to be going back into the room. Instead he was coming slowly down the hall. And Crum had not completely closed the closet door. If the man should notice—

He did! There was a muttered oath. "Who's in there?"

Crum flung himself flat against the closet wall. He clutched his gun in his left hand, groped with his right among brooms and mops for some less lethal weapon. He got hold of a bottle of furniture oil, raised it.

The door came open, light blazed in. The ugly face of the deputy cracked open with an oath and he swung his gun about. Crum hurled the bottle at his forehead. It didn't break, but the cork came out and as the man staggered back, his gun blasting, the oil ran down into his eyes, blinding him for an instant.

Crum sprang out like a cat. The barrel of his gun slammed against the tottering man's jaw and he fell side-ward to the floor.

He was out. Swiftly the little detective bent over the deputy, whipped the handcuffs from the man's pocket, shackled his wrists behind him and dragged him into the closet. Then with a skeleton key from his own kit, he locked the closet door and hurried out the front.

Verda Ivandi's car was already gone. Without wasting an instant, Crum headed back through the woods toward the lane where his car had been parked. Leila Pentland had been instructed to wait there for him.

He found her at the appointed spot, and as they headed for town Crum told her what had happened. Leila was on the point of tears.

"What can we do now?" she sobbed. "That deputy saw you. They'll have a legitimate charge against you for burglarizing that place and assaulting an

officer. You'll either have to escape or be jailed. In either case, you can't help Len, and without you he's lost!"

"True," Crum admitted. "The situation's grave. But it may be a few hours before that deputy's discovered. I have until then."

"And what can you do in a few hours?"

"When one no longer has any defenses," Crum replied, "one must either attack or surrender. We'll rule surrender out, so I'll have to attack. I'm going to try to run a bluff on Swami Ivandi, force him or trick him into talking or into a break with Eason—play one against the other. Meanwhile you will take this."

He gave her the jar of grease paint and the stained handkerchief. "Turn it over to Aga," he instructed. "Tell him to get the fingerprints from the inside of the jar. Then I suggest that you find Verda and keep her with you at my cottage at the Motor Courts where Aga will be near to protect you. And right now, you can drive me to Swami Ivandi's hangout."

CHAPTER V

Gamble with Disaster

SWAMI IVANDI'S suite was on the third floor of the Grand Central Hotel. Crum knocked on the door marked, "Consulting Room." The swami himself answered.

He was a tall dark man, apparently of Balkan blood. He had about him the lean muscular look of a wolf-hound. He wore no robes now and was dressed in a smart gray business suit. At sight of Crum the black agate eyes in his pottery-colored face widened for an instant. Then he was all suavity.

"Ah, Colonel Crum! I had heard you were in town. But I had scarcely dared hope for a visit from such a celebrity. Please come in."

Crum thanked him and stepped into a waiting room sumptuously furnished in Oriental style and reeking with stale incense. From there through parted magenta drapes, he was led into the office. Here the Swami seated himself

at a glass-topped desk after offering his visitor a chair.

"And now, what can I do for you, Colonel?"

Crum casually reached under his coat as a man might for a cigarette case, but instead brought out his compact and powerful revolver.

The swami started, but he seemed more surprised than alarmed.

"My dear Colonel!" he laughed nervously. "I hardly expected anything as crude as this from you!"

"I didn't think you would," Crum said. "Which of course made it simple. Yes, I'm usually more subtle, perhaps. But it's good to change one's technique occasionally, don't you think? Or do you? At any rate, I shall continue to be blunt."

He paused, holding his gun negligently level, weighing his man.

"Fifteen years ago, Swami," he said, "you were hired to kidnap the daughter of Judge Martin Pentland. Graves Eason hired you to do it. Since coming back here you have been able to get what you wanted from Eason."

"Really, this is absurd," the swami interrupted. "What proof—"

"My proof," Crum said, "will keep. The point is that I am convinced of it, and I would not hesitate to kill a snake of your caliber." He smiled. "It might be an opportunity to test an egotistical feeling I sometimes have that I could get by with murder if I cared to. As you may know, I have considerable resources and a certain amount of experience, so—"

The swami had gone a trifle shy.

"You expect to make me talk by—"

"No, no," Crum said. "Not unless you want to. If you prefer, you will simply talk as I tell you to. You will take the telephone there and call Graves Eason. When he answers you will say: 'This is Ivandi. Come to my suite at once. The lid is about to blow off about Verda.' Then you will hang up instantly."

The swami gulped. "But it's foolish. He will refuse to come."

"I think not," Crum replied. "And, Swami"—he reached down with his left hand, took hold of his little watch charm pistol and leveled it playfully—"I wonder if you've ever heard of this

little bauble of mine? It shoots a tiny bullet loaded with the jungle arrow-poison *curare*. It isn't as useful as it once was, since it's been rather widely publicized. However, its effect is so instant, so silent—" He wagged it.

"Stop!" Ivandi gulped. "I've heard of it!"

Crum chuckled deprecatingly. "There are," he said, "some misconceptions about *curare*. It is, of course, painless in the usual sense. One becomes instantly not paralyzed but flaccid, unable to move a muscle, yet not immediately dead. The brain still lives, somewhat, I should say, as a head which falls from the guillotine is said to be momentarily alive."

"Stop it!" Ivandi was sweating now. "I'll do what you say, though it will do you no good at all."

HE SNATCHED up the phone, still eyeing the little gun fearfully, and called a number. When Eason's drawling voice answered, he repeated the message Crum had given him and racked the phone.

"Well, what now?" he gasped.

"March into the front room," Crum directed, "and sit facing the door. When Eason knocks, ask him to come in. When he does, say, 'The lid has blown off and they know about Verda.' I will take over from there. But remember, no false moves. The *curare*-gun will be trained on you, my revolver on Eason, and I will not hesitate to shoot either of them."

Ivandi, thoroughly frightened now, went in and took his seat stiffly while Crum stationed himself behind the curtains. The minutes wore away. Sweat dripped from the fake medium's face. Then a knock came at the door.

"Eason?" Ivandi called. "Come in."

The door opened and the bulky form of Eason slid in. But the action which followed came more swiftly than Crum had anticipated. For while the political boss' left hand closed and latched the door, his right snaked under his coat and came out with a snub-nosed automatic.

"Now," he snarled at Ivandi, "you blasted blackmailer, you've shaken me down for the last time. Now I'm going to get you out of the way, and I'll

take my chances with the girl."

He came toward the swami menacingly. Ivandi's face twitched, he made a reaching motion toward the handkerchief flaring from his vest pocket, but desisted at a jab from the gun.

"You can't kill me!" he choked. "The shot will be heard—"

Graves Eason grinned. He had stopped by a radio cabinet. His left hand twitched the dial.

"With a good loud orchestra blaring—" he began, but that was as far as he got.

Ivandi's reflexes, whetted sharp by a lifetime of foxy maneuvering, reacted with an animal's quick instinct for the only hole. Even as faint sounds started from the radio, his lean body doubled and shot forward. Eason's gun went off but the shot was over Ivandi's charging head. The next instant Ivandi struck him, his head slamming like a battering ram into the politician's paunch, his long arms entangling Eason's.

They fell in a windmilling mass and as Crum sprang toward them a muffled report sounded. The moving mass froze, separated. It was Ivandi who rose and whirled, Eason's gun in his hand.

But Crum had him covered. "Drop it!" he snapped.

Ivandi did. "It was self-defense," he whined. "You saw—"

"Correct," Crum said. "And a favor to the community. But you've got other things to answer for, Ivandi."

He stooped, holding the gun on the swami while he assured himself that Eason was dead.

"Now," he said as he rose, "you are coming with me. Neither of the shots seems to have been heard above the radio, but we'll take the stairs down anyhow. Then we will go to my laboratory where I will prove that you are a kidnaper."

Some thirty minutes later a tense and nervous group sat in Crum's cottage at the Midvale Motor Courts. On the bed, her head bowed and her dark pretty face streaked with her tears, Verda Ivandi sat with Leila Pentland's arm protectively around her.

At the back of the room, his chair propped against the wall, Swami

Ivandi sat calmly smoking. He had recovered from his fright and now seemed the coolest member of the group. Colonel Crum was standing with his arms folded and his back to the door while Chief of Police Moberly nervously paced the floor.

"**B**UT I tell you, Colonel," the chief said, "I can't permit it. The attack on Nichols' deputy was bad enough. But now you've called me here, told me that Graves Eason is lying dead in a hotel room, and are insisting that I keep it quiet until you finish some experiment or other. You're already in trouble up to the neck as you'll discover when that deputy is found. But where will I be when it's found that I concealed the fact of Eason's death and connived with you to keep his killer hidden?"

"You'll be on top of the world," Crum said, "If I succeed in proving the swami here a kidnaper, and also get the murderer of Judge Pentland and Jock Gilroy by the ears."

A snort from the swami interrupted him.

"And you expect to prove me the kidnaper by proving that Verda is Rosemary Pentland? Well, you'll never do it. And as for killing Eason, you admitted I did that in self-defense. But you forced me to it, and you'll be held responsible. There's no crime with which you can charge me at all!"

"He's right!" Moberly snapped, stopping belligerently before the little detective. "And now you ask me to wait until your assistant has finished developing the photograph of that burned painting. What if it can be brought out? Do you imagine that you can prove the identity of a grown woman by a fifteen-year-old painting of a three-year-old child?"

"The killer who murdered Judge Pentland to get that painting and destroy it evidently thought so," Crum replied.

"But how would it be possible?" Moberly persisted. "The girl didn't have any scars or deformities on her face, did she?"

"Evidently not," Crum said. "But she had an ear."

"An ear!"

"Exactly," Crum said. "The human ear is the one feature which never changes with age. And ears are almost as individual as fingerprints. And the fact that Gilroy's technique was crude and photographic—"

A knock at the door interrupted him.

"The photograph of the painting is ready, *Effendi*," said the voice of Aga Aslan.

Excitement and relief came into Chief Moberly's eyes. He quickly snatched up a profile photograph of Verda Ivandi which had been brought for purposes of comparison and started for the door. Crum, however, stopped long enough to place a revolver in Leila's hand.

"Keep Ivandi covered every minute," he said, "and if he makes a break, don't hesitate to shoot."

"You need not worry," Ivandi said. "What you learn will clear me."

Crum didn't answer him. He followed Chief Moberly out and the two of them went into his trailer-laboratory. Here in the white tiled space where gleamed all the curious instruments of modern crime detection, Aga had spread out the large photograph under a clear bright light.

The giant's skill and the orthochromatic plates had done a miraculous job. Dark and blurred and criss-crossed with the scores of cracks, the photo of the blurred painting had, nevertheless, brought out the least-burned center part fairly clearly. It was the head, in profile, of a little girl in pigtails. The small dainty ear was fairly clear in its general design.

"Of course," Crum explained as he bent over it, "we may have to make all sorts of enlargements of the details. But this will prove things with a fair certainty. You'll notice that the ear in the painting has a lobule definitely separated from the cheek. The slant of the antitargus is plainly horizontal. The upper helix angles toward the rear, the concha is rather small. Now —"

HE TOOK the profile photo of Verda Ivandi and laid it beside the other. Both he and the chief squinted excitedly. It was Crum who straightened first.

"Good Lord!" was all the little detective said.

Moberly's eyes jerked toward him. "Well, what—"

"But can't you see?" Crum asked in a tone of tense despair. "The concha of the Ivandi girl's ear has an entirely different shape. The antitargus angles obliquely. The upper helix is almost fused with the lower helix, and—But why go on? Verda Ivandi is no more Judge Pentland's daughter than I am!"

The silence that followed his words had the cold and clammy quality of a tomb's interior. Moberly's face, at first a sickly gray, grew mottled with a hectic flush as he rasped between set teeth.

"Now you *have* played hob! You've played hob with me for gambling on your hunches. You've left Len Waring in worse shape than he was at the start. Now I'll have to arrest you and hold you in connection with Graves Eason's death. And I hate to think what Catlett will make of that!"

Crum turned away. It was all true. Never in his career had he faced such an impasse. Never had he seen his whole case crumble so completely in disaster. The accusing voice of Moberly droned on:

"I was a fool to think you could ever clear Len Waring anyhow. Even if Ivandi were proved the kidnaper of Rosemary Pentland, that doesn't clear Len. You still haven't explained how anybody but Len could have killed Gilroy and escaped, leaving that door bolted on the inside."

Crum shut his ears to it. He was trying to think, trying desperately to arouse the stunned processes of that keen brain which had never failed him. In half a daze he drifted to the end of the laboratory table and stood staring at the two photographs of Gilroy's body taken in the murder room that morning.

He scanned them idly at first. Then his eyes fastened speculatively on the one which showed the larger blot of blood near the corpse's head. It was the first shot he had taken. There couldn't have been more blood than later. Yet the shadowy blot was there, extending much farther than in the other, extending clear to the shad-

ow of the balcony rail.

Suddenly Crum straightened, a queer look in his eyes.

"What a fool I've been!" He laughed aloud. "Of course the studio was locked and no one had come out. Of course he left the greasy rag and the jar of grease paint in the closet. Of course Verda Ivandi isn't Judge Pentland's daughter!"

Moberly stared at him as if certain now that the little detective was crazy. But Crum, ignoring him, turned to Aga.

"Did you get the plastic fingerprints out of that grease paint jar?"

"I did, *Effendi*," Aga said. "I used the old Stokis method, bromide of silver paper, and got several good ones."

"Hey!" Moberly cut in. "What's the new angle?"

"You go back in there and see that Ivandi's safe," Crum told him. "I'll be in there in a few minutes to hang him."

CHAPTER VI

Tell-Tale Shadow

MOBBERLY, shaking his head, went out. Crum took the fingerprints which Aga handed him and thrust them into his pocket. He removed the *curare*-pistol from his watch-chain and palmed it in his left hand. He thrust a blackjack up his right sleeve. He had not forgotten Ivandi's swift and wolflike attack on Eason. Then he opened the door and started out.

But on the doorsill he stopped, staring across the dimly lighted court. Two men were coming straight toward his trailer with a purposeful stride. One of them he recognized by his apelike carriage and bullet-head as the sheriff.

Crum thrust a hand behind him and snapped his fingers. Aga was instantly beside him.

"Sheriff and a deputy," Crum whispered. "We're already in it up to our necks, so we won't stop now. You take the big one when I signal."

"Ah, there he is!" the apish sheriff

growled, as he and his stooge moved into the light, hands on their guns. "Colonel Crum, I arrest you for burglary and murderous assault on an officer of the law."

"Very well," Crum shrugged resignedly. "I expected it. I gambled on a long chance and lost, gentlemen. I'm ready to answer to the court." He made a half turn. "Aga, hand me my hat."

Aga stepped back out of sight.

"Hey, don't let that big bully get to a gun!" the sheriff snarled.

He dived past Crum and through the door, clawing his own revolver out.

The second man was close at his heels. As he started to step up into the door, Crum whipped out the blackjack and slugged him expertly. At the same instant Aga's giant body closed with the sheriff. The gun was twisted from the ex-pug's hand as from a child, and huge fingers closing on his throat choked off his scream.

In a matter of minutes both men lay on the trailer floor, gagged and bound with Aga standing guard over them. Crum, smiling grimly, stepped jauntily out and walked toward the cottage.

The windows had been closed and the blinds drawn when Crum brought Ivandi in. Now as he entered he saw at a glance that nothing from the outside had been heard. Both girls sat wide-eyed with suspense. Moberly was scowling as he chewed his mustache. Only Swami Ivandi sat perfectly at ease, a challenging smile on his lips.

"Well," he asked, "were the ears identical?"

"No," Crum said, "they weren't. But you see, I've been approaching this thing from the wrong angle. I just realized that the painting was stolen, and two men murdered, precisely because the ears were not identical.

"But," Moberly cut in, "since that proves that Verda Ivandi is not Rosemary Pentland—"

"Since it proves that," Crum said, "it explains why Swami Ivandi committed two murders in order to destroy the painting and hide the fact."

"Ivandi killed them!" Moberly gasped.

"Of course." Crum smiled. "For it was Ivandi's claim that Verda was Rosemary Pentland which gave him the axe to hold over Eason's head. Gilroy probably knew or suspected that it was a false claim. If he had told Eason that and produced the picture to prove it, Ivandi would no longer have been able to blackmail Eason."

"He was blackmailing Eason?"

"Undoubtedly. That's how he got protection for his fake medium racket, and money too probably. You see, it's like this: Fifteen years ago, Eason hired Ivandi to kidnap Rosemary Pentland. Ivandi does, and for years Eason hears no more about him. Then Ivandi appears in Midvale with a girl whom he claims is Pentland's kidnaped daughter. By holding the threat of exposure over Eason he gets what he wants from him.

"But the hitch comes when Gilroy gets wise to it. Gilroy evidently thought of making the ear comparison with that old portrait, too—knew it would upset Ivandi's game. So Gilroy in turn blackmails Ivandi. He probably got the Auditorium mural contracts by forcing Ivandi to use his influence with Eason."

HE PAUSED and coolly lighted a cigarette before resuming.

"But the real danger to Ivandi came when Verda herself overheard some remark of Gilroy's about her being or not being Judge Pentland's daughter. Ivandi had to act then. For if Eason discovered he had been tricked, Ivandi would lose his lucrative graft and probably his life as well.

"So Ivandi first goes to steal the painting. Judge Pentland must have surprised him, so Ivandi killed the old man. And now he would have to kill Gilroy too, for Gilroy would know who had stolen the painting to destroy it. So he must have gone straight to Gilroy's studio, and waited for the artist to come in, probably burning the painting in the upper back room while he waited in ambush."

Ivandi had by now lost his smile. But he still blustered.

"You have no evidence at all that I killed Pentland," he said. "As for Gilroy, your own deductions have proved

that I couldn't have killed him. With the windows and door locked and bolted on the inside, how could I have escaped?"

"You didn't," Crum said, "until Len Waring broke the door open. In fact you were still in there when we came in."

Ivandi forced a laugh. "Was I invisible?"

"In a manner," Crum replied. "Your face was smeared with brown grease paint to make it look artificial and was also practically covered by the hood of the burnoose which completely swathed your body. The long sleeves concealed your hands, and you had thrown some rubbish over your feet. You were lying on the balcony up there, sprawled against the rail, and you looked just like another of the costumed lay figures."

Ivandi paled. "And how did I get out?"

"By quick thinking, quick footwork, and a well laid plan," Crum said. "Probably at first your plan was to make it look like suicide. The fact that Len Waring came along and broke in made it even better, because then he would be accused. But at any rate you had planted yourself up there when he broke in. So you lay there motionless, saw us come in, heard all that was said.

"Then when we were all in the front yard you got your chance to escape. You quickly shed your burnoose, put it on the unclothed dummy which was in the closet upstairs and left it where you had lain. Then you sneaked quickly down and hid in the closet under the stairs. There you cleaned your face of the grease paint and waited. Later—probably when Waring was being taken to jail—you got out of the house and away from the scene."

Ivandi, whose beady eyes had been focused on his accuser's face now rallied his faculties.

"A clever hypothesis," he sneered, "cooked up to save your face. But you have no proof."

"Oh, yes I have," Crum answered. "You were smart enough to wipe the outside of that jar of grease paint, but you overlooked the prints your fingers

had left on the inside." He flipped from his pocket the prints Aga had developed and thrust them forward. "Would you like to give us your prints for comparison at once?"

Ivandi paled under his swart skin, stared speechlessly at the prints while Crum went on:

"But that of course doesn't exhaust it. With a little time we shall be able to find the prints you must have left on the balcony rail, on certain parts of the dummy, in the closet and other places we didn't think of examining before. We may find some of your hairs in the burnoose. We may find microscopic particles of the grease paint about your hair roots, under your nails, on your clothing. And each detail, proving a part of my story, will nail you in your coffin, Ivandi!"

THE silence was electric for a moment. As the fortune teller stared back at Crum the harsh lines of fear and hate seemed to soften slowly to a curious cynical resignation. He shrugged.

"Well," he said slowly, "one thing you must believe. I did not murder that child I kidnaped. She sickened and died a natural death some months afterward. Later I adopted an orphaned niece, Verda, and always told her she was my daughter. Later still it occurred to me to represent her to Eason as the kidnaped girl and put the pressure on him."

He paused, staring at Verda. His eyes grew slightly misted. He reached a shaking hand to the breast pocket of his coat and clutched the handkerchief which protruded. He brought it out with a sharp jerk and with it came a small and deadly derringer attached by a string. Quick as a conjurer he caught it in his right hand, and his teeth bared in a wolfish grin as he leveled it at Crum.

"I've got a few tricks in my bag too, you see," he snarled. "Get this whole bunch flat on the floor now or I'll blow a hole in you. And don't reach under your coat for that *curare*-pistol either!"

Crum didn't. The little gun was already palmed in his left hand.

"Get down as he says," Crum told the others. "Even if he escapes we'll

get him later."

The girls obeyed at once. Moberly hesitated. But since it was Crum at whom the derringer was pointed he decided to comply.

Instantly then Ivandi started backing toward the door, keeping Crum covered. Crum watched, not the feral face of the killer, but the knuckles of his gun hand.

When Ivandi reached the door, what Crum was expecting happened. The knuckles whitened, the trigger finger tensed. But Crum had already brought his hidden *curare*-gun in line, still concealed by his fingers. Now he pulled the trigger and ducked.

The little gun made only a faint *pfft!* like a small firecracker which was drowned in the derringer's blast. But once its minute, *curare*-impregnated bullet struck Ivandi's flesh, he dropped even as a jaguar drops when a poisoned blow-dart strikes him.

Crum straightened, the shot having gone over his head. But the killer lay dead across the doorsill. . . .

It was not until much later, after the news had been broadcast to a startled town, after an aroused populace had turned out to carry Len Waring from the jail in a torchlight procession, that Moberly and Leila Pentland found Colonel Crum at his Motor Court cottage and cross-examined him about that sudden turning point from defeat to victory.

"One minute," the stocky police chief said, "the case was lost and all was disaster. Then the next minute everything seemed to clear up for you and you were ready to march right in and tell Ivandi exactly how he had killed Gilroy and made his escape. It sounds uncanny."

Crum smiled. "The uncanny part," he said, "is that the explanation had been in plain sight ever since I first looked at those pictures of the corpse I made this morning. Only I didn't get it." He turned to Leila. "Remember how we wondered why the blood blot in the first shot was larger?"

"I do," she replied, "but I still don't know why it was."

"It was larger," Crum said "because it wasn't all blood. It was part shadow. The square of light in which Gilroy lay

was shining past the balcony rail, you know. And it was up there that Ivandi, swathed in his Arab burnoose was lying. But evidently he had to see what was going on below. So he poked his head out to look down. He jerked it back before any of us noticed. But evidently I snapped the camera bulb just at that moment—and the shadow stayed, blended in the picture with his victim's blood. Sort of ironical, isn't it, that curiosity killed him?"

LEILA said that it was. She also said a lot about how grateful she and Waring and the whole town felt for what Crum had done.

"But I do feel sorry for Verda Ivandi," she finished. "She's had a tough break, but she's a good kid and I'm sold on her. Even though she isn't my sister, I'm going to adopt her anyhow.

She'll help brighten up the old place out there, now that Father is gone. And Len approves too. He says she'll be a lot of company to me when he has to be away."

"Oh," Crum said, "so Len's in on the new arrangement too?"

"I wish I could blush like I should," Leila said wistfully. "But everybody knows I've just been dying for him to ask me."

"And where is the lucky devil now, by the way?" Crum asked.

"Oh, he's still wallowing around in the landslide," Leila replied, "the beginning of the landslide that's going to carry him into the district-attorney's office at election day after tomorrow. Gosh, but it was a close call though, wasn't it? Believe me, his wife is going to keep him at home around election time after this!"

*The Invisible Man Stalks! The Mysterious Ray
Gun Strikes Death! And the Green Ghost
Meets the Challenge of Criminal Magic*



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COMING IN THE NEXT ISSUE



Lambert
amashed down
with the poker

HIS GRAVE WAS DEEP

By C. G. TAHNEY

*Lambert's Perfect Crime Would Baffle the Police
—but He Hadn't Counted on the Laws of Nature!*

GEORGE LAMBERT reached for the phone as if he were striking at it.

"Send Rallston in here, Miss Emery."

His lips tightened as he replaced the receiver. He stood up, walked around the desk and began pacing the office. A big, raw-boned man, he had the craggy face of a New England farmer and the cold eyes of a card sharp.

A man entered hesitantly.

"Sit down," said Lambert.

Edward Rallston, paymaster of the Acme Textile Company, looked like a mouse on stilts. With his peaked, grayish face, his sparse hair, his habit of nervous blinking, he should have been a little man. But some macabre whim of Nature placed his thin little torso upon grotesque, spiderish legs. He sidled like a crab to a chair near the desk.

"Two weeks ago," Lambert said, "I discovered that you were padding the

payroll. I gave you a break. You're not in prison—where you should be. And where I can still send you. What's the payroll this week?"

Rallston twisted his fingers.

"A little over forty-two thousand dollars."

Lambert walked toward him.

"You," he said quietly, "are going to fake a holdup."

Rallston stared at him, and his peaked face slowly became the color of cold ashes. He tried to get up, but Lambert's hand pinned him down.

"No!" he whispered. "I can't do it. I—I won't be able to bluff it through. When the police start questioning me"—his voice rose shrilly—"I'll be caught. I *know* it!"

"I know that, too," said Lambert. "But what if *I'm* your alibi. If *I* did all the talking?"

There was a pause.

"I don't understand, Mr. Lambert."

"I'll say I was in the car with you when the supposed holdup took place. All you know is that someone jumped on the running board and slugged you through the open window. Knocked you out. You didn't see the man who hit you. You don't know what happened. I give all details, answer all questions."

Rallston watched the big, cold-eyed man crouching over him.

"But why," he asked helplessly, "should you do that? You're general manager of this plant. You earn ten thousand a year. Why should you risk disgrace and prison?"

"That's my business," Lambert snapped. "Will you do it? *Will* you?"

He clamped his hands on the paymaster's shoulders, and the latter panted, his popping eyes now bright and shiny:

"Okay. Okay. How do we work it?"

Lambert released him. He said tersely:

"I won't go into the details now. Don't want to keep you here too long. Just get this! When you pick up the money tomorrow morning, drive to my home. You know where it is. The garage doors will be open. Drive right in. I'll be waiting for you, and we'll hide the money there. Then I'll ex-

plain to you just how we'll go about it."

"You—you'll do all the talking, Mr. Lambert?"

"Yes. Now beat it!"

The paymaster shambled out. Lambert waited a few minutes before he followed him. He told his secretary that he'd be gone for the day, went downstairs and slid behind the wheel of his big green sedan. It was then that he noticed how sweaty his palms were.

"I've got to do it," he said through his teeth.

CHARLIE HOWELL'S hole-in-the-wall office, where Lambert spent the next three hours, was blue and strong with cigar smoke.

"It must work," the pink-cheeked, smiling man told him. "Because I'm a smarter crook than that Mexican politician. Fifty grand—and we get title to the Moreno mines. And that British syndicate *must* have those mines. George, we'll clear a quarter of a million apiece.

Lambert nodded.

"We will. I've been doing some private checking, too. I'll have the money for you Monday."

"George," Howell said, smiling, "is it a secret where you're getting all that dough?"

Lambert's eyes held the other's.

"A secret—yes," he said. "I think you'll have no trouble guessing soon, Charlie. But you won't ask questions."

"I won't. A quarter of a million is worth taking a chance for," the pink-cheeked man said, still smiling.

"That," said Lambert, getting up, "is what I thought."

Lambert now drove to a garage near his office which did his repair work. He told the night man, who knew him, that his spare tire was flat and he wanted a short checked in his tail light. He said he'd call for the car in the morning. Then he took a taxi home.

He lived in a rambling suburban house. Entering, he sensed the strange loneliness of a home without its mistress. Edith, his wife, had been gone several days now, visiting her mother in Atlantic City, and the house somehow sullenly resented her absence.

He walked right on through to the cellar steps off the dining room, turned on the lights and ran down the steps. The elongated basement was immaculate. Glancing right, he saw the communicating door leading into the garage. It was through this door that Edward Rallston would pass tomorrow morning.

He walked to the door, twisted the Yale lock and passed into the garage. The big doors here were open, as he'd left them. He strode out into the driveway. It was quiet, dark, very lonely.

Facing him was a huge vacant lot that embraced at least three normal blocks. It was a messy jungle, but a footpath bisected it. Ashley Drive, on which his house faced, curved and dipped along the right edge of the lot. No private dwelling there at all, and very little traffic passed here. On the left was a walled private estate, untenanted now.

"You couldn't," he whispered, "ask for more privacy. It'll work. Oh, it'll work, all right."

He retraced his steps back into the living room, removed his hat and coat and made himself comfortable in his favorite chair. He sat there, smoking, thinking, getting up occasionally only to fetch another can of beer from the refrigerator in the kitchen. He was astonished when he suddenly noticed that it was two o'clock in the morning.

"I'd better get some sleep," he told himself.

He made another trip to the refrigerator, but now he spiked his beer with a generous slug of gin. He detested the combination, a slight nausea revolting him as he raised his glass, but he knew it was a swell sedative.

His legs already were heavy and his head sluggish when he climbed the stairs to his bedroom. He set the alarm for nine, wound the clock, and then seated himself on the edge of the bed. As he took off his shoes, he remembered that he'd left the lights burning downstairs and in the basement. Well, nuts to them! And nuts with getting undressed, too!

He yawned and slumped over on the bed. He was asleep almost immediately.

THE alarm awakened Lambert. He lay still, shrinking from the sound, waiting for Edith to silence it, as she did every morning. But it kept on and on, and then he remembered. He sat up jerkily and stopped the alarm. His mouth felt fuzzy, but his head was clear enough.

Reaching for his shoes, he said aloud: "A big day today, brother. Yes, sir!"

Suddenly he was somehow reluctant to put on his shoes, unwilling to get off the bed. He decided he'd better have a drink.

He put on his shoes and went downstairs and had a husky shot of Scotch. It brushed away his uneasiness like a mop sweeping cobwebs. He was now eager to get busy.

He went upstairs again and washed and shaved. Appraising himself in the mirror, he thought he looked perfectly normal. He changed his shirt and was careful the way he made his tie, and he put on another suit. Glancing at the alarm clock, he saw that it was now twenty-five minutes after nine.

He was glad it was so late. Rallston would be at the bank promptly at nine. He'd leave at nine-fifteen, at the latest, and he should be here by nine-forty. Fifteen minutes from now——

Wearing his hat, coat and gloves, he descended into the basement. He approached the black, squat furnace. It was cold, since he hadn't started heating the house yet. The various implements associated with the furnace hung on nails behind it.

Last night he had decided on the long-handled hatchet, but now he looked at the poker. He knew how heavy it was. He brought it down and swung it several times as if it were a baseball bat. He tried the hatchet next. Then he was sure. He felt more confident with the poker.

He carried the poker to the inner garage door, ajar now, stepped to one side and experimentally swung the heavy end up over his head. And it was then that he heard the car in the driveway.

He thought, his heart pounding. "I can still tell him it's all off."

The car swung into the garage. A brief squeal of brakes. The slam of a

door. Heels on cement. Rallston's voice:

"Mr. Lambert?"

His fingers tightened on the poker.

"I'm in here, Rallston."

He heard footsteps approaching. Closer, closer. He squeezed the cold roundness of the poker. And there was Rallston with the black satchel, stepping through the door, and Lambert felt something rising within his chest, pressing outward, as if he'd just dropped ten floors in an express elevator.

He smashed down with the poker.

There was a sound he would never forget and could never describe. Rallston spilled left on his long legs. He was a limp thing, held up—and released—and folding now. He fell on his face and lay still. His gray felt hat, still on his head, was now battered and shapeless.

Lambert lowered the poker. He approached Rallston and rolled him over on his back. The hat came off and the paymaster's head almost immediately was pillowed on something wet and widening. It was red, and there was another color in it, too. His eyes were open and his mouth sagged. He seemed astonished by something he saw on the ceiling beam above him.

Lambert glanced at the money satchel, then his eyes shifted to the corpse again. As he kept watching it, something drained from him. It left him cold and grim and very steady. The thing was done!

RUNNING up the cellar steps, he reversed the key and locked that door. He dropped the key into his pocket, switched off the lights and descended the steps. Skirting the body, he walked through the inner garage door. He slammed it shut behind him and made sure that the lock had caught.

Rallston's car was a black coupe, a couple years old—a car similar to thousands of others. Lambert backed it out of the garage and the driveway.

Not a soul in sight. He turned into Ashley Drive. Neither pedestrians nor cars, as yet.

Wessley Street and railroad tracks and the slum section beyond it. He

drove through it. No lights here, no pauses, very little traffic. Passing an abandoned ice plant, he swung left into the alleylike Spruce Street. He parked the coupe there, got out, walked leisurely toward the corner.

An old Negro woman shuffled past him. That was all. And then he turned the corner, now on Kendall Avenue, and thought:

"From now on, it's not so bad. I'll make it!"

A ten-minute walk to his garage, and it was good to hear Joe Parrish's cheerful voice.

"Good morning, Mr. Lambert. Your car is ready for you. The short in the tail-light was just some worn insulation."

"Thanks, Joe," he said.

He got into his own car and it was ten-thirty when he reached the plant. This was not unusual.

"Good morning, Mr. Lambert," said his old maidish secretary.

Familiar greeting, familiar scene. Just another morning. He went into his private office, hung up his hat and coat and sat down behind his desk. He waited for the phone to ring—and it did, a few minutes later. As he expected, it was O'Keefe, the assistant paymaster.

"I'm a bit worried about Mr. Rallston, sir. He hasn't returned with the payroll yet. I phoned the bank and they said he left with the money at nine-twenty. He should have been back here by ten, at the latest. Now it's——"

Well, the ball was rolling.

O'Keefe got off the wire and Lambert called Arthur Wyatt, president of the Acme Textile.

"That sounds ugly, George," Wyatt said. "Maybe you'd better call the police."

So Lambert phoned the police—and the ball was booted again and it rolled faster and things began to hum. O'Keefe knew the license number of Rallston's coupe. Within twenty minutes, a radio car found it on Spruce Street.

Lieutenant Collins, from Headquarters, theorized about it in Wyatt's office:

"If he were held up, there's no reason why the bandits should take him with 'em. Easier just to bash him over the head. No, he took it on the lam with the money. Probably swapped to another car he had ready. We'll get him. Was the payroll insured?"

Wyatt, fat, thick-necked and pompous, looked as if this question were a personal insult.

"Of course it's insured. But Rallston has been ten years with this company and never——"

"Every man is honest until he commits a crime," Collins declared philosophically. "And is caught at it!"

THE hours marched on, and the ball kept rolling—always in the right direction. The cashier at the bank stated that Rallston had seemed pretty jittery when he departed with the money.

The landlady at his boarding house came through with the information that she had heard him pace the floor in his room until wee hours of the morning and that he had refused his breakfast.

Two investigators from the insurance company came to see Lambert. He spoke to them and found himself kidding with them, and they had a few drinks from the supply he always kept in the office. The investigators liked his liquor and they lingered on. And some reporters came over, and they lingered on, too, until it became a kind of party.

After all, there was nothing particularly dramatic or unusual about an embezzling paymaster. The concensus was that Rallston was a fool for trying it and that it was only a matter of time before the cops picked him up.

It was ten o'clock when Lambert finally drove home. As he ran up the steps and fumbled for the key to the front door, he half-expected a sharp command and men with drawn guns. And then he was in his living room, turning on the lights. A silent house, and he was both angry and grateful for the relief he felt.

He squared his shoulders and his mouth tightened and he went to the cellar door. He could not see the corpse until he walked halfway down the steps. Then—there it was! Rall-

ston was still staring, astonished, at the ceiling beam. And there was the black money satchel.

He had feared meeting horror here; he found that there was none. There was just a man, dead. And there was a problem that he must—and would—solve within the next thirty minutes. Then it *really* would be all over.

He strode to the furnace and brought down the shovel. In a hamper where Edith kept her dirty linen, he found a large pillow-case. He stuffed into it a length of clothes line. Then he picked up a flashlight and walked through the communicating door into the garage and the driveway.

A black night, silent and lonely. He crossed to the vacant lot in the rear of the house, found the footpath and followed it straight on through, alert and wary like some night animal. He came out onto a gravel road under construction. Beyond it was an iron fence enclosing a cemetery.

He crossed the road and walked left along the fence, his feet rustling the dry, dead grass. The little rear gate should be just about here—and he saw it a moment later. He tried the handle. The gate swung inward, and he unconsciously pursed his lips at the protest of rusty hinges.

Slipping through, he looked for the grave. As he remembered, it was a bit to the left of the gate and some thirty feet in. The pale blurs of the tombstones made him think of the anti-tank defenses he had seen in a newsreel. He sidled past one uneven row of them. And there it was—the hole in the ground, the great mound of earth to the left of it.

An open grave—waiting!

He stood there a little while, brooding about the crazy whims of chance and destiny. By sheer accident, he had caught Rallston padding the payroll. He had given the guy a break—because he felt sorry for him.

Then Charlie Howell came along with his ingenious and crooked scheme. They could clean up a fortune—if they could raise fifty grand. And it seemed that they couldn't possibly lay their hands on that much money. The chance of a lifetime and—no go!

And then Edith telephoned that she

would return Sunday morning for Mrs. Albright's funeral. She had mentioned casually that the funeral, scheduled for Friday, had been postponed to Sunday morning. And the cemetery *happened* to be a two-minute walk across the lot from the back of his home.

SO HE'D strolled across and he saw the open grave. And he thought of Rallston, who would pick up a forty-two-thousand-dollar payroll Saturday morning. Saturday night—an open grave, unguarded. And Sunday morning a coffin would be lowered into it, making sacred that bit of ground to the last remains and memory of some woman.

But what if another body secretly shared that grave? A body buried below the coffin?

"Edward Rallston, the paymaster who took it on the lam with forty-two grand, will never be found," he said softly. "Never!"

On the right side of the pit was the granite block and headstone of another grave. He looped one end of the clothes line about the stone, securing it there. Then he slid down to the bottom of the black hole. Placing the flashlight on the ground, he got down to work.

The earth was soft, and it was easy enough to bite out big chunks with the coal shovel. Starting from one end of the pit, he dug a two-foot-wide trough, retreating from it as it lengthened. Minutes dragged and there was only the sound of his breathing and the soft sigh of earth spilling off the shovel.

It was finished finally, the trough running the full length of the grave. Panting, he picked up the flashlight, stuck it in his pocket. Then he grabbed the clothes line and pulled himself out. And two minutes later, he was back in the basement.

The paymaster's body was stiff, *rigor mortis* already having set in. Startlingly light, it came up like a board as he lifted it off the floor. He balanced it edgewise on his shoulder, as if it were a six-foot plank.

The grim trek began. Across the driveway. Along the path in the lot. His ears were always wary for the sound of a car on the Drive, for a foot-

step, a voice. And he lived a long time before he finally stood at the edge of the grave.

He bared his teeth as he tossed the body into the pit. And his skin crawled as if he'd just shaken off some hideous parasite.

"All right," he panted, "let's get it over with."

Down in the pit again, he yanked at the legs so that the corpse slid into the cradle of the trough. He grabbed the shovel. With swift, sweeping strokes, he began blotting out the body, piling evenly the loose earth.

The trough soon became a low mound. He tamped it down with the back of the shovel. There was still some surplus earth, which he gathered into the pillowcase. He knotted the mouth of the bag and lifted it out of the pit.

Once again he went to work with the edge and back of the shovel. He smoothed and scraped the bottom of the grave until there was absolutely no suggestion of the elongated ditch that had been dug there before.

He climbed out and now he got rid of the surplus earth by sprinkling it over the mound the gravediggers had left. The last move was to detach the clothes line from the tombstone.

"Well," he whispered, "that's that!"

HE WAS free now—free to flee from here. And yet he somehow dreaded leaving. Was he *sure* that he'd forgotten nothing? Little things were always supposed to trap murderers.

He began poking about with the searchlight. Then he thought—this wouldn't be a scene of crime, with detectives snooping about. The hollow tragedy of a funeral would focus attention here tomorrow morning. People suffering genuine grief, people faking sympathy, yet all absorbed by the coffin, by the ceremony. Sure!

He edged away from there. For the last time, he heard rusty hinges speak as he closed the little gate behind him. And he was walking across the lot, and his confidence returned with a kind of gush, fierce and strong.

He'd made it. Nothing could go wrong now. Not now. Not any more.

He'd run the gauntlet—and he made it!

He would never wear this suit again, however. For, always, regardless how many times it was cleaned, he would sniff suspiciously at the right shoulder of the jacket. And he would never again attend a funeral.

He entered the basement. There was Rallston's bloody hat. The hideous stains on the cement floor. The money satchel. Details that still had to be taken care of.

Under the cellar steps, hung a dusty straw basket he used on his fishing trips. He brought it to the satchel, opened the latter and transferred to the basket the banded thousand-dollar packets of tens and twenties. The look of the money, the feel of it, did not excite him.

He could just about squeeze all the money into the basket, which he now hung back on its nail beneath the steps. Like all his fishing equipment, it was sacred in this house; neither Edith nor the maid would dare to touch it.

He returned to the satchel with an old magazine he'd also found beneath the stairs. Gingerly, he picked up the stiff, crimson-black thing that was the paymaster's hat and deposited it in the fabricoid satchel. Then he tore pages from the old magazine. He wadded them as he threw them in after the hat.

Now he carried the satchel to the cold furnace, thrust it through the fire door. Behind the furnace was a sprouted, two-gallon jug of kerosene. He could tell when he lifted it that it was half-full. He spilled quite a bit of it into the satchel, soaking the wads of paper there. Then he threw in the lighted match.

He watched the flames shoot up, hesitant, then swiftly joyous and hungry, consuming the bag and its contents. It was the final funeral pyre, he thought, of the deadly enemy he'd engaged.

No, there was still something else. He carried the kerosene container to the dark stains on the floor. Pouring a small pool there, he ignited it, and here too a dancing, gay little pyramid of flames marked another funeral pyre.

He lingered in the basement until those flames died out, leaving a black-

ish patch that now only a laboratory could identify. Through the open damper of the fire door, he saw that the fire had spent itself there too. Nothing left now of the bloody hat. And only a few bits of metal, fallen through the grates, remained of Rallston's money satchel.

"Yes, I made it," he told himself. "Yes!"

HE WAS suddenly swept by a tremendous feeling of emancipation. It felt glorious to regain the exclusive claim on his life and freedom. Almost, it was like being reborn.

He went upstairs, had a drink and carried the squat bottle of Scotch into the living room. He turned on the radio. Spanish music, of which he was very fond. He relaxed in his chair. With imperceptible transition, his feeling of elation faded before the reaction of deadly fatigue.

He sat with the Scotch, listening to the music but not really hearing it, drinking automatically. The music ended, and there was a news broadcast, and that went off, too. He did not remember just when he had drifted into sleep—nor why he now suddenly awakened, tense and suspicious.

Glancing at his watch, he saw that it was only one o'clock. He'd slept an hour or so. He caught himself listening to something. And then he realized what it was. Rain. A slashing rain drumming the porch windows. That was what had awakened him.

He stared at the rain-blurred windows, grimly aware that something was wrong, trying to put his finger on it. Then he got it—and the hot, scratchy little things he thought he'd purged from his system again began crawling in the pit of his stomach.

Only a thin layer of earth concealed the thing buried in the bottom of the grave. And the slashing rain, churning the earth, washing it away in muddy rivulets—it was only too probable that it would expose the corpse!

He lurched out of the chair. He felt the savage resentment of a weary soldier who is once again booted out of the dug-out to face the horror and chaos of no-man's land.

This was a summer rain, not the kind

one could expect in October. And why did it have to rain *tonight*? A dry spell for weeks—

He went to the porch window. He could hear and see the rain slowing up now, its fury spent. In a few minutes, it stopped altogether. But had it already done its harm?

He clenched his fists, then he opened them and slapped his thighs. It had to be done! So he walked down to the basement, picked up the flashlight, once again got the clothes line and the coal shovel. His resentment as he walked out was a sick and poisonous thing. Oh, how he hated that rain!

It was a wild, black night. A wind had come up, damp and cold. There was a threat of more rain in the air. He followed the path across the lot. The ground was spongy, but not too muddy. There were shallow puddles here and there, reflecting like polished stone the white finger of the flashlight. Apparently it hadn't rained long.

The little gate had a new sound now in its wet hinges. The bad teeth of the first row of tombstones. And then he stood at the open grave, lancing downward a beam from the flashlight.

He saw what he had feared. The earth had seeped and washed—and there, clearly visible, were two muddy shoe tips. And another muddy lump that was the head. He could even make out the plastic mass suggesting the outlines of the body.

SOMEHOW the sight dissipated his vicious resentment. For, in a way, luck still was with him. How easily he might have slept another hour—and not have discovered that it had rained. Now it was just a task of unpleasant brute labor—to bury the corpse deeper. He had many hours yet before daylight. Yes, it might have been much worse.

As he did before, he secured one end of the clothes line to the tombstone and used the rest of it to help lower himself into the pit. He found the bottom of it now to be sticky, clayish mud. Well, it could be shovelled anyway, and it would probably be firmer a bit lower.

He forced the base of the flashlight into the earth wall and focused the light so that it spread and shone down-

ward. Then he stooped and yanked at the yellow shoes. The board-stiff corpse came heaving up from beneath its muddy cover—a kind of nightmarish resurrection. He rolled it to one side of the trough now once again exposed.

Reaching for the shovel, he thrust it into the ground. It struck something solid. His frayed nerves made him curse what must be a stone there. He jabbed the shovel at another point. Rock again. A large stone, apparently. For the third time, he sank the shovel, now at a point a foot away. And again it struck a hard surface.

His eyes narrowed, and he suddenly became thoughtful rather than impatient. He took a step forward and tried the other end of the trough. The same result—rock! A few minutes later, the ugly truth had him by the throat.

He could not bury the body any deeper. Because a rocky ledge passed there. Rock! A pneumatic drill might break it—pickaxes. But not a shovel. He could not bury the body any deeper!

He dropped the shovel and stood there numb with shock, desperate beyond mere terror. It was like diving off the high board and suddenly finding that the water had disappeared and jagged rocks were below.

There was not enough earth above the rocky ledge in which to bury Rallston's body. And so he was stuck with the corpse of the man he had murdered.

He lighted a cigarette, dragged the smoke deep into his lungs. His thoughts were jammed like an ice floe, piled up and frozen and meaningless. He was stuck with that corpse!

Slowly, the shocked numbness began to leave him. Something had to be done. Fortunately he still had a half dozen hours until daylight. As the very last alternative, he could drag the corpse back to his car and drive it out somewhere. But this would make what he had considered a flawless crime just another murder, clumsy and dangerous.

Could he find some solution right here in the grave? He thought of the mound of earth above. He could shovel some of it down, use it to make the

extra layer he so very desperately needed. But there was an ugly risk attached to this.

The gravediggers would return, of course, to complete the job here. Surely their experienced eyes would notice the shrinking of the mound and the fact that the grave was not so deep as it had been. They would know that someone had tampered with the grave.

And from their surprise and suspicion, it would be only a short step to police investigation, to the discovery of the body, to the linking of the fact that he, Lambert, lived just across the lot. The police wouldn't need much more

the solution. Why not bury the corpse in the side of the grave?

Sure, why not? There were earthen walls on either side. All he had to do was to carve out a niche, like those in Roman catacombs, place the corpse there, plaster the earth back, tamp it down, smooth and solid again. The earth that the paymaster's body would displace could be used to refill the trough at the bottom of the pit. Perfect!

He passed his hand over his eyes, weak and shaken for a moment by the relief he felt. Then he tilted the flashlight upward, directing the beam on the

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of a lead. Then he'd be walking on horribly treacherous thin ice.

"I must think of something else," he whispered. "I must!"

FOR minutes after this, his thoughts raced like a caged squirrel in a tread mill. Round and round—and getting nowhere. And time slipped ever on. And there was the corpse.

He considered burying the corpse out on the vacant lot somewhere. But children often played there. And there were dogs. If one of them should begin digging, barking—

He had it! It flashed and flared like gunpowder touched off, and he was again stunned by the very simplicity of

opposite wall, and grabbed the shovel.

The earth seemed driest along the center. He sank the shovel there and tore out the first chunk. And then another and another and still another.

He controlled himself when he realized that there was no necessity for being so frantic. He had plenty of time—and he had a way out. Such a simple way out—but what if he hadn't thought of it!

The scar deepened in the side of the pit. Now he began lengthening it. He felt a drop of rain. He'd better have the thing dug before he wallowed knee deep in the muck. He worked faster, a burying animal, panting, plastered from head to foot with earth and mud.

Suddenly he realized that he was burying the corpse with the earth he took out of the side of the pit. He turned and stooped to shovel some of that earth away from the body. And it was then that the thing happened!

He sensed rather than actually saw the motion behind him—earth toppling downward like an oily wave breaking. It struck his back, a yielding mass with terrific weight behind it. He was thrown to the other side of the pit, and the earth piled on his legs, his thighs, his back. A mass beneath which he frantically tried to claw out.

And then something else—something solid and brutal—struck with crushing force the small of his back. It pinned him down, a tremendous heel grinding there, and he gave a cry that was like the thin wail of a child.

HE lay still, instinctively realizing that the numb feeling beneath the grinding thing on his back would become a horror of agony if he disturbed it. His left arm was pinned under him. He could move his right arm. He could turn his head slightly. That was all.

The flashlight still remained stuck in the opposite wall. It bathed impersonally, meaninglessly, the clayish earth all around him.

"Two walls to choose from—and I pick the one that would undermine the adjoining grave. A huge block of granite there and the tombstone and the ground already softened by the rain—oh, why didn't I *think!*"

Lambert began to cry, but stopped it when he realized that he was bawling. And he thought—this is the end, isn't it? No bright ideas could springboard from here, could they?

The drops of rain intensified. Heavier and more frequent, and now he could hear the song of the rain. Without premeditation, he suddenly tried to struggle forward, writhing his shoulders and hips.

He screamed, for he had never known such pain, brutal and hideous and white hot. Smashed bones where the corner of the huge granite slab had struck him. It did not merely pin him helpless. It was boring, boring, a merciless thing of vengeance.

Now he found that his cheek lay in two inches of mud. He had to twist his head so that his mouth and nose might be out of it. The rocky ledge held the rain. The huge, muddy puddle at the bottom of the grave was slowly rising. And he could not move!

The savage, bitter irony of it made him forget the pain for a few moments. It wasn't the police who would destroy him. Nor the landslide. No, it was the rain. The rain had upset his plans. And the rain would soon kill him.

Already he could suck air only through the corner of his mouth. And then some muddy water came in with it. He coughed, and this started the frightful pain in his back again. And with the cruel thing grinding there, he stopped hating the rain. It would have been so long until morning.



*When Enos Penwell Brings Home a Strange South Seas Plant Death
and Madness Uproot a Small American Town*

in

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Grim Disaster Comes to
Those Who Would Arouse
the Vengeful Wrath of
the Mighty Yakamfwa!

THERE were four men who escaped from the African penal colony, and it happened that each was born on a successive day of the week.

Monday's child is fair of face

Little Juan Pico deftly steered the longboat north and remembered, with some pleasure, how neatly his knife had slipped into the guard's back. The blade, which he had named death, was at his side, as always. Pico's brown, innocent-looking face wore a happy smile.

The escape had been well planned, and no doubt the guards were even now cursing and crashing through the jungle.

Well, let them. The Spaniard's gentle voice cursed them obscenely, but without malice.

Tuesday's child is full of grace

God had been very good, Pierre Bonheur thought, idly spinning the chamber of his stolen revolver. But the Lord always watched over Pierre. How else explain the fact that he had been sent to Africa, rather than the guillotine? That old widow in Paris—she had screamed much too loudly when Pierre, masquerading in his favorite disguise as a priest, had strangled her.

Who would have expected the old woman to be so lively? Well, it did



The gorilla-like arms swept around the native

not matter now. The longboat's make-shift sail swelled in the wind, and within a few days they would be safe. There was sufficient food and a cask of good, sweet water. The Frenchman's white, fleshy face shone with benevolence.

Wednesday's child is full of woe

Tom Mahon was a New Englander—a huge, red-haired giant, with the dour, harsh face of a Puritan. His mouth was perpetually drawn down at the corners. He had an unfortunate habit of using his gnarled fists for purposes upon which the law frowned. His crime? He had, as third mate of the *Pacific Queen*, killed his skipper by breaking his neck with an unlucky punch. But he had been drunk at the time.

His piggy little eyes gleamed as he glanced around the boat, and, weather-wise, read the signs in the cloudy sky. There wouldn't be a storm, but there would be a hatful of wind. Just what they needed. If necessary, there were the oars. But he was the only man in the crew with strength enough to pull them!

Thursday's child has far to go

Rupert Leeuw felt saddened at being in the company of men who were stupid as well as criminals. The not-quite-middle-aged Dutchman sat motionless, his gray hair flying in the wind, and remembered Amsterdam, the vanes of the windmills turning slowly and sunset on the Zuyder Zee. Being a philosopher, he bore no malice to the police who had arrested him for various murders, and, being a little insane, he did not quite know why he had killed.

SCIENTIFIC research, he thought. But not since the child-murderer of Dusseldorf had such horror been roused in the newspapers. Still, proof had been lacking, and so Leeuw escaped the penalty he deserved. He sighed, turned his heavy head, and stared at Salimu.

Nobody knew what day Salimu had been born because he was a native African, with ebony skin where it showed around the stained scarlet cloth that draped him from chest to

loins. He carried a vicious knife with a curved blade, and was a young witch-doctor.

It was through Salimu that the four had contrived their escape. Not until the last moment had he announced his intention of joining them on their perilous voyage. He squatted on his haunches, dark face immobile, and stared at the sun.

"My mouth is burning up," Juan Pico said. "Pass me some water."

Leeuw, sitting near the cask, said, "Ja," and ladled out a dipperful, passing it to Mahon. The New Englander lifted the wooden lid and peered in, nodding with satisfaction.

"There is plenty," Leeuw said.

"That don't mean we can drink it up today," Mahon added grimly. "If a storm comes along—" He didn't finish, but gave the dipper to Bonheur.

The Frenchman swished the water about and sipped a little. His white face gleamed with sweat.

"Heaven will guide us," he said unctuously. "But it is very hot."

"Let's have it." Pico stretched out a lean brown hand.

"Here, my son," the Frenchman said.

The Spaniard grinned mockingly and gulped water.

"*Bueno!* Very good!" he exclaimed. "I'll be glad to get north, where the sun isn't an oven. Even in Madrid we have some wind, but this is a breath out of hell."

"It fills the sails," Leeuw told him, and kept his gaze steadily on the motionless Salimu.

"Why do you keep looking at that native?" Mahon said roughly.

Leeuw shrugged. "I am curious to know why he accompanied us. A rising young medicine-man—he can command many head of cattle from his tribe. Why should he go forth into unknown lands?"

"You have the silver tongue," Pico murmured. "But I, too, have wondered. Especially since our friend carries something hidden under that red cloth of his. His hand strays to it sometimes. It must be valuable to him."

They were speaking English, which Salimu did not understand. But he

must have caught a few words, for he stirred uncomfortably and touched his knife-hilt.

The sun beat down remorselessly, but it was long past noon. Presently the swift tropic night would fall. That did not matter, however, for there was a compass.

"He speaks French," the white-faced Bonheur said. "Let me—" He turned to Salimu. "We are curious, *ami*. We have been wondering why you took the risk of joining us, men with prices on our heads."

LEEUW and Pico knew French, and waited tensely for the answer. Mahon understood a little—all sailormen understand *lingua Franca*, the composite dialect of many tongues.

Salimu's face, bearing the scars that told of his initiation into the priesthood, twisted into a scowl.

"That is no hard question, *B'wana*," he replied. "There was a very old priest who hated me. He saw me as a rival, and wanted me dead. So I was afraid."

"You are young and strong," Bonheur suggested. "Why did you not—"

"He would have poisoned me," Salimu said. "Or cursed me. The curse of *Yakamfwa*, the water-cobra. That is our tribal totem." His hand moved in a meaningful gesture.

"He's got something valuable," Bonheur said in English. "Something he stole. That was why he didn't want to stay with his people."

Mahon's tiny eyes gleamed greedily. "Yeah? It's probably some sacred medicine."

"I do not think so." Bonheur fingered his revolver. "Mahon, can you get his knife?"

"You mean—" Mahon begun.

"Be quiet," the Dutchman, Leeuw, interrupted. "He's getting suspicious. Wait a bit."

There was silence. The broiling sun beat down heavily. There was no protection against it, save when the sail sometimes threw a shadow. Wavelets splashed softly against the long-boat's sides.

"We do not need him any more," Pico said at last. "Shall I throw my knife?"

"No," Leeuw said. "We might want to find out a few things from him. I've an idea." He dipped into the cask of water. "Everyone drink. When Salimu does, Mahon, grab him. I'll have my gun ready."

"Okay." The red-haired giant gulped water, and passed the dipper back. Finally, after all the others were satisfied, the container went to Salimu. He hesitated, but finally lifted it to his lips. Still, his hand lay lightly on his knife-hilt.

For an instant his attention was distracted, and Mahon's huge body lunged forward. The gorilla-like arms swept around the native. Mahon's gnarled hand closed over Salimu's, crushing it against the knife-hilt.

"*B'wana!*" Salimu shrieked. *Ya—*"

None of the others moved, though Salimu's eyes went appealingly to them as he was held motionless in the Yankee's powerful grip. Only Leeuw shifted the revolver a little.

The knife clattered on the boat's bottom, and Bonheur reached out a foot and drew it toward him.

"Steady on!" Pico called sharply. "We'll turn over!"

But there was no danger. Salimu struggled like a wildcat, and at last Leeuw leaned forward and smashed the revolver against the kinky black head. The native went limp and motionless.

Every eye was on Mahon as he stripped the red cotton cloth from Salimu's body and tossed it aside. Bound about the native's thigh was a small package, wrapped in wool. Mahon opened it.

"*Dios!*"

That was Pico, leaning forward tensely, forgetting the tiller as his gaze was held to the immense, glowing diamond in Mahon's big hand. The gem was uncut, but these men knew jewels thoroughly. And they realized that this stone represented an immense fortune.

Salimu woke up then, screamed, and grabbed at the gem. Mahon deftly gave it to Leeuw and pinioned the native's arm behind his back, twisting it viciously.

"*B'wana!*" Salimu yelped. "*Aie—*"

"You talk his lingo, Leeuw,"

grunted Mahon. "Get him to spill the dope."

"Ja." Leeuw stared keenly at the native. "We palaver, Salimu. True palaver. Where did you steal this diamond?"

But the other was almost incoherent with hysterical fear. Not the fear of death. It was something more. . . .

"*Yakamfwa!*" Salimu screeched. "I have broken the *mugilo!*"

"He means taboo," Leeuw said to the others, and turned back to Salimu. "What is this about *Yakamfwa*, the water-cobra? Whom did you kill to get this jewel?" He leaned forward and brutally slapped the native's face.

"The curse of *Yakamfwa*—I did not believe in it!" Salimu said. "I thought I could steal the diamond from the temple hut and sell it. I thought I would be safe if—" Salimu screamed again as Mahon bent his arm back.

"Talk," Leeuw said grimly. The pistol's muzzle jutted forward.

"It—it was the sacred jewel of our tribe. It was kept under water, always, in a pot before the shrine of *Yakamfwa*, the sea-cobra. The old priest—I killed him and took the diamond. I did not believe in the curse, *B'wana.*"

"What curse?" Leeuw demanded.

"Only holy hands may touch the diamond. If a man has sinned—murdered—the curse of *Yakamfwa* will strike him. And—*aie!*—it is true! It is true!"

Suddenly, with a quick writhe, Salimu slipped out of Mahon's grip. His naked body arched toward Leeuw, struck the Dutchman, and bore him back. The boat swayed and rocked perilously.

"Steady!" Mahon roared, gripping the thwarts. "Bonheur! Use that knife!"

The Frenchman, holding the native's blade, abruptly dropped it and lunged for the diamond as it rolled toward him. At the tiller, Juan Pico hissed between his teeth and let his little knife fly. The weapon sang through the air and dug deep into Salimu's back.

Simultaneously Leeuw's gun exploded. The African gave a queer, coughing grunt, and his body arched

back. Then he dropped backward, and the Dutchman pushed him aside as he carefully rose, rubbing his throat.

"Tried to strangle me," he growled. "Ach! . . . Well, he is dead. Good!"

There was a gaping hole in Salimu's ebony chest, from which red liquid welled.

"Throw him overboard," Mahon commanded. "He's making a mess here. Got the diamond all right, Bonheur?"

"Oui. I have it."

"My knife!" Pico shouted. "Pull it out of Salimu before you get rid of him!"

Mahon obeyed, tossing the weapon to the youngster. Then he slid Salimu overboard with a powerful heave. The body sank slowly through the blue, translucent water.

"Keep an eye on that stone," the New Englander grunted. "If it goes overboard—"

"I swim very well," Pico said, grinning.

For answer, Mahon silently pointed. A lean, torpedo-like shadow was sliding through the depths. Further away, a triangular fin broke the surface.

"Not in these waters you don't," Mahon said, with grim humor. Pico shrugged.

BONHEUR'S white face was dank with sweat as he stared at the jewel he held.

"How much do you think it's worth?" he asked.

"Let's see it." Leeuw took it from him. "Thousands, at least. Even when it's cut."

"Dollars?" Mahon asked.

"Pounds. It's big. Another Kohinoor."

"Good!" Pico said cheerfully. "We will be rich, all of us! But who will keep the stone?"

"We'll figure that out later," Mahon told him. "First of all, we've got to make port. There may be boats putting out after us."

"We follow the original plan?" Bonheur asked.

"Might as well. The Araka Peninsula's safe enough. From there we

can cut inland. Once we reach the Araka, we can stop worrying."

"The diamond?" Pico said quietly.

Mahon challenged him with his eyes.

"I'll keep it," he snapped.

"No, *Senor Mahon*," Pico disagreed.

"Honor among thieves," Leeuw said, with wry sarcasm. "Drop it in the water-cask. That way, we'll be safe till we hit Araka."

Bonheur passed him the jewel.

"*Oui*, that is wise," he assented.

"Did not our poor dead friend say it was kept in a pot of water in his jungle temple?"

The stone fell, with a tiny splash, and Leeuw put back the wooden cover.

"Now we can rest, for a while," he said with satisfaction. "Wait, Mahon! Don't throw that cloth overboard. It will make a little shade, at least."

The New Englander, holding the red cotton cloth Salimu had worn wrapped around his body, grimaced with distaste.

"Not for me," he growled, and tossed the garment to Leeuw, who calmly lay down and spread the folded cloth over his face.

"I sleep," Leeuw said. "If you are wise, you will do so also."

Mahon made his way to the tiller.

"I'll take over, Pico."

The Spaniard nodded. "*Gracias.*"

Then there was silence, as the hot African wind pushed at the sails and sent the longboat speeding north, with four men and a fortune aboard. . . .

THAT night Pierre Bonheur died. In his suffering before he passed on, Pico tended him with gentle, feminine kindness; Leeuw held the dipper to his lips; Mahon held him motionless when, in his frenzy, he surely would have torn his face to ribbons with his nails. Each one of the three hoped Bonheur would die quickly, but, for certain unvoiced reasons, each one kept the thought well hidden.

The affair was not at all pleasant, because Bonheur grew delirious and his obscene blasphemies made Pico, at least, feel uncomfortable. The young Spaniard always made it a point to do penance for his misdeeds, and he felt

sure that Bonheur was doing himself no good in Heaven.

It was a bad business. The Frenchman got abnormally thirsty, and at last it was necessary to refuse him water. He screamed that fire was seeping through his veins and that *Yakamfwa*, the water-cobra, had bitten him. Well, there were sea-snakes in these waters, and Mahon stripped Bonheur and examined him as thoroughly as possible by the faint moonlight.

The Frenchman's body was white and soft, with a curious pulpy rottenness, as though his muscles had long ago turned to some horrible half-solid stuff. There were a few old duelling scars here and there, but no sign of a snake's fangs.

Yet Bonheur insisted that *Yakamfwa* had bitten him. He showed symptoms similar to those of snake-bite. His eyes bulged glassily and his face was congested with blood. Veins stood out on his forehead. Toward the end he cursed everything on earth and died with shocking slowness.

So they threw him overboard, first making sure that the diamond was still in the water-cask.

"It is all quite impossible, of course," Leeuw said. "Yet I have studied anthropology, and the African witch-doctors know quite a bit. Do you suppose Salimu managed to poison the food or the water?"

Mahon growled dissent.

"I feel okay," he grumbled. "Don't you?"

"I feel good, but I am afraid." Pico looked very unhappy. "Perhaps I am too superstitious."

By this time it was dawn. They had kept on their course, despite the horror of the night, and the longboat had made excellent progress. Two more nights and they would be safe on the Araka Peninsula, ready to plunge through the jungle to a settlement where few questions would be asked.

"Anyway," Mahon said, "the diamond will be split only three ways, now." He examined the food. There wasn't much of it, but it seemed clean and good. The water was sweet, with no trace of poison. At the bottom of

the cask the diamond lay like a huge dim eye.

Yet each man in the boat suspected that one of the other two had killed Bonheur.

Finally, by common consent, they made certain. They stripped, one by one, while the other two searched for any concealed poison. And these men were well versed in the tricks by which objects may be hidden, even by a naked man. When they had finished, they were quite certain that there was no poison to be found in the boat.

PPULLING his singlet over blistered shoulders, Mahon grunted:

"I guess maybe a cobra did get Bonheur, after all. I must have missed the marks in the dark."

"I have seen no sea-snakes." Leeuw shrugged. "Only the sharks."

Pico, staring at the triangular fins that followed the longboat, shud-

did."

"Si," Pico broke in eagerly, leaning on the tiller. "I have seen something like that in my own country. A gypsy woman I knew put a curse on my brother. She made a small mud image of him and did things to it. Unpleasant things. When my brother found out he fell sick and died, and I was his heir. But he did not have as much as I thought."

"Sure you didn't pay the gypsy to do it?" Mahon asked sardonically.

Pico only smiled.

"*Quien sabe?*" He shrugged. "Certainly I paid no gypsy to kill poor Bonheur."

There was silence again. Under a hot, cloudless sky the boat sped north. There was no sign of pursuit. But a tension grew and throbbed in the heavy, stagnant air, almost palpable, almost tangible. Each man dreaded the coming of night, when a sea-cobra might writhe over the side of the boat

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dered and crossed himself. He kept his knife ready for any flat, venomous head that might lance suddenly over the side and strike at him.

"*Dios*," he whispered, sweat on his handsome face. "There may be something in this *Yakamfwa* curse, after all."

But nothing happened that day. Except that the sun grew hotter and the breeze failed a little. Not enough to matter, however, though they used the oars for an hour or so.

Soon after midday, Leeuw broke a long silence.

"About Bonheur," he began. "I have an idea that auto-suggestion killed him. He was a most superstitious man, and that was fatal."

"How do you mean?" Mahon stared at him, his red hair plastered dankly on the sunburned forehead.

"Well, subconsciously he was worrying about the curse. Maybe he got a touch of sunstroke, or fever. Auto-suggestion did the rest. He believed he was dying of the curse—and so he

as it rode low in the water, and search out a victim. . . .

But it was cold steel that killed that night.

In the silvery dimness of the moonlight Pico began sobbing and gasping, and presently said that his head was ready to burst.

"It is like Bonheur," he panted. "I am thirsty, and there is fire running through my veins. It is the *Yakamfwa* curse!"

Mahon and Leeuw sat motionless, eying the dark figure at the tiller. Pico went on:

"But there was no snake, no sea-cobra. Nothing struck me with its fangs. I am sure of that. *Dios!* My belly is afire! And—and—"

Soon he began to scream about *Yakamfwa*. When the other two tried to get near him, Pico menaced them with his knife.

"Do not touch me!" he screamed. "Let me be, curse you! Let me be!"

"We've got to get at the tiller," Mahon said to Leeuw in a low, tense

undertone. "He's steering off course."

"Ja. I have the gun."

They had spoken too loudly, and Pico heard.

"The gun!" he raged. "Shoot me, Leeuw! I do not want to die as Bonheur died. I can feel the tortures of Purgatory already."

But they did not shoot Pico. It was difficult to aim in the gloom, and they did not wish the Spaniard, wounded, to come leaping at them with his knife. Leeuw had the long blade taken from the witch-doctor, and Mahon gripped the gun. Both men were waiting tensely, wincing at the sounds that came out of the darkness shrouding Pico.

He did not die easily. Like Bonheur, he cursed for a little time, but then changed to low, sobbing moans that quavered out on the still air like the cries of a tortured beast in agony. Over and over he whispered:

they expected to strike the Araka Peninsula.

Mahon's dour face was black with sunburn. His red hair flamed like a banner. He seemed to ignore the blazing heat, however, and sat like a statue at the tiller.

Leeuw had made a folded pad for his head out of Salimu's red cotton garment, now faded and discolored. The Dutchman's skin was peeling, and angry scarlet wherever it showed.

They ate and drank, and sailed on. Neither one mentioned that the diamond's value would be split only in two shares now. But the thought lay, like a crawling maggot of evil, in two brains. Neither man trusted the other. Both Leeuw and Mahon would have preferred to be the sole owner of the priceless jewel.

And the stone lay in the water-cask, gray and rough, looking not at all valuable. It might have been a chip of soapstone, rather than the jewel of

CASE OF THE ASTRAL ASSASSIN

"*Yakamfwa . . . Yakamfwa . . .*"

Then he prayed to the water-cobra and pleaded for mercy. He would serve *Yakamfwa* faithfully, he said, if only the snake god would save him from such a horrible death. His voice rose and fell as the tides of agony waxed and waned through Pico's veins.

At last he killed himself with his little knife.

They kept the body aboard till morning, intending to search it for fang-marks, but at the first light they changed their minds. All of Pico's handsomeness had gone and his face was that of an imbecile gargoye. Mahon let go the tiller and silently heaved the corpse overside. There was a swirl of foam almost at the boat's hull. The sharks were getting to expect their grim food.

All that day they sailed north, under a good wind, two men who watched each other in silence. They ate and drank little. The provisions would last till the next evening, when

Yakamfwa, which no bloodstained hands might safely touch.

MAHON kept the revolver and Leeuw fingered Salimu's long blade. They sat in opposite ends of the boat, while the silence between them grew into a deadly, ominous wall. They did not look at the sun as it slipped down slowly toward the west, and dipped beneath the horizon. Only twenty-four hours to go. At sundown the next evening they would be in Araka.

"Want to steer?" Mahon called at last. He gave Leeuw the course, and the Dutchman squatted silently at the tiller. Mahon went forward to the bow and lay down full length, but he did not sleep. The whisper of the waves was too much like a serpent's hiss. He kept thinking of curses, and the way Bonheur and Pico had died.

At midnight Leeuw relinquished the tiller to Mahon. The Dutchman went forward to the water-cask, drew a dipperful, and gulped it down. Then he

looked very carefully at Mahon, who was a vague shadow looming against the rocking horizon of the sea.

He filled the dipper again, and put it down carefully under one of the seats. Then he took the folded red cotton cloth from his head and thrust its corner into the water. He waited.

Mahon could not see what he was doing, Leeuw thought. *Ja!* And he would never know. Not till he died in agony, as Bonheur and Pico had died, with the ordeal poison of Africa flaming through his veins. There was no expression at all on Leeuw's heavy face. But he was feeling exultant, more so, even, than he had in Amsterdam, when the police were searching vainly for a mad killer.

Mad? They had been fools. For Rupert Leeuw was a philosopher and a scientist. Why, if he had not studied anthropology he would never have insisted on keeping Salimu's garment, when Mahon wanted to throw it overboard after the native's butchered corpse.

Yes, Leeuw had read a great deal. He knew how African witch-doctors sometimes carry their medicines, when burdens must be light and gourds would be too heavy. They soaked their garments in the medicine they needed most. And Leeuw had thought it logical that Salimu would provide himself with a strong poison, in case he met enemies.

The Dutchman even thought he knew the nature of the venom. It was the "black medicine" of the ordeal, made from crocodile glands. The red cloth had been steeped in the deadly stuff, and Leeuw had found it fairly easy, under cover of darkness, to poison a dipperful of water before handing it to Bonheur. That was when he realized his guess had been correct. So young Pico had died next, and now it was Mahon's turn.

What was the fool doing? Steering. No, he was advancing slowly through the dark. Why. . . .

Hastily Leeuw drew the red cloth from the dipper and laid it aside. Its work was done. There was enough poison in that water to kill several men.

"What's wrong, Mahon?" he called. "Want me to take the tiller?"

THERE was no answer. The big figure seemed to draw together and hesitate. Then, out of the darkness, came a spurt of red fire and a sharp report. Leeuw screamed, clutching at his stomach, and collapsed in a writhing heap.

Mahon waited, his gun ready. But Leeuw's struggles did not last long. Presently the Dutchman lay quiet. The giant's piggish, tiny eyes glinted with satisfaction. Good! That was done, and now the diamond belonged to one man only.

Mahon shrugged. Leeuw had probably intended to kill him, he thought, once they were in the jungle at Araka. Two men and a diamond worth a fortune—it was inevitable that one of them must die. Only Mahon had struck first.

The boat lurched as a gust filled the sail, heeling the craft over. With a muffled curse Mahon whirled and sprang to the tiller. There was a precarious moment while he wrestled with it, but soon the danger was past. Yet it had given Mahon a bad moment. If the boat had capsized in these shark-infested waters, not to mention the sea-cobras that had killed Bonheur and Pico, he would be finished instantly.

A sound came out of the darkness then. The moon came for an instant from behind a cloud, and Mahon saw that Leeuw was moving. The Dutchman's bulky body lurched forward, smashed against the cask and sent it toppling upside.

Laughter bubbled up from Leeuw's throat. Laughter that was cut off abruptly as his jaw dropped and his eyes glazed in death. . . .

Mahon was leaning far out, cursing viciously and trying to recapture the cask, which was filling and sinking fast. The diamond would be lost forever if he didn't—

His fingers touched the wood and tightened. Something cut through the water, and Mahon snatched back his hand just in time. A white belly gleamed for an instant in the moonlight as the boat shuddered under the

impact of the shark's rush.

Then it was too late. The cask was gone, bearing with it the fabulous diamond of *Yakamfwa*. The diamond that no blood-stained hand could safely touch, gone forever into the silent ocean abysses.

Mahon remained for a long moment staring at the place where the cask had vanished. His dour face was haggard. At last he drew back and crouched motionless, trying to fight down the mad impulse to dive after the jewel. Well, it was gone. Leeuw had taken care of that. And the Dutchman lay silent, his dead face pale in the moonlight.

And now—what? Araka, Mahon supposed. Freedom was a treasure to be gained, and one of which Leeuw could not rob him. Even though the diamond was lost, that was no reason for forgetting the prison cell that waited, back along the jungle coast.

Maybe there was something in the curse, after all, he reasoned. But it was ended now. Four men had died—five, including the priest Salimu himself had killed—and *Yakamfwa* should be well satisfied, Mahon thought with grim humor. He stared down at Leeuw.

"Did you think I'd dive in after it?" he questioned the blank, blind face. "Like blazes! I'll be safe in Araka when the sharks are feeding off your rotten carcass! Yeah!"

As for the water, that didn't much matter. It would be hot after dawn broke, but Mahon could stand thirst for fifteen hours or so. Nevertheless, at the thought, his throat suddenly went dry and his tongue was hot and parched.

The devil with it! Tom Mahon had been thirsty before.

He bent to lift Leeuw's body, ready to cast it overside, and saw the dipper under a seat. It had jammed into a corner there, so tightly that it had not overturned. Mahon saw the water.

Carefully he worked the tin cup loose. Just enough for a swallow or two, but it would help. Mahon lifted the dipper to his lips. He glanced at the silent figure at his feet.

"Here's to you, Leeuw!" he said—and drank.

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PREMIUM FOR MURDER

By C. S. MONTANYE

Detective Bannon Likes to Take It Easy—but There's No Chance of That When a Desperate Killer Plays Possum!

ACCORDING to the astrology book Dave Bannon religiously bought every month, Wednesday was his unlucky day. Wednesday was this sunny, warm day and so far, horoscopes to the contrary, Bannon's luck had been pretty good.

He hadn't had any difficulty picking up the taffy-haired, violet-eyed Bonnie Cole. All he'd had to do was wait around the lobby of the Burnham until the inspector was through questioning her, upstairs in the murder suite. He watched her now as Bonnie, attracted by a jewelry store window, stopped to look over the glittering display.

Bannon slid up beside her. He

glanced from a tray of diamond bracelets to eyes that were no less bright.

"If you see anything you like," he said, "pick it out and we'll go in and buy it."

"You've been following me!" she accused, and her voice shook.

Bannon saw she was nervous and upset. Still, under the circumstances, that was only natural. That morning, Vesta, her sister, had been found dead in her bedroom at the Burnham, with a bullet in her heart and an enigmatic, funny smile frozen on her lip-sticked mouth.

"I'm not the only one following you," Bannon said quietly.

"What do you mean?"

"Take a look in the plate glass. Across the street—lighting a cigarette at the curb."

He saw the sudden start she gave, heard the gasping breath she expelled. Opposite, Jack Curtz buttoned his form-fitting jacket, and watched.

Bannon smothered a smile. She hadn't known Curtz was tailing her, too. He palmed his badge and let her have a glance at it.

"Taxi sound good?" he asked. "I'll run you home."

"Would you?" Her voice was choked. "That would be swell!"

He handed her into the first cab that came along, giving the hackie her address. Bannon looked through the cab's rear window. Jack Curtz was moving quickly through the crowd on the sidewalk, looking up and down for another cab.

"He know your address?"

"I—I don't know," Bonnie Cole said.

"What does he want? Or don't you know that either?"

BANNON relaxed comfortably on the leather upholstery. He knew quite a little about Jack Curtz, about the girl beside him, and about "Sonny" Wallace and Martin King.

"He's been bothering me for a long time," Bonnie said.

"In love with you?"

She made no effort to disguise a shudder.

"You might call it that. I hate him! I'm afraid of him."

"I don't blame you." Bannon smiled sleepily. "Jack Curtz isn't exactly the kind any nice girl would like to have cluttering up her living room. As a matter of fact," he added idly, "I wouldn't be surprised if Jackie's number has gone up. I don't think he'll be around much longer."

The cab went north for a mile or more, then east, into a neighborhood of cheap apartment houses. Bannon saw they were almost to her place. He wished the ride could continue. He was comfortable, completely at ease, the way he liked to be.

He pulled himself together when the taxi stopped, got out and offered

Bonnie his hand.

They were in front of a narrow, brick apartment house. Bannon knew the type. Rooms ten dollars apiece by the month, on lease. He paid the cab driver, looked at the corner they had rounded for a sign of Curtz, saw nothing, and followed Bonnie Cole to the vestibule.

"I think I'll come up—for a drink," Bannon announced, when she opened her bag and fumbled with unsteady fingers for her keys. "Got any liquor?"

"Only a bottle of Bourbon."

"Swell. What are we waiting for?"

In the girl's apartment he dropped down with a sigh on a three-cushioned couch, listening to the click of her heels on the wood borders of the carpeted floor, as she hurried to the kitchenette. Bannon loosened the last two buttons on his vest.

He thought about Vesta Cole's killing. Bonnie's sister, the ex-wife of Martin King, who owned numerous catch-penny shows along the main stein, had been murdered sometime after midnight. Bannon reviewed the details of the case. Almost the first thing that had been turned up in Vesta's apartment was a small, red leather address book that belonged to Sonny Wallace.

One of the elevator operators identified Sonny's photo as that of the passenger he had taken to the seventh floor at eleven o'clock the previous night. And Sonny Wallace, out on parole after a larceny rap, was Bonnie Cole's boy friend.

Bonnie came back with a dose of Bourbon, water and ice. Bannon tried it and liked the taste. His gaze wandered over her. She was certainly an attractive dame. Lucky guy, Sonny Wallace, keeping company with a knockout like Bonnie.

"Where is he?" Bannon asked, out of a silence broken by the tinkle of the ice in his glass. "Sonny, I mean."

"I don't know." The violet eyes clouded. The hand that held her Pepsi-cola trembled. "I—I haven't seen him for a couple of days."

"I've got a warrant for him," Bannon went on quietly. "The inspector

would like to have a chat with him, find out what he was doing in your sister's apartment around midnight."

BONNIE COLE'S red lips parted. Her breath came fast.

"Why should they think Sonny would want to kill Vesta? What reason would he have?" Sudden tears overflowed the violet eyes. "Why, Vesta paid for Sonny's lawyer! She helped him get his parole! He's the last person in the world who would have done it!"

Bannon pushed out his long legs. He sampled the Bourbon again. Not a bad drink, he decided.

"Any ideas?" His tone was sympathetic, kindly.

Bonnie Cole raised her taffy-colored head.

"Why don't you check on Martin King? He hated her! Ever since the divorce he's threatened her! Why don't you tail him and see what happens?"

Bannon shook his head. "No good. We questioned King early this morning. He's out. Got an air-tight alibi."

"How air-tight? Marty's smart!"

"Not smart enough to get out of the bed he's holding down at the General Hospital, go up to the Burnham and blast his ex with a thirty-eight."

"Marty in the hospital!" Bonnie Cole stared. "What's wrong with him?"

Bannon moved his shoulders. "Appendectomy, couple of weeks ago. That means something you put in a jar of alcohol and stand on the mantelpiece. Forget King. Let's talk about Sonny Wallace. If the guy's so clean why doesn't he come around and see us? This hide-out stuff isn't helping him any. And neither," Bannon added shrewdly, "are you."

The telephone across the room rang suddenly. Bonnie Cole straightened. Some of the Pepsi-cola slopped over the rim of her glass as she looked from the instrument to Bannon's expressionless, placid face.

"Go ahead," he said. "Answer it."

She still watched him when she picked up the phone.

"Hello?"

"This is Sonny, Babe," Bannon heard the voice in the receiver say. "Listen, I've got a sharp angle and—"

There's a detective here now!" Bonnie interrupted quickly. "He can hear everything you say!"

Bannon started to get up. "Tell him to hang on a minute. I want to talk to him."

Bonnie put the telephone back on its cradle. There was a defiant gleam in the violet eyes she lifted to Bannon.

"No! Nobody talks to Sonny—until the time comes!"

Again Bannon moved his shoulders. He found himself wishing he had a girl who would defend him the way Bonnie Cole did Sonny. He turned back to the couch with another shrug. Then, as he sank down, there was a sudden knock on the door. Bannon pushed his hand in under his coat and loosened the gun holstered there.

"Curtz!" the girl whispered sibilantly.

"If it is, let him in and we'll get this over with. I don't think he knows me. Tell him I'm an old friend."

Bonnie went slowly to the door. She turned the knob and Jack Curtz slouched in. The man's dark, hooded eyes flashed from her to Bannon on the couch.

"Hello, kid," Curtz said. "Got a visitor?"

Bannon couldn't help but admire the girl's nerve. She kept her emotions tightly in check, forcing a smile.

"An old friend of mine, Jack. Meet Mr. Barnes. Ed. Barnes."

"Old friend—nuts! I saw you pick this guy up on the avenue. What's the idea?"

CURTZ was small, thin and dapper. In partnership with a Times Square bookmaker, he always had plenty of money. Twice in the past six months Curtz had been hauled in as a murder suspect, but each time there had been the usual lack of evidence and he had walked out free.

Bannon knew he even had a permit to carry a gun. Cockeyed town, where they licensed characters like Jack Curtz to tote firearms.

Bonnie had met him at the magazine

and cigar counter where she worked. It was in the same building where Curtz and his partner maintained an office. From what Bannon knew about him, Curtz never overlooked a pair of shapely legs or a pretty face. As Bonnie possessed both, she was fair prey.

"What do you want?" she asked Curtz tensely.

"Just a little information." A crooked sneer twisted his thin lips. "I picked up a piece of news last night. Maybe you can guess what it is. I want to get in touch with Wallace. Where is he?"

Bonnie's hand moved up to her heart. There was a strained, terse note in her brittle voice when she answered.

"He's out of town. Chicago. Didn't you know?"

Curtz laughed under his breath. "Don't hand me that stuff. I'm in a hurry. Where'll I find Sonny?"

Bonnie Cole shook her head and retreated a step or two. Curtz followed, his thin face dark and threatening. So far as Curtz was concerned Bannon didn't feel he was in the room at all. Curtz had probably figured him as a masher who had made the pick-up to while away the warm afternoon. Bannon nodded to himself. Not a bad notion.

"I've told you!" Bonnie insisted. "Sonny's in Chicago!"

Curtz's clawlike hand darted out and circled her softly rounded arm.

"Talk," he said, "or I'll break it off at the elbow!"

"I told you—"

"Talk!" Over his shoulder, Curtz added to Bannon, "You'd better duck. This is private business. Go on, get out!"

Bannon finished the last of the Bourbon and got up. He saw what had to be done and sighed. Maybe the astrology book was right after all. Wednesday, unlucky. Anyway, his peaceful relaxation was all over and done with.

Curtz let Bonnie go and whirled around. He ducked Bannon's smashing right fist, reached for his gun and whipped it out before he straightened. Bannon saw it coming and lashed with his foot. His heavy shoe caught Curtz

above the left knee-cap and bounced him off the end of a radio cabinet.

Bannon nailed him with a straight left hook before Curtz could get his firing hand in position. His knuckles cracked into the sharp cheek-bone of the taut-skinned face.

Curtz hissed a curse and banged into the wall. He swayed against it, flattened, for a couple of seconds. Bannon used the time to almost fracture Curtz's wrist while he emptied the fellow's fingers of the steel they contained.

He kicked the gun aside, dragging out his own department pistol. Curtz doubled like a jack-knife, propelling himself forward as if he had been hurled from a sling-shot.

BANNON tried to sidestep and take aim. He fired from a point near his vest, throwing the lead at a tangent and not knowing whether he had missed. The next instant Curtz butted him in the belly. Bannon's head ground the rug as his heels went up. He heard Bonnie's stifed scream, then his head whacked the wood border of the floor and somebody turned off the sunshine that poured in through the windows. . . .

After a time, Bannon snapped out of it.

He opened his eyes, wincing sharply at the pain when he moved his head. Bannon was stretched on the floor, and no hangover had ever given him as bad a headache.

Stiffly he sat up, glad to be alive. What was the matter with Jackie Curtz, leaving him there without his finishing, lead-engraved signature?

When Bannon's gaze cleared he found the answer.

Curtz lay sprawled across the sofa, his face turned to the ceiling. Blood dripped from a chest wound. Bannon nodded. He hadn't made such a bad shot, considering the difficulties involved.

Curtz's heart still fluttered, though his respiration was faint. Bannon found the bathroom and let the cold water run in the sink. He soaked a towel in it, slopped it over his face. That made him feel somewhat better.

Bannon slicked his hair back with

one of Bonnie's combs and went in to Curtz. He went through the pockets of the man on the couch. A couple of letters, a leather cigarette case, a wafer-thin watch, a soiled handkerchief and a wallet.

Bannon had finished reading the second letter when Curtz opened his eyes.

"I don't know whether it's worth phoning for an ambulance," Bannon said casually.

Curtz's hooded eyes began to burn. "What are you? A Jap—leaving me here to bleed to death?"

Bannon smothered a yawn. "Maybe if you'll talk a little you'll get some service. Why were you so hot after Sonny Wallace?"

Curtz's eyes retreated behind their puffy lids.

"That's easy. He cut in on me and Bonnie. I warned him. I told him to keep away or he'd get blown up. Yesterday—"

He coughed, choked and moved his head weakly. Bannon frowned. He saw he wasn't going to hear as much as he had hoped. He went over to the telephone and called Headquarters.

Back at the couch, he picked up his gun, holstered it and shook Curtz's shoulder.

"I'm on the way out, Jackie. There'll be an ambulance over here in a few minutes."

Curtz's voice was low, each word slow-paced.

"Thanks—copper. I'll be around again—to get you!"

In a corner drug-store Bannon took a stool at the fountain.

"Bromo, strong," he said to the soda-jerker. "I've got a riveting machine in the back of my head."

While the foaming concoction digested, Bannon read one of the letters he had taken from Curtz. It had been mailed in town, three days previously. He shoved it in his pocket, listening to the growing clang of the arriving ambulance and the siren of a police car.

around and have a talk with Marty King, to keep this straight."

But at the General Hospital the white-clad receptionist, consulting her book, said:

"Mr. King was discharged an hour ago."

Bannon scratched his head. "All cured, eh? That's fine. Where did he go?"

"Home, I suppose. They usually do."

"Thanks."

The subway took Bannon downtown. He hung around Headquarters until dinner time. Nothing had been turned up on Sonny Wallace. Inspector Dietz came in just before Bannon went out.

"Curtz croaked." The inspector, a big, florid man, gave Bannon a sharp look. "Where's Wallace? I thought I told you to bring him in."

"I'll break this case tonight," Bannon promised, pulling his hat further down over his still aching head. "So Curtz curtained? That saves the D.A. a lot of trouble."

It was dark when he finished dinner in the little place, near Prince Street, where he usually ate.

Curtz out of the picture. Where had Bonnie Cole lammed? Where was Sonny Wallace? Who had murdered the glamorous Vesta?

With these problems in mind, Bannon went uptown. He got out of the subway at Forty-second Street, and walked up Longacre. It was the hour when the main stem turned on its brightest lights and opened up for business.

Bannon wandered into one of the catch-penny attractions. It was called "Wonderland." A flea-circus, side show freaks, a shooting gallery, pin-ball games and rows of animated picture machines were some of the devices for amusing the patrons.

Bannon made his way to the rear. He skirted the shooting gallery, opened a door set in a recess to the left of it and stepped into a dimly lighted hall. A flight of stairs took him to the floor above. Three doors faced him there. They were all shut. Bannon dropped a hand to the knob of the center one, turned it and walked

NO CHANCE for a nap this afternoon," he thought regretfully. "Guess I'd better hoof

into Martin King's office.

"Hello, Marty. Back at the grind again."

A man in a pillow-swathed chair raised his head quickly. King wore a bathrobe over his pajamas. He looked pale and gaunt. On the desk in front of him was a heap of correspondence. Mail and bills that had piled up during his absence.

His gaze flickered over Bannon.

"Oh, it's you. Sit down. Smoke?"

Bannon lounged against a typewriting table.

"Thanks, no. I just dropped around to bring you a little news. Your friend Curtz got measured up for a harp late this afternoon."

King's gaze didn't waver. "Is that so? What happened?"

"I shot him, when he began to get tough with your former sister-in-law."

King frowned. "That's good. This town will be better off without that lug."

"That's what I think." Bannon pushed his hat back. "I expect," he drawled, "to break the Burnham murder case tonight."

King sat motionless. "Yeah? Got an angle?"

"I know the man who did it." Bannon spoke slowly, indifferently. "It's a good thing you had that air-tight alibi, Marty."

"Why?"

Bannon moved his shoulders. "Just before Jackie Curtz checked out," he went on, "he spilled—to me."

KING arranged the pillows in his chair. He moved it closer to the desk and the heap of letters on it. From below the noise of "Wonderland" filtered up: Sharp, continual cracks from the shooting gallery, the grumble of voices, faint and remote.

"Who did it?"

"Who do you think?" Bannon hunted around in his pocket, found a loose match, and put it in his mouth. "Funny, if it weren't for that alibi of yours, you'd certainly look like the logical killer, Marty. I mean, the way you've been squawking about the alimony you had to pay Vesta. The fact is, I understand, that you've got a little sweetie who craves matrimony

with you. Kind of tough supporting two dames, both with expensive tastes."

"Where'd you get all that stuff?"

Bannon shifted the match around in his mouth.

"Put one and one together. That makes two. I get ideas all of a sudden, out of nowhere. Then, of course, what Curtz said," he added smoothly, "fit the whole thing together, neat as can be."

"Looks like I was lucky getting appendicitis when I did," King laughed.

"Yeah, the way you hated Vesta and the threats you've been making. Bonnie mentioned them. Tell me something. Where does Sonny Wallace figure?"

King's hand went in under the litter of correspondence. Life a flash of lightning it came out, holding a snub-nosed automatic. He drew a bead on the lounging Bannon.

"So Curtz talked!"

Bannon shook his head, grinning.

"That was one of my ideas. He didn't mention your name. He was too far gone to do any singing. But—" Bannon expelled the match with a move of his lips—"there were a couple of letters in his pocket. One was from you to him, mailed three days ago. There's just enough information in it to tie you nicely up with Curtz. Sure, you were on the flat of your back on a hospital cot, but Curtz, your hired trigger-man, was up at the Burnham filling his contract and—"

Something in King's gaunt face checked what Bannon said. The man in the chair laughed quietly.

"Smart copper. Do you know what's going to happen to you? I'm going to ventilate you, give the fresh air a chance to circulate through the holes I make. Then, a little later, you'll be taken downstairs to the cellar. We'll dig a nice space, fill it with cement and put you in it for keeps!"

"The old mob stuff." Bannon's eyes went around the office. "Bonnie Cole thinks you're a smart guy, Marty. That's a mistake. You're not smart—enough. You're crazy if you think I came up here alone."

He nodded toward the door. King

(Continued on page 110)



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Strange stories will always be popular, especially when these strange stories are true. The person who has a number of odd and mystifying stories at his fingertip will always be the center of attraction in any conversation.

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London Retribution

IS THERE a law of vengeance which gradually weaves a web around a killer, bringing him to retribution as fearful as the horror of his own deed?

Timothy Wiggin was a hunchback. All his life he had been mistreated by bullies who belittled him in his neighborhood in the slums of London.

His one love was his beautiful sister who was a bar-maid, and who made it possible for Timothy to have a home, such as it was. Tim begged enough pennies each day on the streets of London to pay his share of the rent and food.

Then tragedy struck! Tim came home one evening to find a human fiend attacking his sister. The brute had stuffed a rag into her mouth to prevent her screaming. Tim rushed the fiend, but was too puny to be of any use, for the drunken giant knocked Tim unconscious.

When the hunchback came to, he found his sister dead. She had suffocated from the gag which had been pushed back too far in her throat. The police could not find the killer. The matter was just one more of those unsolved crimes of the

slums which interested few people.

But Tim swore revenge. He erected a little shrine to the God of Vengeance—and each night prayed that his sister's death would be avenged.

Then one evening on the banks of the Thames River, Tim saw the killer. In his excitement, Tim screamed at him, then realized his foolishness, for he should have followed the man and reported him to the police.

The killer turned — recognized the hunchback and instantly started after the little fellow. There was murder in his eyes — Tim knew it.

Panic-stricken, the hunchback didn't know what to do. If he ran toward the river, the killer could catch him and throw him in. If he ran across the open field, he could never reach the street before the giant would get him.

Like a trapped mouse, he was paralyzed with fear. And just as he was about to collapse, he thought he saw his dead sister beckoning him across a narrow shallow stream. Instinctively he jumped in and started to wade to the opposite side. The mud was thick but he kept going.

The killer darted after him, jumping in



the stream a few feet to the left. Tim reached the grassy bogs beyond, then turned in panic to see if the killer were near.

But Fate willed otherwise. The killer was sinking—he had jumped in the one spot of quicksand along the entire river, a section only a few feet in diameter.

Panting and terrified, Tim watched the murderer gradually sink to his doom—his screams stifled as his head disappeared beneath the slime—a fitting end for a fiend who had suffocated an innocent girl.

The police later found the body and believed Tim's story—all but the part about the vision of the dead sister, which was attributed to terror. But—was it due to terror? Who knows?

The Vision of Gas

MUSTARD GAS is a horrible weapon. It burns one from inside out, for its chemical formula is Di-Chlor-Ethyl-Sulphide which releases sulphuric acid when the vapor enters the pores of the body and mixes with the moisture therein.

Joseph Fenner of Plainfield, N. J., a soldier of the First World War, would never forget Mustard Gas. He had inhaled some of it in the trenches of France—and it had burned his throat and lungs. For many years he suffered, before excellent care prevented the ravages of disease from adding his name to the roster of the dead.

Shortly after the war, Fenner was in Tucson, Arizona, an inmate of a sanita-

rium, trying to regain his health. One morning before sunrise he woke up very thirsty. He asked one of his room-mates to get him a drink of water from the hall table where the nurse kept it.

The room-mate was new at the sanitarium, not as ill as Fenner, so he went out in the hall where he saw the bottle of water on the nurse's table. Half-asleep, the room-mate carried the bottle to Fenner.

Although the room was not very light, Fenner saw something that made him sit up in bed terrified. He was back in the trenches in France. The man approaching him was a German soldier wearing a gas-mask, and around him was a cloud of poison gas.

But the vision lasted only a moment, and by that time the room-mate had reached Fenner's bed and handed him the bottle of water.

But Fenner didn't drink it. He just stared at the bottle and tried to collect his wits. As he did so, the nurse rushed in.

"Who took that bottle from my table?" she shouted.

Then, seeing it in Fenner's hand, she gasped: "My God—don't drink that—it's sulphuric acid!"

Later, doctors in the sanitarium took down Fenner's testimony, his strange actions being verified by the room-mate and the nurse who had been severely reprimanded for her carelessness. But no explanation could be given.

The case was referred to psychiatrists
[Turn page]

PROVES MAN IS GOD

A strange method of mind and body control, that leads to immense powers never before experienced, is announced by Edwin J. Dingle, F.R.G.S., well-known explorer and geographer. It is said to bring about almost unbelievable improvement in power of mind. Many report improvement in health. Others acquire superb bodily strength, secure better positions, turn failure into success. Often, with surprising speed, talents, ability and a more magnetic personality are developed.

This startling method was found in remote and mysterious Tibet, formerly a forbidden country, rarely visited by outsiders, and often called the land of miracles in the astounding books written about it. Here, behind the highest mountains in the world, Mr. Dingle learned the extraordinary system he is now disclosing to the Western world.

He maintains that all of us are giants in strength and mind-power, capable of surprising feats, from the delay of old age to the prolonging of youth, and the achievement of dazzling business and professional success. From childhood, however, we are hypnotized by a false idea of what we really are.

Most of us know that God is everywhere, but never realize that God cannot be everywhere without being also in us. And if He is in us, then all His wisdom, all His power—unlimited knowledge and infinite power—is likewise in us. If God is everywhere, then there is nothing but God, and we also are that—a completely successful human life being the expression of God in man. The Holy Spirit of the Bible is an actual living force in man, and through it we too can do greater things than these." The method found by Mr. Dingle in Tibet is said to be remarkably instrumental in freeing our minds of the hypnotizing ideas which blind us to the vast power of this living force within us.



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as another phenomenon of psychic instance in the records of mystery.

Tiger Justice

CLARK MARKBERG, a former tiger trainer, told this story to friends while attending the opening of Ringling Brothers, Barnum and Bailey Circus at Madison Square Garden, New York City, on April 9th, 1942.

Some years ago when Markberg was with a small circus touring the southern states, a young lady, one of the trapeze artists, was found dead in bed. Her death was attributed to a fall she had suffered some weeks previously which had affected her heart. The doctor had told her she should rest for the remainder of the summer—but she had continued to perform.

But there were several troupers who believed the girl had been poisoned. However, they didn't want to get into any legal entanglements which might hold them in town. When the doctor pronounced the cause of death, without holding an autopsy, they kept their mouths shut.

Still, they suspected the assistant tiger trainer, Joe Lopez, who took charge of the "cats" two afternoons a week, when the head trainer rested.

They knew he had been in love with the trapeze girl, Florrie Hoffman, and had

You give to someone you know when you give to USO

threatened her if she refused to marry him. Before he had joined the circus he had been a pharmacist and he once boasted that he knew a poison which could not be detected.

Time passed. The circus went on. Then came the fatal afternoon in Oklahoma when Lopez was scheduled to take charge of the "cats."

The drums rumbled. Lopez entered the cage of the tigers in all his finery. The atmosphere was tense. Spectators held their breath.

Then, before the guards could prevent the tragedy, the tigers suddenly went wild. As though animated by a sudden lust to kill—they pounced upon Lopez, clawing him to death.

Two tigers were shot before the guards could get to the mangled body. His jacket had been torn from his back, for it seemed that the jacket rather than the man had angered the "cats."

An investigation brought forth the revelation that the fatal jacket had monkey hair on it—and the smell of a monkey will drive any tiger wild.

Suspecting a plot, the circus owner interrogated everyone, even the absent-minded watchman who had been with the circus many years and who was known to be touched.

When asked if he had seen anyone near Lopez's dressing room that day, he answered:

"Only Florrie Hoffman. She was carrying a monkey when she came out."

The owner quickly snapped back:

"But Florrie Hoffman is dead—don't you remember—she died back in North Carolina."

"Oh, yes," said the watchman shaking his head, "I remember. I forgot she was dead. I guess I must have been dreaming, for it couldn't have been *her*—could it? I thought it was funny when she took that monkey back to his cage—and then disappeared. That proves it was just a dream—doesn't it?"

No one accused the queer old man of having anything to do with the plot, so his testimony was discredited by the police—but not by the troupers who wanted to believe that the ghost of Florrie Hoffman had found revenge.

Gun-Hand Justice

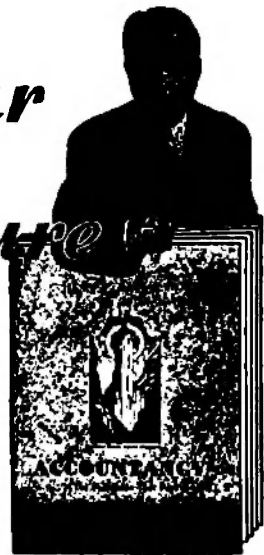
BACK in the eighties in Arizona, one of the fastest men on the draw was Ted Shawney, who bragged he could draw and fire before his opponent's gun left the holster.

Shawney was hated by his associates for his brutality, but they respected his quick draw. Aware of his ability, he seldom shot to kill, but rejoiced in wounding an antagonist. His pet trick was to shoot the other fellow's gun hand and cripple it for life. Many a man who had faced Shawney in a brawl had never used his right hand again.

One of these men was Will Hasting, [Turn page]

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who had questioned Shawney's honesty in a poker game—and before Hasting could draw, he had had the bones of his right hand shattered by Shawney's bullet.

Hasting had cursed Shawney. He shouted at the laughing gun-man: "Someday I'll ruin that gun-hand of yours, Shawney—and you'll laugh on the other side of your rotten face."

Shawney sneered: "You'll never do it facing me, you cripple."

Hasting never did live to fulfill his vengeance, for one evening while Shawney and others were in a saloon, a rancher rushed in and reported that Hasting had been killed in a cave-in at the mine. The rancher asked for help to dig out Hasting's body.

Shawney volunteered along with several others. After digging for sometime, the lifeless right arm of the dead man was seen sticking out of the dirt. Shawney recognized it by the scar which his own gun had made.

"Here he is!" shouted Shawney. And then he reached down and grabbed the crippled hand and started to pull the body out of the loose dirt.

Suddenly Shawney screamed: "My God—my hand!"
 And before others could unloosen the grip of death, the bones in Shawney's gun-hand had been so crushed, that from that day on, Shawney had to shoot from his left hand. No one ever feared him again for his quick draw.

Although the accident was laid to *rigor mortis*, there were those who thought otherwise, for no doctor had ever reported

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Wild Indian

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A case has been reported from Lancaster, Pennsylvania, where a young lady attended a spiritual seance. The doctor reporting this case asks that the young lady's name be withheld.

She had been warned by her stepmother to keep away from spiritualism, but because her friends had been finding entertainment at a certain medium's house the girl couldn't resist the temptation.

The room was dark except for a tiny red light. The medium, sitting in the center of a circle of spectators, went into a trance. Suddenly, beside the medium, appeared the form of an American Indian, followed by a war-cry that startled every spectator.

The young girl became more excited than the others—and then as though she were animated by another entity, she rushed at the Indian's image which seemed to disappear into the body of the medium. But this didn't stop the girl.

[Turn page]

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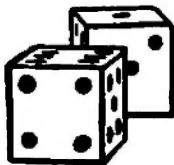
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Using her long handbag as a tomahawk, she struck at the medium's head, grabbing the medium's hair in the other hand as though trying to scalp the woman.

Someone turned on the lights, and soon the young girl was quieted. In a dead faint, she was placed on a sofa.

Soon she came to, but she had no recollection of what she had done. The others told her she had acted like a wild Indian, herself.

Still upset when she got home, she confessed to her stepmother, promising never to attend another seance.

After forgiving the repentant girl, the stepmother decided to reveal a secret she had kept from the girl for a long time. Assuring the stepdaughter that there was nothing for her to be ashamed of, the stepmother said:

"You see, my darling—your great-grandfather was a full-blooded Sioux Indian—the greatest warrior of his tribe!"

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Dear Chakra: I have been told that the name "Jones" should never be given a boat, because it makes Davy Jones mad

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and the boat will sink. Is this just a joke or is founded on fact?

William Dooler.

Dear Mr. Dooler: Statistics seems to show that there may be some basis to this belief. For instance the American destroyer Jacob Jones was sunk in the first World War. More than 60 sailors lost their lives. Then a new destroyer in the Second World War was christened Jacob Jones. This was sunk early this year.

Dear Chakra: Is it true that insanity can be transferred from an insane man, to one frequently around him?

Alice Mall.

Dear Miss Mall: There are some cases of this. One outstanding case is that of Count Szechenyi, a famous Hungarian scientist who went insane. A young student was assigned to play chess regularly with the Count. In six years, the Count was sane and the student was insane.

Dear Chakra: When a child is afraid of something, does it show that such a thing is destined to do damage to the child?

Wilma Johnson.

Dear Miss Johnson: There are many doctors who will say yes. There are many cases to substantiate it. One recently got into the headlines. A Mrs. M. or New York City had been afraid of mirrors all her life. As a child she would scream when she looked into one. This item appeared in a New York newspaper this Spring: "Mrs. M. suffered a dizzy spell last night and while clutching violently at the dresser for support, yanked it from its place as she fell with her back against the mirror. A splinter of glass entered her back and when she staggered to her bed, the glass splinter killed her."

Dear Chakra: Who discovered spiritualism?

Mary Bailer.

Dear Miss Bailer: Katie Fox is considered the mother of spiritualism, begun at Hydesville, New York in 1848.

—CHAKRA.

FOR VICTORY



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PREMIUM FOR MURDER

(Continued from page 101)

was only human and, for a fraction of a split second, his gaze followed Bannon's. Bannon lunged in that fleeting space of time. The automatic exploded. Hot lead whizzed by Bannon's right ear, but he gained his objective in the next breath.

The chair with the cushions went over. He flung himself on top of King, struggling for possession of the automatic. King clung to the weapon, trying desperately to squeeze the trigger. Bannon felt the steel digging into his stomach.

HE WRIGGLED to one side, using his fist as hammers. King was big, hard. The hospital stay had softened him, but he still had plenty of fight left in him. His teeth ripped at Bannon's face, his hot breath sickened the detective. Still Marty King clung to the automatic.

King's arm wound up around Bannon's neck. It tightened. Thumbs dug into the vulnerable spot on his neck. Bannon used all his strength to pry King's weaponed hand out from under him.

Inch by inch, while his breath burned in his lungs and black spots danced before his eyes, Bannon continued to wedge the gun away. He pinned King's wrist to the dirty wooden floor, trying with superhuman effort to get his neck out of the vise that held it.

Seconds were ticking away. Bannon knew he couldn't last much longer. His head was spinning around like a top. It was a question of whether he could get the gun before he went out—of strength against strength.

Bannon put everything he had into a final attempt. He heard the office door opening. Bannon's heart sank. He was cooked if it were one of King's henchmen. The sound of the rusty hinges squeaking seemed to give him fresh, desperate power. Martin King's fingers opened and Bannon had the automatic in the next heartbeat.

The paralyzing arm about his neck dropped off when Bannon rammed the gun against King's head. The man twitched and lay still. Bannon got to

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his knees, shaking his head to clear it—and peering up into Bonnie Cole's anxious face.

"You—you've got him!" the girl cried thinly.

Bannon saw the man with her. Sonny Wallace, red-headed, freckled, pushed Bonnie aside. He helped Bannon shove King back into the chair.

"What are you doing here?" Bannon wheezed. "I've got a warrant for you in my pocket."

"I tried to get here to beat the pinch!" Wallace explained quickly. "I've kept under cover, working my own angles. I figured this thing perfectly because, before I left Vesta last night, she said she had a late date with Curtz. She said he was coming there to talk about a full alimony settlement, that King was sending him to see her."

Bannon snapped the cuffs on King and jerked a thumb at the telephone on the end of the desk.

"Call Headquarters," he said to Bonnie. "Tell them I want a wagon around here, that I've got the party who murdered Vesta Cole last night!"

Then, while Bonnie unhooked the receiver, Bannon mopped his face with his handkerchief and scowled at Wallace.

"One thing more, Sonny. For my own private information. I know you're on parole and that you've been going straight. But what were you doing at the Burnham last night, in Vesta's apartment?"

"I went there," Wallace replied, "to tell her something."

"What?"

Sonny Wallace looked across at the girl telephoning. He began to smile as he said:

"I wanted to tell Vesta that Bonnie and I got married yesterday afternoon!"

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—THE EDITOR.

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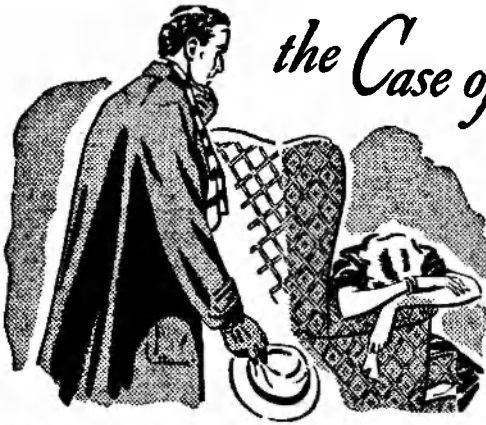
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