

THRILLING

MYSTERY NOVEL

15¢

MAR.



A THRILLING
PUBLICATION

A COMPLETE BOOK-LENGTH *Crime Novel*

TRUCKS MYSTERY

Now Any AUTO REPAIR JOB Can Be a "Push-Over" for You!

**IN LESS TIME—
WITH LESS WORK—
AND MORE PROFITS!**

MoToR's new **AUTO REPAIR MANUAL** shows you how to service and repair ANY part of ANY car! Now you can lick even the toughest jobs when you have this amazing Manual to make your work easier!

Every job on every car built since 1935 is explained as simply as A-B-C. Clear, illustrated instructions lead you step by step. NOW you can tackle ANY job from carburetor to rear end—and do it quick, easy, right, the FIRST time! Just look up make, model, and the job in the quick index of **MoToR's AUTO REPAIR MANUAL**—and go to work!

ONLY Manual of Its Kind

No wonder this manual is used by the U. S. Army, Navy, trade and technical schools everywhere, and thousands of successful auto servicemen!

To make this great book possible, the engineer-editors of **MoToR Magazine** condensed all the meat from 150 official factory manuals for you. They dug out all the information you need; made sure every word is crystal-clear; and put "the whole works" into this one great, handy book!

MoToR's AUTO REPAIR MANUAL is a big book: 744 large pages, 8 1/2 x 11 inches, bound in sturdy covers. Nearly 200,000 service, repair, adjustments, replacement, tune-up facts on every car built from 1935 through 1941!

Over 1,000 Pictures!

More than 1,000 cutaway photos, diagrams, drawings, charts, SHOW you what the clear text TELLS you! No wonder thousands of men call this amazing book their Auto Repair "Bible"! No wonder it will save YOU countless hours of work—and help you make MORE MONEY from auto repairs!

See for yourself—without cost!—what a work-saver, time-saver, and "life-saver" **MoToR's AUTO REPAIR MANUAL** will be for you! TRY it FREE—for 7 days. Learn first-hand how it can pay for itself the first few times you use it!



Just mail coupon below—without money! When the postman brings your book, examine it thoroughly. Make it show you what it's got! Unless you agree this is the greatest time-saver and work-saver you've ever seen—return book in 7 days and pay nothing. Mail coupon today! Address: **MoToR Book Department, Desk 64C, 572 Madison Ave., New York 17, N.Y.**



Clear, Pictured Facts on Every Job on Every Car Built Since 1935!

Nearly 200,000 service and repair facts on all these makes:

American	Crosley	La Salle	Packard
Bentley	De Soto	Lincoln	Pierce
Auburn	Dodge	Lincoln	Arrow
Austin	Ford	Zephyr	Plymouth
Buick	Graham	Mercury	Pontiac
Cadillac	Hudson	Nash	Reo
Chevrolet	Hupmobile	Oldsmobile	Studebaker
Chrysler	Lafayette	Overland	Terraplane
Cord			Willys

744 big pages; including 50 pages of carburetor text, charts, illustrations covering all models. Over 500 charts, tables: Tune-up Chart; Valve Measurements; Compression Pressure; Torque Wrench Reading; Starting Motor; Engine Clearances; Generator; Clutch & Brake Specifications; Front End Measurements, etc.; Engines; Electric; Fuel, Cooling, Lubricating Systems; Transmissions; Universals; Front Ends; Wheels; Rear Ends, etc.



Used by U. S. Army and Navy



Same FREE 7-Day Offer Applies on MoToR's Truck Repair Manual

For mechanics, truck specialists, service stations, fleet owners. Covers EVERY job on EVERY truck made since 1935! 1400 pictures, 914 pages, 300,000 facts. Used by Armed Forces. Warranted to contain every essential fact you need to know. Strong binding, size 8 1/2 x 11.

Covers all types Gasoline Engines; Diesels and Hesselmans; Fuel Systems; Governors; Lubrication Systems; Ignition Systems; Starters; Generators; Clutches; Transmissions; Axles; Torque Dividers; Transfer Cases; Brakes; Steering,

etc., etc. Also services buses, farm and industrial tractors, contractor and road building equipment, stationary power machinery, etc. (on all parts described in Manual).

Offered on same FREE 7-Day examination as Auto Repair Manual. Check box in coupon at right.



Published by **MoToR, The Leading Automotive Business Magazine**. **MoToR's** manuals assure high standards of repair work.

MoToR Book Dept., Desk 64C, 572 Madison Ave., N.Y. 17. Rush to me at once: (Check box opposite book you want)

MoToR's AUTO REPAIR MANUAL If O.K. I will remit \$1 in 7 days, plus 25¢ delivery charge, \$1 monthly for 2 months and a final payment of 95¢ one month after that (Book's price \$5.95). Otherwise I will return book postpaid in 7 days. (Foreign price, remit \$8 cash with order.)

MoToR's TRUCK REPAIR MANUAL (Described at left.) If O.K. I will remit \$1 in 7 days, and \$2 monthly for 2 months, plus 25¢ delivery charge with final payment (\$9.38 in all). Otherwise I will return book postpaid in 7 days. (Foreign price, remit \$11 cash with order.)

Name.....Age.....

Print Address.....

City.....Zone No. (if any).....

State.....Occupation.....

SAVE 35¢ Check here if enclosing full payment (check, money order or postal note) WITH coupon. We pay 25¢ shipping costs. Same 7-day return-refund privileges.

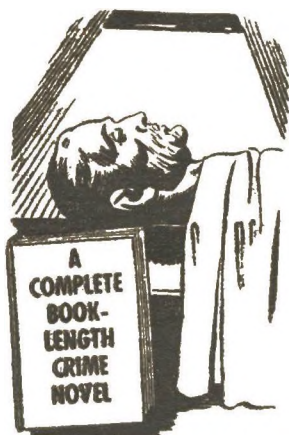
THRILLING MYSTERY NOVEL

MAGAZINE

Vol. XXVI, No. 2 A THRILLING PUBLICATION

March, 1947

Featured Complete Book-Length Novel Selection



DEAD TO THE WORLD

By NORTH BAKER and
WILLIAM BOLTON

Smooth-talking witnesses all but convinced interne Danny Michaels that the mystery corpse on the morgue slab was not Alfred Sutton, but the mute testimony of the dead man's dog told a different story! A brilliant young medical student proves science can unlock the doors of mystery.....

13

Copyright, 1944, by Doubleday, Doran & Company, Inc.

Short Stories

STOP, CROOK, AND LISTEN!.....Tom Thursday 85

It was a simple case of three-in-one robbery

THE LAST MOVE.....Ray Cummings 89

Detective Melvin Cone strives to checkmate a dastardly killer

And

THE LINE-UP.....A Department 6

Where readers and the editor meet

Next Issue's Novel: DEATH'S OLD SWEET SONG, by Jonathan Stagge

THRILLING MYSTERY NOVEL MAGAZINE published every other month by Standard Magazines, Inc., at 10 East 40th St., New York 16, N. Y. Subscription (12 issues), 1.80; single copies, \$.15. Foreign and Canadian postage extra. Entered as second-class matter July 12, 1935; reentered September 13, 1945, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879. Copyright, 1947, by Standard Magazines, Inc. Manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by self-addressed, stamped envelope, and are submitted at the author's risk. Names of all characters used in stories and semi-fiction articles are fictitious. If the name of any living person or existing institution is used it is a coincidence. In corresponding with this publication please include your postal zone number, if any.

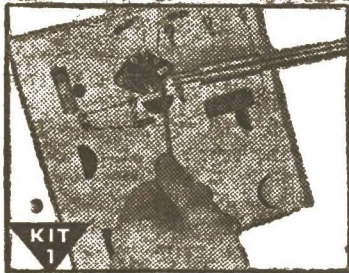
Read our companion magazines: Detective Novel Magazine, Thrilling Detective, Popular Detective, G-Men Detective, Black Book Detective, Thrilling Western, Thrilling Ranch Stories, Thrilling Wonder Stories, Thrilling Sports, Thrilling Love, Thrilling Football, Popular Western, Popular Love, Popular Sports Magazine, Popular Football, Texas Rangers, Sky Fighters, Everyday Astrology, West, Masked Rider Western, Range Riders Western, The Rio Kid Western, Popular Crossword Puzzles, Exciting Love, Startling Stories, Best Crossword Puzzles, Rodeo Romances, Exciting Sports and Exciting Westerns.

PRINTED IN THE U. S. A.

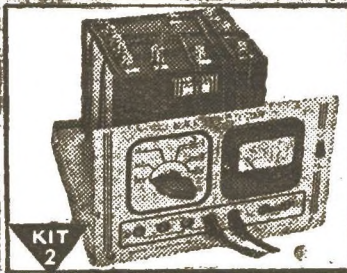


I Will Show You How to Learn RADIO by Practicing in Spare Time

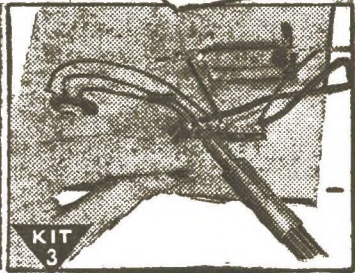
**I Send You
Big Kits
of Radio Parts**



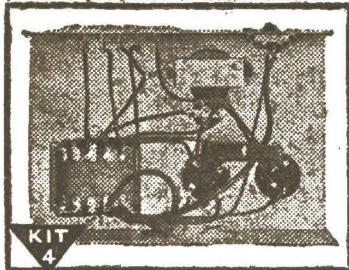
KIT 1
I send you Soldering Equipment and Radio Parts; show you how to do Radio soldering; how to mount and connect Radio parts; give you practical experience.



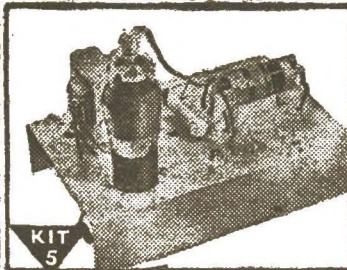
KIT 2
Early in my course I show you how to build this N.R.I. Tester with parts I send. It soon helps you fix neighborhood Radios and earn EXTRA money in spare time.



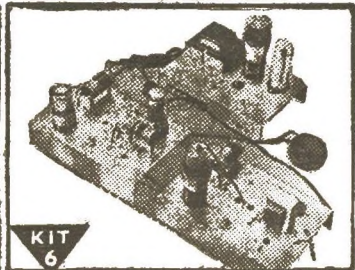
KIT 3
You get parts to build Radio Circuits; then test them; see how they work; learn how to design special circuits; how to locate and repair, circuit defects.



KIT 4
You get parts to build this Vacuum Tube Power Pack; make changes which give you experience with packs of many kinds; learn to correct power pack troubles.



KIT 5
Building this A. M. Signal Generator gives you more valuable experience. It provides amplitude-modulated signals for many tests and experiments.



KIT 6
You build this Supheterodyne Receiver which brings in local and distant stations—and gives you more experience to help you win success in Radio.

KNOW RADIO - Win Success I Will Train You at Home - SAMPLE LESSON FREE

APPROVED
for training
under
G. I. BILL

Do you want a good-pay job in the fast-growing Radio Industry—or your own Radio Shop? Mail the Coupon for a Sample Lesson and my 64-page book, "How to Be a Success in RADIO—Television, Electronics," both FREE. See how I will train you at home—how you get practical Radio experience building, testing Radio circuits with **BIG KITS OF PARTS** I send!

Many Beginners Soon Make Extra Money in Spare Time While Learning

The day you enroll I start sending **EXTRA MONEY JOB SHEETS** that show how to make **EXTRA** money fixing neighbors' Radios in spare time

**My Course Includes Training in
TELEVISION • ELECTRONICS
Frequency Modulation**

while still learning! It's probably easier to get started now than ever before, because the Radio Repair Business is booming. Trained Radio Technicians also find profitable opportunities in Police, Aviation, Marine Radio, Broadcasting, Radio Manufacturing, Public Address work. Think of even greater opportunities as Television, FM, and Electronic devices become available to the public! Send for **FREE** books now!

Find Out What NRI Can Do For You

Mail Coupon for Sample Lesson and my **FREE** 64-page book. Read the details about my Course; letters from men I trained; see how quickly, easily you can get started. No obligation! Just **MAIL COUPON NOW** in envelope or paste on penny postal. **J. E. SMITH, President, Dept. 7C09, National Radio Institute, Pioneer Home Study Radio School, Washington 9, D. C.**

Approved for Training under GI Bill

Good for Both - FREE

MR. J. E. SMITH, President, Dept. 7C09
National Radio Institute, Washington 9, D. C.
Mail me **FREE**, your sample lesson and 64-
page book. (No salesman will call. Please
write plainly.)

Name.....Age.....
Address.....
City.....Zone.....State.....

GETTING ACQUAINTED WITH
RECEIVER SERVICING

How to Be a
Success
in RADIO
TELEVISION
ELECTRONICS



The LINE-UP



A DEPARTMENT WHERE READERS
AND THE EDITOR MEET

A WIDOWER with a twelve-year-old daughter must get used to strange chants in and about the household. If it isn't "Three Little Fishies" or the "Hut-Sut Song" or "Mairsie Doats", it's "Cement Mixer" or some as yet unpublished silly ditty from Tin Pan Alley purlieus.

So Doctor Hugh Westlake, general practitioner and coroner of the little western New England community of Kenmore, was accustomed to the treble pipings of his intermittently precocious daughter, Dawn.

An Old English Ballad

But when, to allow the youngster to recover fully from a mastoid operation, Dr. Westlake took her with him to nearby Skipton, little Dawn came up with a new vocal terror, this one an old English ballad or dirge. It went:

*Two, two, the lily-white boys,
Clothed all in green-O,
One is one,
And all alone,
And ever more shall be-O!*

There were many verses, ranging from numbers twelve to the "one all alone"—and there was a gruesome undertone to the whole song. Dr. Westlake pleaded with his daughter to sing something else, but avoiding the macabre and ancient verses was like ducking cornflakes in a Hollywood snowstorm. It couldn't be done.

It cropped up at the Saturday night picnic given by Lorie, daughter of Ernesta Bray, Skipton's acknowledged hostess supreme. On this occasion Mrs. Bray, a millionaire widow who had moved to Skipton to be near her sister, Mrs. Phoebe Stone, was in New York, but she left orders that the picnic be held anyway and even sent on caviar and champagne to give it impetus.

A couple of ten-year-old boys—twins in

fact—who went under the names of Billy and Bobby White, arrived with their aunt, Miss Love Drummond and took over the picnic. They pried into the food hampers, they wrestled with the grown-ups, they screamed and shouted naughty words.

So hideous was their behavior that Doctor Westlake suggested grimly that they should be hit on the head and thrown into the pond near the old sawmill where the party was picnicking. Only Dawn heard him say it, but she promptly fitted the threat into a verse of what had become her favorite song.

*Two, two, the horrid White boys,
Clothed all in green-O.
Hit them, hit them on the head,
And throw them in the pond-O!*

When the brats disappeared to swarm over the sawmill, everyone was relieved, and Lorie Bray was asked to sing. Of course, she had to sing that song—which opened up an argument as to whether it was an early Christian ballad or one of pre-Christian origin used by the Druids to accompany certain human-sacrificial rites. The Reverend Jessup stood up stoutly for the former, while she-novelist Avril Lane stated unequivocally that the song had known pagan birth.

The Gruesome Discovery

It was merely another argument in a party where many either blossomed or lay dormant merely until those involved could find privacy to express their views. And when the White twins turned up missing after rain had broken up the affair, it was merely another aggravation on top of many.

Neither the behavior of the brats nor the ill-nature of the occasion prepared the way for Dr. Westlake's discovery of the two small bodies—hit over the head and thrown into

(Continued on page 8)





THE TOP MEN in Industrial Posts often are I. C. S. graduates

THE men holding the top industrial jobs didn't get there by wishful thinking. They had ambition and intelligence . . . and they applied them to obtaining essential *training*. Many enrolled with the International Correspondence Schools, famous for 55 years as a training system for industry and commerce.

When a committee of ranking U. S. scientists voted Modern Pioneer medals to the outstanding inventors of the past 25 years, 59 of the award winners

stated over their own signatures that they had studied I. C. S. technical courses.

Successful I. C. S. graduates are numbered by the thousands and they include presidents, production managers, chief engineers, head chemists of some of the greatest airplane, railroad, steel, chemical and electric companies in the nation.

You have ambition and intelligence. I. C. S. has the training you need to get to the top. Mail the coupon today.

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS



BOX 3968-H, SCRANTON 9, PENNA.

Without cost or obligation, please send me full particulars about the course before which I have marked X;

- | | | | |
|---|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Air Conditioning and Plumbing Courses | <input type="checkbox"/> Structural Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Textile Courses |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Heating <input type="checkbox"/> Plumbing | <input type="checkbox"/> Surveying and Mapping | <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial Metallurgy | <input type="checkbox"/> Cotton Manufacturing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Refrigeration <input type="checkbox"/> Steam Fitting | Communications Courses | <input type="checkbox"/> Machine Shop | <input type="checkbox"/> Rayon Weaving |
| Chemistry Courses | <input type="checkbox"/> Electronics | <input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical Drafting | <input type="checkbox"/> Textile Designing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chemical Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Radio, General | <input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Woolen Manufacturing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chemistry, Analytical | <input type="checkbox"/> Radio Operations | <input type="checkbox"/> Mold-Lost Work | Business and Academic Courses |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chemistry, Industrial | <input type="checkbox"/> Radio Servicing | <input type="checkbox"/> Patternmaking—Wood, Metal | <input type="checkbox"/> Accounting <input type="checkbox"/> Advertising |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chemistry, Mfg. Iron & Steel | <input type="checkbox"/> Telegraph Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Reading Shop Blueprints | <input type="checkbox"/> Arithmetic <input type="checkbox"/> Bookkeeping |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Petroleum Refining <input type="checkbox"/> Plastic | Electrical Courses | <input type="checkbox"/> Sheet-Metal Drafting | <input type="checkbox"/> Business Correspondence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pulp and Paper Making | <input type="checkbox"/> Electrical Drafting | <input type="checkbox"/> Sheet-Metal Worker | <input type="checkbox"/> Business Management |
| Civil Engineering, Architectural and Mining Courses | <input type="checkbox"/> Electrical Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Ship Drafting <input type="checkbox"/> Ship Fitting | <input type="checkbox"/> Certified Public Accounting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architectural Drafting | <input type="checkbox"/> Electric Light and Power | <input type="checkbox"/> Tool Designing | <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Lighting Technician | <input type="checkbox"/> Toolmaking | <input type="checkbox"/> Cost Accounting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bridge and Building Foreman | <input type="checkbox"/> Practical Electrician | <input type="checkbox"/> Welding—Gas and Electric | <input type="checkbox"/> Federal Tax |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Building Estimating | Internal Combustion Engines Courses | Railroad Courses | <input type="checkbox"/> First Year College |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Civil Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Auto Technician <input type="checkbox"/> Aviation | <input type="checkbox"/> Air Brake <input type="checkbox"/> Car Inspector | <input type="checkbox"/> Foremanhip <input type="checkbox"/> French |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Coal Mining | <input type="checkbox"/> Diesel Electric | <input type="checkbox"/> Diesel Locomotive | <input type="checkbox"/> Good English <input type="checkbox"/> High School |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Coal Refining | <input type="checkbox"/> Diesel Engine <input type="checkbox"/> Gas Engines | <input type="checkbox"/> Locomotive Engineer | <input type="checkbox"/> Higher Mathematics |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Contracting and Building | Mechanical Courses | <input type="checkbox"/> Locomotive Fireman | <input type="checkbox"/> Illustrating <input type="checkbox"/> Motor Traffic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Highway Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Aeronautical Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Railroad Section Foreman | <input type="checkbox"/> Postal Service |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lumber Dealer | <input type="checkbox"/> Aircraft Drafting | Steam Engineering Courses | <input type="checkbox"/> Salesmanship <input type="checkbox"/> Secretarial |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reading Structural Blueprints | <input type="checkbox"/> Flight Engineer | <input type="checkbox"/> Boilermaking | <input type="checkbox"/> Sign Lettering |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sanitary Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Foundry Work | <input type="checkbox"/> Combustion Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Spanish <input type="checkbox"/> Stenography |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Structural Drafting | <input type="checkbox"/> Heat Treatment of Metals | <input type="checkbox"/> Engine Running | <input type="checkbox"/> Steam Engines |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> Engine Running | |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> Marine Engineering | |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> Steam Electric <input type="checkbox"/> Steam Engines | |

Name _____ Age _____ Home Address _____

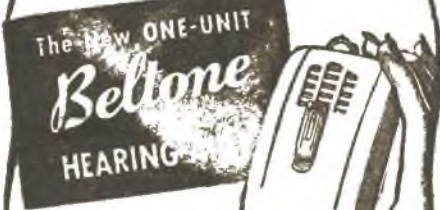
City _____ State _____ Present Position _____

Working Hours _____ A. M. to _____ P. M. Length of Service in World War II _____

Special tuition rates to members of the Armed Forces. Enrollment under the G. I. Bill of Rights approved for War II Veterans.

Canadian residents send coupon to International Correspondence Schools Canadian, Ltd., Montreal, Canada.

**NOW! The ONE-UNIT
HEARING AID**
Thousands Have Waited for



THIS IS ALL YOU WEAR →

**No Separate Battery Pack
No Dangling Battery Cords**

The tiny new BELTONE Mono-Pac is about 1/2 size and weight of old-style hearing aids, yet so powerful you hear even *whispers!* Get helpful facts about this new "MIRACLE" aid in valuable **FREE** book about deafness.



BELTONE HEARING AID CO.
1450 W. 19th St., Dept. TG-73, Chicago 6, Ill.

FREE BOOKLET

Beltone Hearing Aid Co.
Dept. TG-73, 1450 W. 19th St., Chicago 6, Ill.
Please send me **FREE** booklet about deafness and what can be done to overcome it.

Name _____
Address _____
Town _____ State _____

DETECTIVES

TRAINING SECRET INVESTIGATIONS—FINGER PRINTS
Easy Method—Short Time, Home—Travel—Secret Code—Bookings
FREE—WRITE, INTERNATIONAL DETECTIVE SYSTEM, 1701-T
Monroe St., N. E., Washington, D. C. 18.



POCKET ADDING MACHINE

Sturdy steel construction for lifetime use. Adds, subtracts, aids multiplication. Capacity 999,999.99. A real machine—guaranteed 5 years. Thousands of satisfied users. Send name and address. We ship immediately. On delivery, **postman \$2.50** (plus C.O.D. and postage charges). If you send \$2.50 with order, we pay postage. Leatherette case 25c additional. Your money back after 10 days' trial if not satisfied.

\$250
Free Trial

TAVELLA SALES CO., 10 West Broadway, New York 7, N. Y.

LAW...

STUDY AT HOME Legally trained men win higher positions and bigger success in business and public life. Greater opportunities now than ever before.
More Ability: More Prestige: More Money We guide you one train at home during spare time. Degree of I.L.L.E. We furnish all text material, including 14-volume Law Library. Low cost, easy terms. Get our valuable 48-page "Law Training for Leadership" and "Evidence" books, **FREE**. Send **NOW**, G. I. APPROVED.
LASALLE EXTENSION UNIVERSITY, 417 South Dearborn Street
A Correspondence Institution Dept. 3329-L Chicago 6, Ill.

THE LINE-UP

(Continued from page 6)

the millpond to drown. The finding of the little boys, dead in their green playsuits, is the opening shock of many in—

DEATH'S OLD SWEET SONG
By JONATHAN STAGGE

This brilliant tale, most recent in a famous modern series of mystery novels, is, in complete form, just as formerly published by The Crime Club at \$2.00 per copy, the featured thriller in the next issue of **THRILLING MYSTERY NOVEL**. It is in every way a fitting successor to its best-selling predecessors, which include **DEATH, MY DARLING DAUGHTERS—THE YELLOW TAXI—THE STARS SPELL DEATH** and many other Dr. Westlake novels.

For the cycle of murder did not end with the discovery of the two small bodies in the millpond. Despite the frantic endeavors of Westlake and his astute and very good friend, Inspector Cobb, others were yet to die—and each according to the eerie regulations of some stanza of the old song.

As the facts became known, this dirge of human sacrifice regained the horror it must long ago have held for superstitious Britons over whom the Druidic priests held power of life and death. The very methods of murder thus made discovery of the human motives that caused it almost impossible to trace.

Yet, ultimately, Cobb and Westlake, with an invaluable assist from little Dawn, were able to dig out the identity of the shrewd killer before he had run his entire course of crime—in a climax as wrapped with tension as any that has appeared in book form over the year just past.

DEATH'S OLD SWEET SONG is a knockout in every sense of the word. It is, in short, a story no true mystery fan will want to miss. Nor will any such reader want to miss the thrilling short stories that accompany it.

FROM THE REVIEWS

YOU needn't take only our word that **DEATH'S OLD SWEET SONG** is a knockout. Like other Jonathan Stage opera, the latest work by this talented author received critical comment to back us up. For instance:

"Mr. Stagge gives us his usual well-drawn characters and tight plot, with enough complications to please every taste. . . ."—*New York Post*
"Deserves the skull (for humor and homicide) and the exclamation point (for something new). . . ."—*Syracuse Post Standard*
"A elegant job. . . ."—*Omaha World Herald*

(Continued on page 10)

Three months after taking your course I STARTED TO PLAY FOR DANCES



**"Before I took it I didn't
know a note of music"**

says Miss Rosie Montemurro of Vancouver, B. C., Canada



Read Miss Montemurro's Letter:

"Words cannot express my feelings to the U. S. School of Music. Before I took your Course I didn't know one note of music. Then three months later I started to play for dances. I have been invited to many parties and made people very happy with my music. They enjoy my playing so much. I never saw anything like this Course before. It has a clear and careful explanation in every lesson. It's easy and very interesting.

"I am happy and proud of this beautiful Course."

Truly yours,
Miss Rosie Montemurro

You too, can learn your favorite instrument quickly, this money-saving way

THE letter above is typical of the many we have received from the more than 850,000 people who have taken our courses . . . expressing appreciation for the way we have helped make their musical dreams come true.

Yes, literally thousands of people, who didn't know one note from another before, are now playing their favorite instruments . . . thanks to this amazingly simple way to learn music right at home, in spare time, for as little as 7c a day.

Here's why the famous U. S. School

of Music "Print and Picture" method of instruction is so successful. . . . You learn to play by playing . . . and you have loads of fun doing it. No long-winded, difficult explanations . . . no tiresome exercises . . . no trick numbers or "Play-by-ear methods." You learn to play real tunes by actual notes from the very beginning.

And it's all so clear . . . so easy to understand. First the simple printed instructions tell you how to do something. Then a picture shows you how to do it. Then you do it yourself and hear how it sounds. You just can't go wrong!

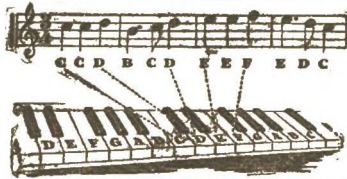
If you want to play, mail the coupon below asking for our FREE "Print and Picture" Sample and Illustrated Booklet. Check off the instrument you wish to play. But don't wait . . . act today. U. S. School of Music, 2943 Brunswick Bldg., New York 10, N. Y.

NOTICE

Please don't confuse our method with any systems claiming to teach "without music" or "by ear." We teach you easily and quickly to play real music, any music by standard notes . . . not by any trick or number system.

See how easy it is!

"My country 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty"



Look at the diagram. The first note on the music is "C." Follow the dotted line to the keyboard and locate "C" on the piano. Find the other notes the same way. Now strike the notes as indicated and you'll be playing the melody of that famous patriotic hymn, "America." Easy as A-B-C, isn't it!

FREE! Print and Picture Sample

U. S. School of Music, 2943 Brunswick Bldg., New York 10, N. Y. I am interested in music study, particularly in the instrument checked below. Please send me your free illustrated booklet. "How to Learn Music at Home," and Free Print and Picture Sample.

Piano	Saxophone	Flute	Clarinet
Guitar	Trumpet, Cornet	Piccolo	Mandolin
Hawaiian	Reed Organ	Modern	Practical
Guitar	Tenor Banjo	Elementary	Finger
Violin	Ukulele	Harmony	Control
Plane Accordion	Trombone		

Name _____ Have you _____
 (Please print) Instrument?
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____

NOTE: If under 16 years of age, parent must sign coupon.

SAVE 2c—STICK COUPON ON PENNY POSTCARD

YOU ARE UNDER ARREST!



There's a Thrill In Bringing a Crook to Justice Through Scientific **CRIME DETECTION**

I have taught thousands of men and women this exciting, profitable, pleasant profession. Let me teach you, too, in your own home. Prepare yourself in your leisure time to fill a responsible, steady, well-paid position in a very short time and at very small cost. What others have done, you, too, can do.

53% of All American Identification Bureaus

Be A
**FINGER
PRINT
Expert**

Employ students or graduates of I.A.S. This fascinating work is easy to learn and the training is inexpensive. You, too, can fit yourself to fill a responsible crime detection job with good pay and steady employment. But don't delay—get the details now. Let me show you how easily and completely I can prepare you for this fascinating work, during spare time, in your own home. You may pay as you learn. Write today for free Crime Book.

FREE! "THE BLUE BOOK OF CRIME"

It's a thriller. Tells about some of the most interesting crimes ever perpetrated and how they were solved through the very methods taught by I.A.S. Send now—be sure to state age.

INSTITUTE OF APPLIED SCIENCE
Dept. 7963 1920 Sunnyside Ave., Chicago 40, Illinois

PICTURE RING \$1.



Exclusive Picture Ring—made from any photo.
SEND NO MONEY! Mail photo with paper strip for ring size. Pay postman only \$1 plus postage. Hand tinted 2c extra. Photo returned with ring. Money back guaranteed. **SEND PHOTO AND RING NOW!**
PICTURE RING CO. Dept. H-26 CINCINNATI 2, Ohio

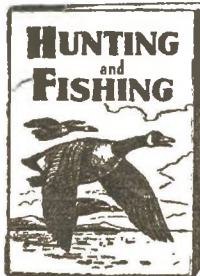
Made from
Any Photo
or Picture
**SEND NO
MONEY!**

**PLAY GUITAR
LIKE THE
COWBOYS
DO... A LESSON**

Just out—very latest guaranteed, simple, easy method. Play cowboy songs the Western way in a few minutes by ear. Surprise and amaze your friends. Be in big demand at parties, dances, public order-standards, on the radio, etc. 12 Complete Lessons.

SEND NO MONEY. Pay postman only \$1.00 plus postage and U.S.D. charges, or send \$1.00 and set EXTRA SONGS all postpaid. (Cash, \$1.25 money order only.) Nothing else to buy. Positive money back guarantee. Rush order today.

WESTERN RANGER STUDIOS, Dept. 479, Hutchinson, Kans.



HUNTING and FISHING

is a monthly magazine crammed full of hunting, fishing, camping, dog and boating stories and pictures, invaluable information about guns, fishing tackle, game law changes, best places to fish and hunt—countless ideas that will add more fun to your days afield.

Special Trial Offer
Send 25c in stamps or coin and we will send you Hunting & Fishing for six months.

**HUNTING & FISHING
MAGAZINE**
267 Sportman's Building
Boston Massachusetts

THE LINE-UP

(Continued from page 8)

"Gentle humor . . . Clever satire . . . Character and atmosphere are the keynotes of **DEATH'S OLD SWEET SONG**. . ."—*Chicago Daily Law Bulletin*

"A really good mystery. . ."—*Greensboro News*

Which amounts to a pretty convincing clincher in any mystery-story fan's rating box!

LETTERS FROM READERS

NOW, with next issue attended to, let us turn to the mail bag for perusal of the most interesting of the hundreds of letters received and such comment upon them as space permits.

When you have the privilege of running a story as excellent as Helen McCloy's **CLUE FOR MURDER**, which we printed in our November, 1946, issue, it is, of course, difficult to find criticism worthy of reproduction. **CLUE** was one of the best novels this magazine—which has the pick of the field to cull its leads from—has ever run.

So, pardon us for showing a pat on the back, coming from Miss Eleanor Roache of Chicago. Says Miss Roache:

I am a radio actress who has had considerable dramatic experience in stock as well as before the microphone, and when I picked up the issue of **THRILLING MYSTERY NOVEL** containing Helen McCloy's **CLUE FOR MURDER** I was prepared to scoff at its representation of backstage life.

To my pleased surprise, however, I found myself engrossed in as vivid and real a written picture of actors, directors and stagehands at work as I have ever found. I could almost smell the paint of the scenery and feel the tension that always grips the behind-the-curtain section of a theatre before the curtain goes up. To a girl condemned (for the time being, I hope) to do her acting in front of a microphone, it was a stirring experience.

Furthermore, I found it a baffling mystery, one whose motivation I found easily understandable once I was allowed by the author to understand it. Yet not until Miss McCloy chose to let me know did I have the slightest idea of the murderer's identity.

Congratulations to Miss McCloy and to **THRILLING MYSTERY NOVEL** for printing her unusually excellent story!

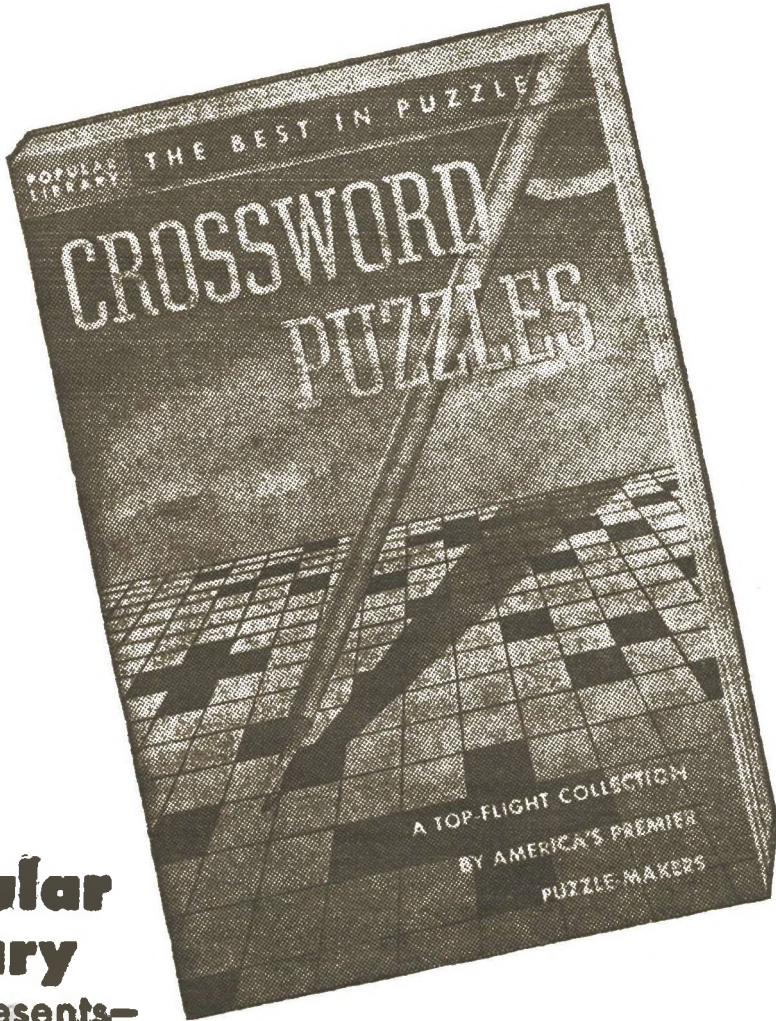
Gosh, we are almost embarrassed, but in a most pleasant manner. Frankly we thought **CLUE FOR MURDER** was a pretty swell story ourselves—else we should not have run it.

Now here is a letter from one H.B.S. of Dallas, Texas, who wishes that his name should not be revealed for obvious reasons. We respect his desire to hide his identity while printing an excerpt from his letter:

The most interesting part of **CLUE FOR MURDER** to me was the knowledge Miss McCloy revealed of diabetics and the ingenious use she made of this knowledge and understanding. The lure of the knife for the fruit fly was no more easily-read a clue for me (although I suffer from the disease) than it must have been for non-diabetics, thanks to the brilliant

(Concluded on page 95)

**Just Out! The Biggest Little Book of
Puzzle Entertainment!**



**popular
library**
now presents—

CROSSWORD PUZZLES

a pocket-size puzzler for both tyro and expert

It's new—smart—different—the very last word in puzzle books! Including 192 pages of crosswords, diagramless, progressive blocks, wordagrams, skippers, cryptography and other features in fascinating profusion! It's an enjoyable POPULAR LIBRARY special—produced for your pleasure by the editors of the famous POPULAR LIBRARY detective and western novels of proven merit! Like all POPULAR LIBRARY books, CROSSWORD PUZZLES is handy in size, pleasing in format, durable, tops in quality and value! This original collection has never previously appeared in book form. Now on sale, only 25c per copy!

Alin Overcame More Than One Handicap When . . .



ALIN WILSON IS WELL IN THE LEAD AS HE ENTERS THE LAST FIVE-MILE STRETCH OF THE FAMOUS SNOW-KING SWEEPSTAKES, WHEN . . .



I TWISTED MY ANKLE WHEN MY SNOW-SHOE BROKE

RACE OR NO RACE, I CAN'T LEAVE YOU HERE. I'LL DUMP MY PACK TO LIGHTEN THE LOAD



YAAAY WILSON WINS!

WHAT'S MY DAUGHTER DOING ON THAT SLED?



IT'S A SWELL STORY. ANY OTHER DETAILS?

YES. ADD THAT MR. WILSON WILL BE MY HOUSE GUEST WHILE IN TOWN. YOU WILL, WON'T YOU?



COME ON, WILSON. LET'S GET YOU CLEANED UP BEFORE THE TROPHY PRESENTATION

I CERTAINLY CAN STAND IT AFTER 14 HOURS ON THE TRAIL



SAY, THIS BLADE'S A WONDER! I NEVER KNEW SHAVING COULD BE SO QUICK AND EASY!

THAT'S A THIN GILLETTE AND IT'S SEEN PLENTY OF USE, TOO



I LIKE THAT YOUNG MAN. WONDER IF HE'D CARE TO WORK FOR ME?

OH, DAD, PLEASE ASK HIM!

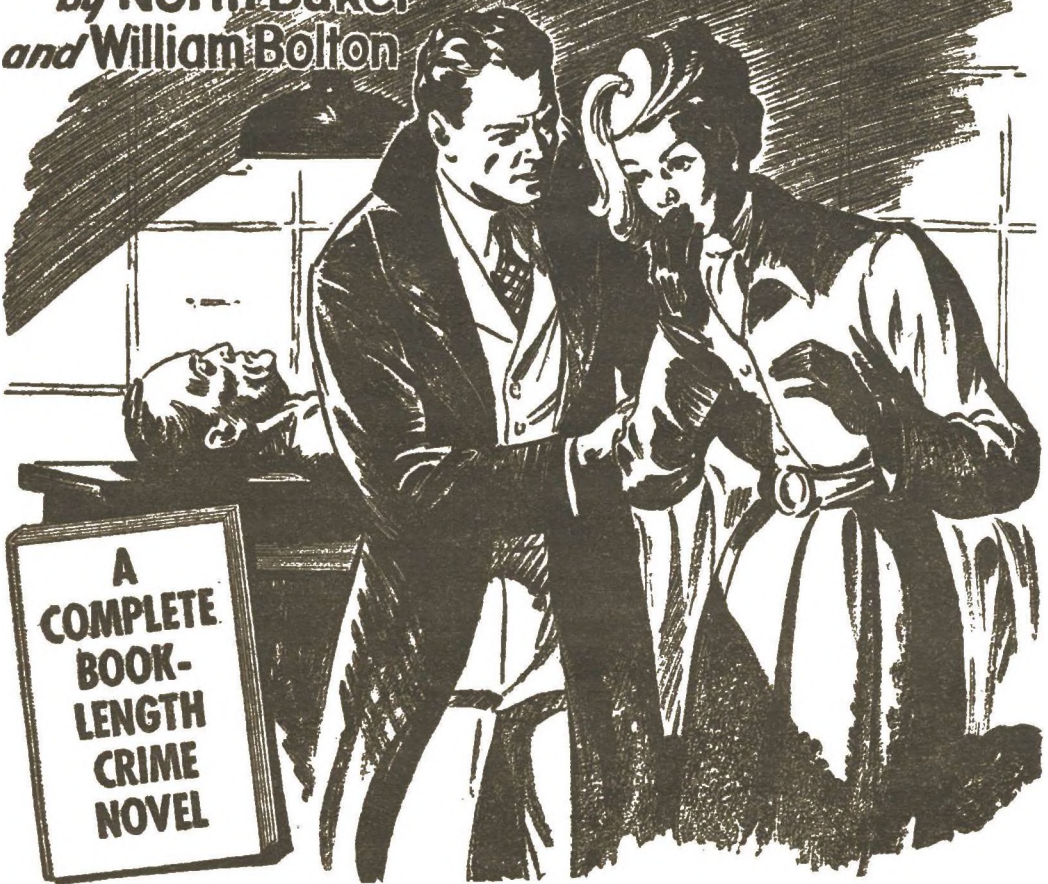
HE CERTAINLY LOOKS KEEN!

FOR GOOD-LOOKING SHAVES THAT PEP YOU UP PLENTY, USE THIN GILLETTES. MEN, THESE ARE THE KEENEST, LONGEST-LASTING, LOW-PRICE BLADES ON THE MARKET. AND, BECAUSE THEY FIT YOUR RAZOR PRECISELY, THEY PROTECT YOUR FACE FROM THE IRRITATION OF MISFIT BLADES. ALWAYS ASK FOR THIN GILLETTES

4 for 10¢

DEAD TO THE WORLD

by North Baker
and William Bolton



Smooth-talking witnesses all but convinced interne Danny Michaels that the mystery corpse on the morgue slab was not Alfred Sutton, but the mute testimony of the dead man's dog told a different story!

CHAPTER I

December 16

SERGEANT PAUL C. MYERS, Homicide Detail, Chicago Police Department, lumbered gloomily into the high-ceilinged, barren reception room in the County Morgue.

Two years he'd been on this job; two years of hopeless pondering over mute rows of human question marks, unnamed, unknown, unidentified, unwanted. Two years of looking for answers to all the tough, dirty questions a big city could spew up at you. Two years! God in heaven!

A Brilliant Young Medical Student Proves

Christmas was just nine days away. That cheerful fact only served to kindle his exasperation. For ten years he'd played Santa Claus at the Police Orphans' Annual Christmas Party. But not this year.

Of course the chief had stated the case as tactfully as possible. "We decided, Myers, as long as you boys at the morgue'll be in the midst of your Christmas rush, we'd ask McWalters to take over this year." The chief's delicacy hadn't deceived Sergeant Myers. It was this reeking perfume of the morgue—formaldehyde and lye—clinging, penetrating, nauseating. A Santa Claus that reeked of the morgue hardly fitted any pre-arranged notion of the jolly old gentleman. Yet as Christmas drew near nostalgia was strong upon the sergeant—the memory of the jovial chuckle, the booming voice, the padded stomach, the gluey mustiness of the false whiskers, and the vision of eager, upturned faces.

Charlie Hankenmeier, the night morgue attendant, sat behind the wide reception desk, blinking like a heavy-lidded owl. Despite a thin, flaccid face and a bald, dome-shaped head fringed by scraggly white hair, Charlie looked painfully like one of Santa Claus's helpers. "Sergeant Myers, I presume," Charlie said affably. "And what's the news of the outside world?"

Charlie could afford to be affable. He hadn't a care in the world. He got his pay regularly and he had no one to prod him on. Sitting behind this wide-topped desk, he could pretend he was a bank president if he savored a brief and pungent taste of affluence, or he could drowse placidly during the quiet night hours. Unlike the sergeant, he could never be thwarted because there was nothing he particularly wanted.

The sergeant was in no mood for pleasantries. In addition to all his other dark thoughts, the big yellow-faced clock over Charlie's shining head pointed to six. That meant Mrs. Sergeant Myers was impatiently awaiting her spouse in their Indian-blanket-littered apartment, set for dinner at Paul's Café and the new Dotty Lamour picture at the Sterling. The gay Christmas crowds would be thronging the streets, crowding the restaurants, jamming the theaters. Even the Salvation Army Santa Clauses frantically clanging their bells would serve only as a reproachful reminder.

Myers found himself dreading the gay evening that faced him almost as much as the routine inspection he must go through in the morgue room downstairs. Right now he could

go for a quiet evening at home with a fresh cigar and his fur-lined slippers, but the old lady always said: "You don't know what it is to be cooped up in an apartment all day." She could say that again! He certainly didn't—but he could dream.

He exchanged a couple of pleasantries with Charlie and then swung through the wide, battered door at the rear of the room and plummeted down the narrow iron stairs into the cold, damp, tomblike storage rooms. His large lace-up shoes with their well-rounded toes crashed against the silence with the report of cannons.

He paused in the doorway of the identification room, hitched up his sagging trousers as though to hitch up his morale, and his big paw swiped at the light switch, flooding the bare white room with naked, blinding light. Then he sighed.

Every last marble-topped table—every single one—had a lumpy form beneath the stiffly white laundered sheeting. The sergeant sighed.

Eighteen tables, and each one of them taken. Christmas! Only nine more days till Christmas. Do Your Shopping Early.

He took off the soiled brown felt hat that fit tightly over his round grooved forehead. The room was so full of death that he had to put it back on his head again.

The sergeant groaned; his bearlike shoulders slouched beneath the rumpled blue serge suit, and he eased a finger between his thick neck and a wilted collar. Might as well get on with it

Despite a figure that had all the ungainliness of a waltzing bear, the sergeant could go through this routine in his sleep. There wasn't much to do—just read the tags with all data and information inscribed. Take notes, then follow up clues—laundry tags, store tags, a letter; dope you might find on a grimy scrap of paper in a ragged pocket. After the investigation came the notification of nearest of kin—the ordeal of identification. Some of these babies got in the way of a razor or a speeding car; they weren't too hot to look at. The sergeant had become deft, too, at catching people as they fainted.

HE PROGRESSED along the easterly row of marble slabs, his gorge sometimes rising at the things he saw. This was one hell of a job for a grown man. In one step you left the normal, teeming, noisy world of the living, with its wild riots of smells and colors and sounds and sights. You entered the great brotherhood of the marble slab, death-

Science Can Unlock the Doors of Mystery!

ly white, colorless, silent. The great lodge room, with its solitary sickening incense of embalming fluid, the acrid smell of death. Sometime, maybe, he'd win a bank night. Then he'd tell the chef where he could put his damned old morgue. He'd line himself up a dozen pairs of fur-lined slippers and a gross of Havanas, and he'd never stand on his feet again. Yeah, and he'd tell the old lady where she could put her damned moving pictures too.

His silent reverie was shattered abruptly.

Suddenly he heard the clatter of footsteps on the iron stairway at the end of the hall



DANNY MICHAELS

which led down to this room. The sudden chaos, breaking into the tumult of quiet to which his ears had become accustomed, gave him a sharp, unpleasant jolt in the back of the neck that left the ends of his shaggy brown hair tingling. He heard rubber heels squishing along the ever-moist cement corridor floor, and then his big limp mouth formed into its first real grin for the day.

Outlined against the dark hallway stood Daniel Michaels, M.D., student of the sciences and senior intern at County Hospital.

"Danny!"

"Greetings, Sarge. How's tricks?"

"We're playing to capacity, Danny."

Something about the impudent Irish smile that spread over the young face dissolved all

the weary annoyance in the sergeant. He liked Danny, who was small, wiry, and trim, as bouncy as a terrier. As smart and handsome as a good Irish brogue! There was something easy and comfortable about him, like the smoke from a good cigar. That's all the recommendation the sergeant needed.

"So what in hell are you doing down here on a night like this?" The sergeant's voice was so good-natured it embarrassed him. He was sounding like the middle of his old Santa Claus act, so he gruffly added: "For Chrisesakes!" This, he felt, reinstated him as tough and realistic.

Danny's sandy red-brown eyes almost squinted shut against his smooth tan face. His slender hand shoved back the dapper brown Homburg, exposing a shock of thick, closely cropped hair the color of his eyes.

"Just thought I'd drop in and wish you and your old lady a good Christmas, Sarge. And to tell you I just heard about McWalters, and he'll make a hell of a Santa Claus. When the kids come up to him he'll turn a strong light in their eyes and crack 'em over the head with a rubber hose to make them talk. No sir, the chief's making a big mistake."

The sergeant's big shoulders shrugged. Here was a real judge of ability, this Danny. A real judge of character. McWalters, Santa Claus? Pooh!

The sergeant caught himself. "And also," he grumbled, "you thought you'd drop in for a free peep show at the Beauties of the City. Well, there's nothing for you, kid. It's all old and tired."

Danny clicked his tongue against his cheek and grinned. "If it's good enough for you, it's good enough for me."

The big head shook ruefully. "Only nine days to Christmas, and a young kid like you comes down to a dive like this. Haven't you any family, Danny?"

The face sobered only for an instant. "Nope."

"No girl friend?"

The grin returned. "You're my only love life, Sarge."

"Me and medicine."

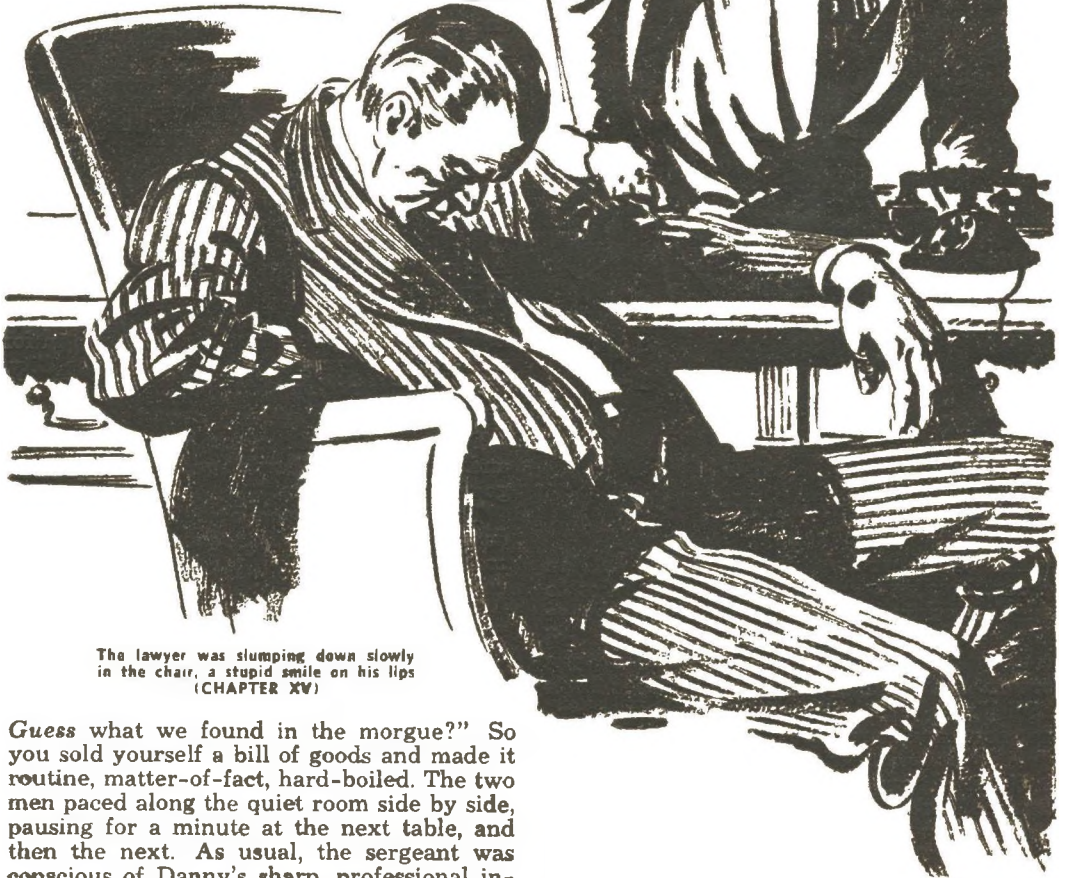
"Yah. A couple of stern mistresses."

The sergeant grunted. Danny could kid all he wanted, but you couldn't make him gripe. Nope, Danny had no family, nor a girl. It took sacrifices to complete medical studies, even with that high-sounding scholarship Danny had won. Now he wasn't missing a trick. Even in the morgue he got experience to widen his understanding. The sergeant ad-

mired that too; the kid had guts and persistence beneath the cocksure bravado.

The old man lumbered to the next marble slab and carelessly tossed the white sheeting away from a youthful adolescent figure. Mechanically he glanced at the glass-covered information tab. A young kid; took too much sleeping powder in a cheap downtown hotel. Left a bitter note, unsigned, unaddressed. Wearing good clothes from a fashionable Michigan Avenue tailor. That'd be the tracer. Routine. The sergeant's loose-lipped mouth framed the words. He jotted down a few notes in a rumpled notebook for action tomorrow morning. Already he could picture the two anxious parents who'd come down in answer to his summons. He could visualize the background, too; some meaningless misunderstanding, then an argument, hurt feelings, and an adolescent, hysterical desire to hurt.

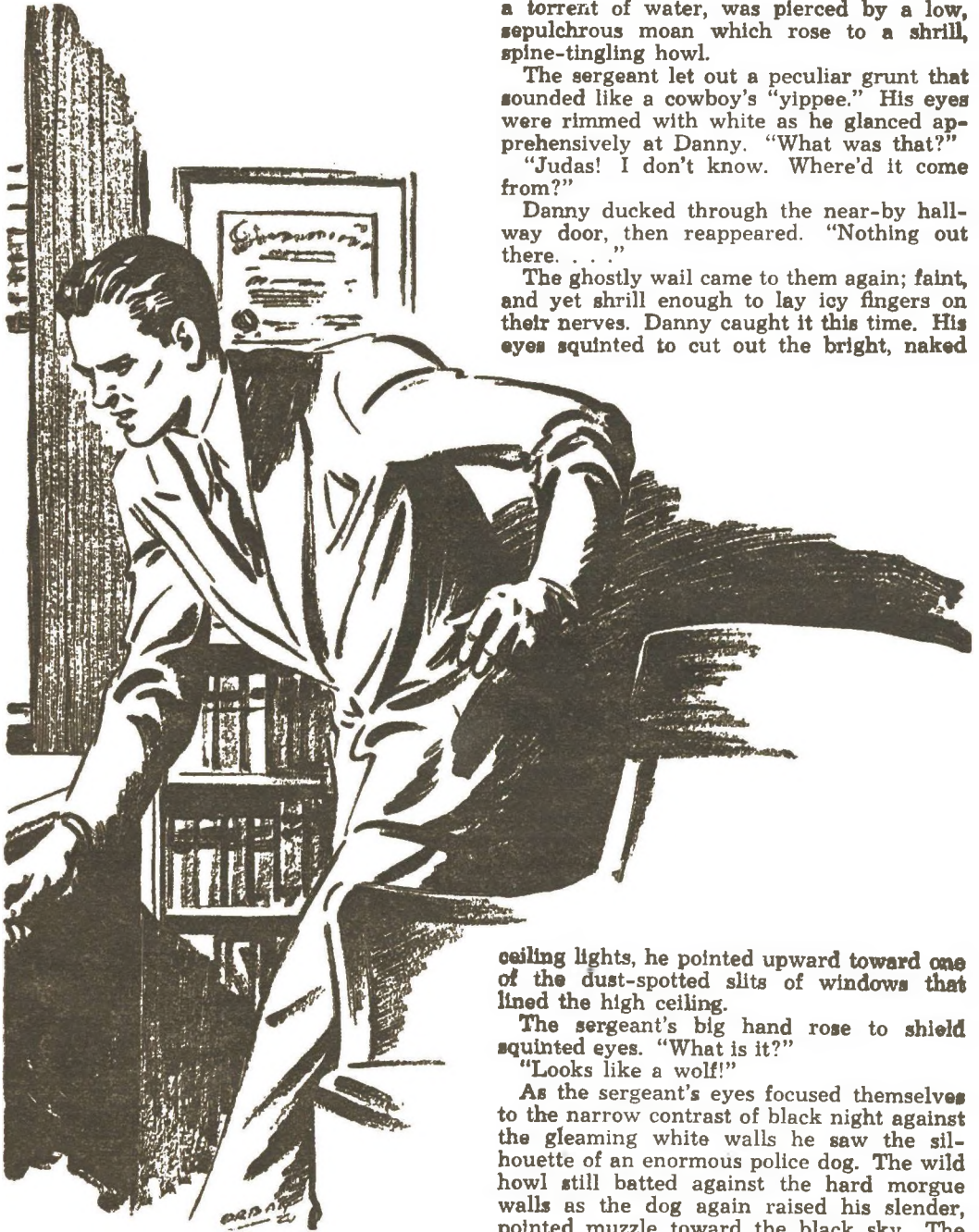
Routine, hell! But it helped to tell yourself so. You couldn't say: "Merry Christmas!



The lawyer was slumping down slowly in the chair, a stupid smile on his lips
(CHAPTER XV)

Guess what we found in the morgue?" So you sold yourself a bill of goods and made it routine, matter-of-fact, hard-boiled. The two men paced along the quiet room side by side, pausing for a minute at the next table, and then the next. As usual, the sergeant was conscious of Danny's sharp, professional interests in each case. He could almost feel it, like an electric current; it was high-voltage stuff.

WHEN they came to the last slab the sergeant carelessly tossed back the white sheeting. It billowed down in stiff folds,



a torrent of water, was pierced by a low, sepulchrous moan which rose to a shrill, spine-tingling howl.

The sergeant let out a peculiar grunt that sounded like a cowboy's "yippee." His eyes were rimmed with white as he glanced apprehensively at Danny. "What was that?" "Judas! I don't know. Where'd it come from?"

Danny ducked through the near-by hallway door, then reappeared. "Nothing out there. . . ."

The ghostly wail came to them again; faint, and yet shrill enough to lay icy fingers on their nerves. Danny caught it this time. His eyes squinted to cut out the bright, naked

ceiling lights, he pointed upward toward one of the dust-spotted slits of windows that lined the high ceiling.

The sergeant's big hand rose to shield squinted eyes. "What is it?"

"Looks like a wolf!"

As the sergeant's eyes focused themselves to the narrow contrast of black night against the gleaming white walls he saw the silhouette of an enormous police dog. The wild howl still batted against the hard morgue walls as the dog again raised his slender, pointed muzzle toward the black sky. The noise faded as the animal's head lowered.

"So now we got sound effects," muttered the sergeant.

Danny grimaced. "The coroner sure knocks himself out to keep us boys entertained."

"Damnedest hole in the world," the sergeant said a little too matter-of-factly as he returned to the report in his hand. "I always

covering the face and left shoulder of the corpse before them. The sergeant stifled a weary cough and picked up the usual identification tag. As usual, Danny glanced at it over his shoulder.

They were just starting to read when the silence, which was roaring in their ears like

thought the old man looked like Boris Karloff."

Danny laughed a little too loudly. Then he moved next to the sergeant and again glanced down at the data tag. As the dog continued its somber wailing the sergeant read the words to himself, slowly forming each syllable with his lips. Danny's more facile eyes took in the notations more quickly:

"Joe Doe #847. Picked up at Dearborn and Lower Wacker. Five A.M. December 16." (That was this morning.) "Clothing: old, worn, soiled. Felt hat, wool-and-cotton union suit, brown trousers, gray wool shirt, cheap set of false teeth. No identification or laundry tags, letters, or identification effects. Cause of death: Contents of stomach reveal 30% grain alcohol, established cause." (This notation was initialed by the autopsist.) "Possessions on person: eighty-seven cents change; package of Old Virginia Ovals with two cigarettes. Wood matches."

The sergeant had only started reading when he realized Danny's eyes had left the tag and were taking in the long, spindly figure on the slab before them. Danny moved quietly to the side of the slab, lifted one of the narrow white hands and surveyed it. As the sergeant forced himself to read on Danny moved agilely to the foot of the slab and surveyed a long, narrow foot.

The sergeant looked up. "What's the matter with you?"

"There's something funny here."

"You don't see me laughing, do you?"

"Take a look, Sarge."

"Listen, kid. I don't want to go into no elaborate medical diagnosis. If Murphy says poison liquor, that's good enough for me."

"I don't mean the cause of death, Sarge. It's the description."

"Description?"

"Yah. All that information'd give the impression this was a bum, a hobo. And it isn't!"

Myers chuckled indulgently. "No? What is he—some eccentric millionaire? Maybe his doctor told him he needed a change. So he goes around among the poor with eighty-seven cents and a set of clothes you could buy in any hock shop for two bucks. He drinks two-bit rotgut for a new thrill."

"He may not be a millionaire, Sarge, but take my word for it; this guy is no inveterate bum."

The sergeant shook his head with friendly impatience. He had a lot of respect for Danny, but already he could hear the shrill police-siren tone in his old lady's voice.

Danny felt the sergeant's impatience and went on talking faster and faster, like a man running to catch a train before the gate

slammed shut.

"Look, Sarge, look at the feet! These blisters on the heels and across the toes show he wasn't used to a bum's cheap shoes. Look at the narrow heels—no calluses. This baby was accustomed to fine shoes. Look at the sunburn. Except for a strip around the middle, it covers his whole body. That means swimming and laying on the sand. And the hands; they're not hands that have done hard work. . . . Why, they've even been manicured not so long ago." Danny lifted the hand, and the sergeant pursed his lips. The kid was right. The cuticle had, at some recent time, been carefully indented, revealing well-cared-for crescent moons at the base. The skin on the hands was smooth, not coarsened or calloused by hard work, despite small scars on the finger tips.

"Yeah—but facts don't lie, kid." The sergeant indicated the sheets before him.

"Not if you start out with the right facts."

The sergeant glanced down again. Virginia Ovals cigarettes. That hadn't struck him as strange the time before. They were up in the two-bit class. Of course it was possible this bird, whoever he was, had found a half-used package in the gutter.

Danny quickly moved up to the head of the slab and tossed the sheeting away from a narrow, angular face. Even in death it was a stern face; cruel, sharp-featured. As the sergeant looked down at the deep, close-set eyes and prominent cheekbones he became conscious of the sudden rush of air rushing out from Danny's youthful lungs in a gasp of amazement. Myers looked up to see Danny staring down at the dead face, his own face strained and taut.

"Danny! What's the matter?"

The young man's lips opened faintly, and he gulped down a deep breath of the cold, dank air.

"I know who it is, Sarge!"

Myers asked quickly, "He some clinic patient of yours?"

DANNY'S head shook this time. He turned to the sergeant, and his voice came in amazed certainty. "That's Alfred Sutton!"

"Who?" The sarge's mind began to race. He shoved his hat back on his furrowed forehead and scratched noisily at the thick, colorless hair over his temples. The name sounded familiar. Alfred Sutton; now let's see . . .

"Alfred Sutton! You mean that big-shot criminal lawyer?"

Danny nodded, still staring down at the blank, silent face.

"Aw, nuts, Danny! Wait a minute. Sutton was up in the chips!"

"Yes. He was." Danny shrugged. "What

in hell could have happened to him?"

The sergeant ran a thick rough finger thoughtfully over his heavy lower lip. "When you come to think of it, I haven't heard nothing of Sutton for—well, it's been a hell of a long time. He used to crack first page as regular as clockwork." He shrugged. "He must of retired from the so-called legal profession; got himself rode out of town on a rail, or something."

"Yeah. He dropped out of sight, all right."

The sergeant glanced down at the identification tag, and his credulity twanged like a rubber band. His voice was more blatant. "Hell, Danny! You're wrong. Even so, a guy like Sutton'd have connections. He was one of the smart boys, that Sutton. He wouldn't end up on skid row like this lug."

Danny's lips were still set as firmly as the wrinkles across his forehead. "I'm not dreaming this up, Sarge. I don't know what happened to the old man, but I wouldn't forget that face. That's Alfred Sutton!"

The sergeant surveyed the thoughtful young face and decided his old lady was probably already so mad a few more minutes of waiting couldn't add anything to her already all-too-tragic mood. Might even be if he kept her waiting she'd get into one of those wild states of repressed hysteria where she couldn't even talk. That would be okay too. Anyway, he was curious. After two years of investigating the dead, he got a strangely flamboyant thrill out of the prospect of a true-life story. After all, the people he ran into down here were in no shape to talk.

"Well, how do you know, Danny?"

Danny turned away from the slab and from the sarge's curious eyes. "I used to know his daughter Marian."

"Yeah? How long ago?"

"About eight years."

The sarge snorted: "That's a long time to be sure about a face, Dan!"

"I'd never forget his. I stared at it hard enough one night to remember it for life." Danny looked back again at the dead face, remembering that night, while the sarge waited for Danny to go on. He did after a moment. "He always thought I was from the wrong side of the tracks. Well, maybe I was. The big blowup came one night—we'd been to a high-school dance, Marian and I. I got her home an hour after the dead line. He was waiting up for us with a black-snake whip. He lit into me like a ten ton bomb. He could really slit you open with an adjective. He gave me unsealed orders to get the hell out and stay out."

"Yah? And so . . . ?" the sergeant prodded.

"He told me I had no plans, no future, and nothing to offer. I'd talk a lot about go-

ing to medical school. Yet I hadn't done a thing about actually getting into what would be a long and tough career. Well, he was right. I hadn't," Danny said thoughtfully, "Maybe it was good for me. I'd been pretty strictly blarney, and it was he who made me realize it."

The sergeant's face rumped itself into an expansive smile. "Well, I'll be damned," he mused. "So then you decided to conquer the world and show up the old man!"

"Don't overdo it," Danny said modestly.

"Sort of ironic," the sergeant went on. "You're the guy who identifies the old man. Only now he's from the wrong side of the tracks and you're the one who's getting by okay."

Danny pulled the rustling white sheet up over the stiff face thoughtfully. "That's just it, Sarge. Sutton had everything. . . . I wonder what happened."

"The bigger they come . . ." The sergeant looked up at Danny. The kid was really taking it big, staring off into space with worry wrinkling his handsome forehead and puzzled concern in his gleaming eyes. "Anyway, it's too late to worry about that now, kid."

"I know. Only if Sutton ended up like this, then where's Marian and her mother? I don't care about him—it's his family I'm worrying about."

The room was silent. The sergeant could almost hear the mental wheels turning. When Danny spoke his voice had straightened itself out. "Look, Sarge. Would it be okay if I did a little checking tonight? I know you'll check in routine ways. But maybe I could help to break the blow; help make arrangements."

The sergeant considered thoughtfully. "But how'll you locate them, Danny?"

"You know Pete Aldrich? He's my roommate. He saw Marian at a dance a few months ago." The brow wrinkled puzzledly. "Funny—Pete didn't exactly say she was dressed in sackcloth and ashes!"

"But you may be wrong, Danny."

"But I'm not wrong, Sarge. I know it's him!"

The sergeant thought it over. After all, Danny was a good kid; reliable, serious, determined. And if the news had to be broken at all, Danny'd do it more considerably and carefully and gently than the department could afford to. Maybe he could help. Why not? The sergeant shrugged his consent. "Okay, Danny. Only take it easy. I'll stop by headquarters and get a check on Sutton on the way home." The sergeant grinned. "I'll call my old lady and tell her I'm on an important case. If I find anything I'll let you know. . . ."

CHAPTER II

December 16



AS LUCK would have it, Danny's roommate had written down Marian Sutton's telephone number on the back of a card. After five minutes of searching and some ten minutes of the usual Aldrich humor Danny was dialing the number. The prefix indicated that the

house was out in Evanston. That could either be good or it could be bad.

As he listened to the measured ringing of the phone bell he wondered just what sort of room was hearing the same jarring dissonance. He wondered, too, who would answer; if he'd recognize the voice. And Marian—what did she look like?

He remembered her now the last night he'd seen her, the night Sutton had abruptly lowered the boom. A round, vivacious face that looked like a stack of smiles. Everything about her smiled, even the graceful way she carried her small slender figure. When she laughed her head tossed back a little. That last night he'd seen her she had worn her hair in a page-boy bob, the soft color of honey in the sun. She'd been wearing a dress with a long green skirt, a straw-yellow blouse, and a deep red belt. That sounded like too many colors, maybe, but on Marian it had been just right. Each color picked up and complemented her natural coloring; the amber of her hair, the red of her small, pretty mouth, and the glittering blue-green of her eyes when she smiled.

"Hello?"

He didn't know what sort of greeting he'd expected, but the sweet, friendly voice nearly knocked him off the stool. Was it Marian? He couldn't be sure, and he mustn't take chances.

"Mr. Sutton, please?" His voice sounded strange to his own ears. He knew it was silly to be asking for a man who lay on a slab at the morgue, but he didn't know any other way to begin the conversation.

There was a long, startled silence accentuated by the sputtering of an incomplete connection between the miles of wire separating them.

Danny repeated his macabre request: "May I speak to Mr. Sutton?"

The friendly voice was cautious now. "Who's calling?"

He stretched his neck to relieve the tension of a collar which had suddenly become too tight. "This is a friend of Mr. Sutton's.

Is he there, please?"

Now the voice was hesitant. "No—he isn't."

"Can you tell me when you're expecting him?"

Another sputtering silence. "Won't you tell me who's calling, please?" The quality of the voice was changing. The words were being spoken guardedly, close into the transmitter. Danny now was certain that it was Marian, and he took the plunge.

"Is this Miss Sutton?"

"Yes."

"This is Danny Michaels, Marian. From Cochran Avenue."

"Oh, Danny!" Another pause, then the voice tried to be self-possessed as it asked carefully, "Why did you want to speak to my father?"

That's the sixty-four dollar question, Michaels, Danny told himself grimly. Now answer it correctly.

He tried. "It's hard to explain over the telephone, Marian. I thought perhaps you'd be in town tomorrow morning—perhaps you could meet me and I could explain then." He cleared his throat nervously. "It's something that—well, I may be completely wrong—maybe I'd better speak to your mother."

"No. No, Danny. If it's about my father I couldn't disturb her. She is not well. What is it, Danny?"

Danny was acutely conscious of being terribly clumsy. He could only evade. "I can't tell you like this over the phone."

"Well, then, isn't there some way I could meet you tonight?"

Danny thought he might as well get it over before the police brought the news.

"Well—yes."

"Where'll we meet?"

He gave her the address of the morgue. Obviously she didn't recognize it.

"About an hour, Danny?"

"Sure. You bet."

DANNY sat on the front steps of the morgue, puffing at his last cigarette and waiting for Marian. She'd be here any moment, full of anxiety his blundering call had caused.

He flicked the short stub of cigarette out into the dark street; it struck the pavement and sent out a cascade of orange sparks; the chill December wind off the lake swept the narrow line of smoke down the dark street. He was a damn fool, the way he'd handled the thing. He'd gone plunging ahead like a wild bull into the proverbial china shop. He had meant to be tactful—but hell, it was hard to be tactful about corpses.

There was a rustling noise suddenly from around the near-by corner of the building

near the hearse entrance. Probably something rattling around in the newspapers the wind always swept there—or was it only the wind? Danny walked to the corner; it was better than sitting here on the cold, damp steps.

As he faced the darkness of the narrow alley two yellow-green eyes flashed at him and he heard a deep growl. It was that damned howling dog again. Danny took a step forward and stopped. The growl grew more intense and the dog was advancing menacingly, his head lowered, his hackles



MARIAN

raised. Danny gulped but stood his ground. A few feet from Danny the dog stopped and glared intently.

Danny took a relieved breath. "Listen, pal," he said. "I've got better things to do with my time than stand here and outstare you. Nice dog." He extended a hand cautiously. "Come here, boy." The dog's ears flattened. Danny took a step forward, and the animal's black lips curled, showing a good set of sharp yellow teeth. Danny stopped in his tracks.

The wind that whined around the corner of the building was shrill, penetrating his clothing, and the cold was numbing. He turned and walked back to the main entrance of the morgue. He could hear the dog padding along behind, keeping at a distance.

He was just preparing to sit on the steps again as a green convertible coupe drew up before him, and he heard Marian's voice calling: "Hello, Danny!"

As Danny turned a streak of tan and black flashed by him quickly, rushing toward

the car. Danny called out sharply and ran too. The dog reached the car first and leaped, its front feet slashing at the door and its deep, throaty growls changing into a high, sharp whine.

"Get away! Down!" Danny ordered sharply as he reached the car. Behind the dog's large head he could see Marian's face, startled and scared. Then her expression changed and she leaned forward curiously. He heard her amazed voice. "Why—Hans!"

The dog's fawn-colored tail was swinging back and forth as the window lowered. Marian reached out a gloved hand; the dog's neck stretched far forward, the muzzle extended to reach her.

Puzzled, Danny warned her sharply: "Look out, Marian!" But she opened the door and the dog bounded in. He leaped at her face, licking it, knocking the little fur hat askew. He still whined in a high, shrill monotone. Marian fended off his moist caresses, talking to Danny and the dog alternately.

"Enough, Hans! Now—stop. Look at him, Danny; how excited he is to see me again! Where in the world did you find him? Down—Hans! And why didn't you tell me over the phone?"

Danny was having trouble figuring it out. It seems the hound belonged to Marian, and if it did, what in hell was it doing howling around the morgue? He didn't have time for his thoughts because Marian was asking surprised questions of him.

"Danny, how did you know he was ours? We haven't seen him for over three years! I thought—"

She interrupted herself sharply and laughed a little. Her voice was shaky with relief. "Oh, I don't know exactly what I did think."

Danny cursed himself and the dog. Her misunderstanding was going to make it even more difficult to tell her. Well, he couldn't shout it out to her from the curb. He leaned in at the door. "Marian, mind if I get in for a moment?"

She slid back behind the wheel gracefully. "Of course not, Danny." But the dog blocked Danny's entrance, snarling until Marian spoke sharply: "Over in back, Hans—get in back!" Hans was reluctant, but he obeyed. "Now be a good dog," Marian ordered. "Sit!"

As Danny slid across the red leather upholstered seat next to Marian he could feel Hans's angry eyes surveying the back of his head with merciless suspicion. A couple of Raney drills couldn't have bored neater holes in the back of his skull.

Danny was thinking quickly. He had his choice. He could let her rest in her apparent belief that the object of the call had

been the dog, or he could start right in, straight and to the point. He'd always sworn he wouldn't be one of those doctors who beat around the bush.

"Marian, I don't know quite how to tell you this. The dog isn't the reason I called."

"No?" She turned to him apprehensively, her relief fading away.

He looked down at his strong fingers and rubbed them together. "Y'see, since we last saw one another I've been studying medicine, and my work brings me down here quite often."

She glanced past him at the dark building. "The courthouse?"

"No, Marian. The morgue."

Her gloved hand tightened around the steering wheel, and she turned startled eyes on him.

"Tonight when I was down there I saw something strange." He paused, then took the plunge. "I don't know what happened to your father. I haven't heard of him in several years, and I suppose I could be wrong, but I don't think so. I'm—afraid he's down there, Marian."

She took in half a breath and then seemed to stop breathing.

"I'd like to be wrong if it'd help you. I'd like to do anything in the world to help you."

"Oh, Danny—"

"The police'll check tomorrow, but the routine they're forced to follow is pretty rough. I wanted to save you and your mother if I could."

Her head lowered, and she ran her fingers lightly across her brow. Then she pulled the heavy fur coat close about her and turned to him. Her lips formed words she couldn't speak.

"The thing is, he's evidently been in poor circumstances. His clothing"—Danny made a small gesture with his hands—"things like that."

"Things like what?"

"He'd apparently been drinking. Poison liquor. That's the established cause of death."

She took another one of those curious deep breaths. Then for an instant she closed her eyes. Weary lines that had edged them seemed to disappear as she tilted her head back, revealing the soft, smooth curve of her throat.

"So that's why I called. This dog—" He stopped short, then went on more excitedly: "This dog was outside at the window! He howled at us as we—Marian! That *must* be your father down there!"

"You say, Danny, that—Father—died of poisoned alcohol? They've had the autopsy, or whatever it is?" Something in the sudden directness of her voice shook him. "It's

been established, proved as the cause of death?"

"Yes."

A GAIN she took a deep breath; it was like the deep, labored breath of a person coming out of ether.

"Look, Marian—there's no need to put yourself through a wringer. Let me drive you home. The police'll check tomorrow. Perhaps your mother can come down."

"No!" Her voice suddenly went shrill.

"Well, then, perhaps someone else—a close relative—"

She seemed to gather firmness as she turned to him. "Danny, couldn't I go down there—tonight?"

"It's not a very pretty place, Marian."

"But—it's important! Mother's been ill."

The voice became more uneven. "Please, Danny!" There was such urgent pleading in her voice that it lay cold hands on his determination and shriveled it into a ball as soft and ineffectual as putty.

Danny shrugged concernedly. He'd pleaded for a chance to help, and if this was the only way . . . "Okay!"

He stepped briskly from the warm interior of the car, with its subtle fragrance of perfume, out into the icy black night. She slid easily across the red leather seat and then was standing beside him, her hand laced tautly through his.

For an instant the lights from the building behind them struck against her face. Danny took a deep, cold breath. He couldn't think of anyone who'd ever looked like her.

She was the only person he'd ever seen who could be completely set to music. Or, he observed as he took a second look at her, perhaps she couldn't. Perhaps all any human man could do would be to take one good look at her and then try to get his breath back.

She turned back to the car. The dog's head was resting on the window ledge, black lips puffing in and out as he whined rapturously. "Stay, Hans. I'll be right back." Her voice had a little tremolo now, but it was still authoritative. Then she turned to Danny and said: "All right. Let's go."

As they reached the door he stopped her with a pressure on her arm. "There's a ruling. No visitors after five-thirty. Wait here while I clear the way."

She nodded, staring through the window. As she felt his eyes peering down at her she turned and again gave him the funny little smile. Her shoulders were squared, her back straight. She was doing a good job; he squeezed her arm, winked, and then went in the door.

As Danny entered Charlie was reading *Sporting Stories* so avidly he didn't even

DEAD TO THE WORLD

look up.

"Say, Charlie, mind if I use your men's room a minute?"

Charlie continued reading distractedly. "In the first place, I don't mind. In the second place, it ain't *my* men's room. And in the third place, you guys act like you own everything around here anyway, so—"

Danny swung through the low swinging gate, across the small office, and through a door marked "Men."

He stalled for a minute before a grimy mirror, straightening the neat striped tie and adjusting the collar tabs beneath the soft lapels of his brown suit. He took a comb from his pocket, doused it under the tap until the teeth glistened with water, then ran it through the wiry brown hair. A last look at himself in the fly-and-soap-specked mirror. He sighed. He was a mug all right, with a square jaw and a slight twist to his short flat nose. But he'd done everything he could. . . . Now to the business at hand.

Suddenly he crashed out of the door with a wild yell. "Charlie!"

Charlie jumped with startled amazement.

"A fine job of cleaning up you do!"

Charlie squeaked hurriedly on the revolving chair.

"Y'know what's in the washbasin?" Danny asked accusingly.

Charlie stared at him through the smeared tops of gold-rimmed reading glasses. His voice was worried. "What now?"

"A human head!"

Charlie gasped and moved faster than Danny had ever seen him move before. First he reached under the counter and fumbled for a wastebasket. Clutching it firmly, he ambled hurriedly past Danny in the side-wise gait of an enraged crab.

Danny ran back to the entrance as Charlie scuttled into the men's room. He shoved open the heavy door. "Okay," he said. "let's go."

As they reached the top of the iron stairs and the big heavy door swung behind them, Marian stopped suddenly. Danny looked at her. She was fighting panic, the impulse to turn and run. It was a fight against the something he could never define. He felt it even now sometimes, accustomed though he was to this place. It was supernatural, indescribable. The sudden quiet made your ears buzz until your mind, in between, began to short fuse. The damp cold chilled your blood and made you shiver. The glare shining along the painted cement walls was ghostly fingers that made you wince.



"Well, Danny?" the sergeant roared.
"I thought I told you to keep away
from here!" (CHAPTER XIII)

HERE, down the narrow iron stairs before you, you entered the white, icy realm of death. The thick, heavy smells of formaldehyde cut your lungs to shreds and hypnotized that part of your brain that could have reassured you that the normal world was only one short step behind you. You stepped into a ghastly nightmare with your eyes wide open, and pinching yourself wouldn't awaken you.

Danny felt her hand close over his arm. She turned to him. It was a weak, pale smile, but, damn it, it was a smile. She had nerve. He covered her hand with his.

"All right, Danny." They started down the stairs, her small heels clanking a resolute, even pattern on the bare iron steps. The sounds echoed loudly back and forth between the damp walls. It was like going under ether, the sensation of drowning, with all the sounds of their movements rever-

berating, becoming more distant and ominously hollow as they clamored against the unearthly silence.

At the bottom of the stairs he said softly: "Over here, Marian."

Danny snapped on the light, flooding the big room with a sharp, cold brilliance. He could feel her hand trembling against his arm. He led her to the sheet-covered slab.

Slowly he slid the sheet away from the pale, lifeless mask of a face. Then he looked down at her.

Her eyes had widened; her lips parted as though she were going to scream. Instinctively his arm went out to support her. Then her lips formed the words and she whispered:

"Father—it's Father!"

She spun around, away from the face and from Danny, and covered her own face with her gloved hands. "Danny! Take me out of here!" Her hands covered her mouth so that the words were muffled. Danny moved closer. He had to watch out for hysteria.

"No, I'm all right. Only please, Danny, I've got to get home! I've got to get away from here!"

He moved her toward the wide ambulance door at the other end of the room. He fumbled with the heavy lock for a moment; the door swung outward with a rasping groan of the heavy hinges.

She turned back to the awful room, her face a white, scared blue. Outside she turned to him as if to speak, but suddenly her mouth snapped shut.

They were climbing the ramp now. Danny bent so that he could talk softly, soothingly.

"I'll drive you home."

He put her in the car. She slumped against the red leather of the seat, staring straight ahead. The dog, Hans, nuzzled at her shoulder, but she didn't seem to notice him.

"I've got to go back, lock the door from the inside. You'll be all right for a minute?"

Her eyes wide and dilated, her head took a sharp, nod. . . .

Charlie was waiting at the head of the stairs as Danny vaulted upward. A very irate, injured Charlie, flushed in the face, with the expression of an owl which has gone completely insane and imagines himself a tiger.

"Now, dammit, listen to me!"

"Sorry, Charlie. Haven't got time. I've got to catch a train."

"Yeah. And that ain't all you're going to catch. Wait till the coroner gets a load of this! Wait'll I tell Doc Elliot! Wait'll I—"

Read DETECTIVE NOVEL MAGAZINE—15c Everywhere!

Charlie's voice was cut off as the outer entrance door swished shut behind Danny. He vaulted down the outside stairs, his mind a jumbled chaos.

At the curb he stopped. The air rushed out of his lungs in a gasp of disappointed amazement.

Marian's green coupé was gone!

He hurried to the center of the street and looked down the black canyon intently. Two gleaming red lights were disappearing into the darkness. He heard the faint mournful cry of tires over the low moaning of the December wind as the car careened about a corner and disappeared.

He paced back to the curb with stiff consolation as a black sedan scraped to a stop behind him. The sergeant's voice boomed out even before the car had stopped: "You still here?"

"Yep." Danny swung around unevenly. "And before you go in and listen to Charlie, I want to tell you myself."

The sergeant grunting and concerned with prying his large bulk from the small sedan, interrupted brashly:

"And I want to tell you I checked on Sutton."

"Yes?"

"He's dead, all right."

"You're damned right he is. He's—" Danny's arm swung in a rough circle toward the building behind him, but the sergeant interrupted again:

"No, damn it! You listen for a change! Sutton died in an automobile accident"—the sergeant paused impressively for a moment—"just exactly three years ago!"

CHAPTER III

December 17



ALTHOUGH he was tired and his mind was nagged by a bewildered annoyance at Marian's behavior, Danny strode briskly down Albany Street toward the interns' dormitory. At the corner he stopped and turned to his friend and roommate, Pete Aldrich, who trailed along wearily behind him. Danny grinned. Big, blond Pete, the Pete Aldrich who broke away from the Minnesota backfield. Two hundred and fifty pounds of muscle, brawn and good humor. Right now Pete looked like a fugitive from an autopsy.

"Judas, kid," Pete moaned. "What're you trying to do, set a new world record?"

Danny bounced springily up and down on the balls of his feet. "What you need," he said, "is more vitamins."

Pete took a long drag on his cigarette, and when he spoke the smoke puffed out of his wide mouth with each word. "What I need," he corrected, "is a good slug of ice-cold beer right out of the tap. How about it?"

Danny pursed his lips. "Not today, Pete."

Pete jingled some coins in his pocket. "Broke?"

"Nope. Just—beer makes me sleepy." This was too evasive, so Danny added: "Anyway, I got a lot on my mind."

The signal changed, and as they crossed the street Pete turned to him. "As long as you weren't going to tell me, I might mention that it's on the grapevine you paid a couple of calls on Dr. Elliot."

Danny made a deprecating gesture. Dr. Elliot was dean of the medical school, in charge of interns at the hospital. Among the interns he was affectionately called the Headsman. As in a fairy story, he could, at will, turn a scalpel into an ax.

"The grapevine also reports he knocked your ears down."

They walked silently on the darkening busy sidewalk. Danny found himself reviewing the two calls to the Head's office. Somehow those calls and the running down he got high-lighted the questions in his mind.

First, Charlie Hankenmeier had criticized the entertainment value in the incident of the human head in the men's room. The coroner, in transmitting Charlie's report, had agreed, among other things, that he felt the episode definitely lacked humor. Dr. Elliot had found sufficient material there from which to work up quite an inquisition.

He had no sooner got back to Emergency

than his name had echoed again ominously over the announcer: "Dr. Michaels. Report to Dr. Elliot's office at once."

Emma, the doctor's secretary, seemed to be expecting him. "Oh, you again," she said. "My, it certainly looks like it's going to be a white Christmas."

Dr. Elliot looked up at him grimly. "Close the door, Michaels. And now perhaps you'll be so kind as to tell me—just what were you up to last night?"

"Well, sir, it was this way—"

"Now just a minute. In the course of another call, Sergeant Myers of Homicide mentioned in all good nature that you nearly pulled him limb from limb outside the morgue last night."

"Oh, him."

"Yes, him! Have you been drinking?"

"No sir. But you see—"

"He was quite pleasant about your leading him on a wild-goose chase of an investigation that had no basis whatever. However, he seemed a little piqued that you should awaken the dead shouting that one of the corpses was that of a man who, his investigation revealed, had been dead for three years."

Danny flipped out a hand as though tossing aside the entire assertion. "You see, sir, I knew Alfred Sutton. At least I knew his daughter some time ago. She came down to the morgue and—"

"You called her there?"

Danny nodded with a self-effacing smile. "You see—"

The Head had covered the lower part of his face with a flattened palm, but suddenly it slapped down on the bare desk top. The whole room shook. "Don't be so damned engaging, Michaels. And don't sit on the arm of my chair!"

"Yes sir." Danny rose and stood stiffly at attention.

"You sneaked a girl into the morgue despite all regulations to the contrary?"

Danny nodded abjectly.

"And that explains the incident of the human head in the washbasin?"

Danny nodded and tried to smile, but it got stuck somewhere. He started to sink down to the arm of the doctor's visitor's chair again but he caught himself in time and rose to stiff attention.

"We are granted the privilege of study and research in the morgue for the good it may do medical science. We're doctors, not detectives. We're neither asked nor expected to provide entertainment or diversion for the police and coroner's staff. We're doctors, Michaels. That demands an attitude of sanity and dignity."

Danny sighed. The cyclone was over. They

were back to attitudes. That meant the barometer was rising again.

He was right. Dr. Elliot's hurricane blew itself out with: "One final word. Medical knowledge and judgment aren't enough. A doctor must have decorum, steadiness. This is no field for clowns. We'll assume last night's escapades will not be repeated. Your record till now has been excellent, but I must say—" The doctor's voice broke off, then grew ominous. "If there is any recurrence we'll assume the Miles Scholarship Committee will find a way to impress you with the fact that medicine and vaudeville are not allied sciences."

The older man looked up at Danny sternly. Danny had never noticed it before. The old boy was a little cross-eyed.

"And now, you'll please return to your duties."

As he crossed the outer office Emma looked up at the clock. "Reading time, five minutes, ten seconds," she said. "You're devastating your average."

Danny had discovered that it was very hard to smile.

NOW that the glow from the day's excitement and furious activity was fading he had time to get mad. Marian had left him there with half the facts, like a half-baked diagnosis. She hadn't even called him today to explain. She'd held out on him...

Pete seemed to read his mind and laughed oddly. "After all, kid, if you minded your own business—"

"Yah," said Danny.

As they reached the steps of the dormitory Pete stopped and looked at him quizzically. "Well, I'll be damned!" he said. "Looks like our vest-pocket Adonis has had his hard, handsome hide penetrated at last!"

By the time Danny had reached his quarters he was stripped to the waist. The white duck jacket, the white shirt, the dark tie, and the cotton undershirt were all over his arm.

He was totally unprepared for the reception he received. As Danny stood in the threshold a visitor arose. He was tall, handsome, in a plain, dignified way. He had on a good suit of tan covert cloth. Beside him on the narrow iron cot lay a richly brown tweed topcoat and a brown felt hat. At the man's feet lay Hans, his ears alert, his head encased in a heavy leather muzzle.

"Dr. Michaels?" The voice was a good one, low, cultured.

"Yes." Danny slipped into his white duck jacket.

"My name is Ferguson. James Ferguson." Danny nodded. "I am Marian Sutton's step-father."

"Oh? I didn't know Mrs. Sutton had—"

The older man nodded briefly. "I wanted to tell you, for Marian, that last night was a—mistake." The handsome face was emotionless.

"Her father was in an automobile accident in Hubbard Woods. The car was destroyed by fire, and Mr. Sutton did not escape. That was on November 18, three years ago."

Danny nodded. "Yes sir. I know that's the police version—"

The voice cut at him: "It's not a 'version,' Doctor. It's actual fact, established and accepted."

Danny nodded submissively. "But Marian—is she all right?"

"As well as can be expected, under the circumstances. Mrs. Ferguson and I resent your using Marian as a guinea pig for tricks in psychology."

Danny had to swallow to down the resentment which instinctively choked him. "That wasn't it at all, sir!"

"Using this dog to develop suggestions of the past—a very disagreeable and unpleasant past—would indicate it was!"

"Marian said the dog was hers before she even knew she was at a morgue."

"Marian was mistaken. She was mistaken." The voice clutched for emphasis in repetition.

Danny eyed the strained, sharp-featured profile. "Mr. Ferguson, I hope you'll believe me. I wanted to help."

"Doctor, I should like to appeal to you. Marian is very upset and disturbed. Both Mrs. Ferguson and I should be most appreciative if—we could spare her from any reminder—"

Despite himself, Danny couldn't repress a smile that tugged at the corners of his lips. This was sharp irony, all right. No matter who happens to be Marian's current father, Danny thought, I seem to be as welcome as something that just crawled from under a rock.

"Yes sir."

Ferguson reached over and picked up his overcoat and hat. "Thank you, Doctor. Perhaps later—"

"Yes sir. But the dog—?"

"I will leave it with you," Ferguson said with finality. "It's a fine animal—even if vicious to strangers. Perhaps you can find its owner."

"I'll try," Danny promised.

"Thank you, Doctor—thank you very much."

And then the door closed silently before the tall, angular figure.

Danny took a deep breath. Thank the Lord he'd hung onto himself; made himself

understand. Marian must have been a dish-rag when she got home. But on the other hand . . .

On the other hand, this was one bell with a crack in it. And what's more . . .

Suddenly the door to the room burst open.

Hans growled and leaped forward. Two hundred and fifty pounds of startled Aldrich bounced back into the hall. The door slammed shut again.

"Good God," said a plaintive voice through the door. "One beer I had. I'm losing my grip."

Danny reached for the short leather leash. With a struggle he fastened the leash to the little steam vent at the end of the radiator. "Okay," he called. "Your hallucination just passed."

Pete's big head appeared timidly through a narrow crack in the door. "Morning of glory, Danny. What's the idea?"

"I thought as long as I'm in the doghouse I should go in for local color."

PETE entered hesitantly, cautiously. "Yah?"

"I thought he'd be good company. Teach us to befriend the wolf at the door when we're out in practice."

"I suppose it would be too utterly rude of me to suggest you stop playing with words and tell me what the hell you're up to." Pete took off his coat and laid it gingerly on the bed. Hans wasn't making a sound; he didn't have to. He seemed to be concentrating eagerly on Pete's right leg. "And I wish you'd also tell your friend I'm no lamb chop."

"If he wants to take you for a lamb chop that's his business."

"Yeah? What'll Dr. Elliot think when we start going around with one arm too few?"

"You're just jumpy, Pete. He's only a puppy." Danny stepped closer to Hans, and the dog's black lips curled derisively away from his fangs.

"Just look at him smile," said Pete.

Pete slipped out of his pants and shirt, never taking his eyes off the dog. The thick black overcoat and the distinct markings about the dog's face probably meant something. "Looks like whatever brand of wolf he is, he's a good one," he observed. "Now give with the facts."

"Okay," said Danny, "I'll come clean. I thought maybe we could get him a wife and raise pups. After all, I figure that if you're going to be an O.B., the least I can do is help drum up some trade."

Pete threw a shoe. "Brother," he said, "this is one time when your whims aren't of the slightest interest to me." By now Pete was attired in a towel over his arm and a small patch of adhesive plaster on his right heel. He rose imperiously from the iron cot, the springs of which groaned with relief. "I shall be gone for some ten or fifteen minutes," he said majestically. "When I return I shall fully expect to find this strange beast elsewhere."

"Yah! But where?"

"There's always the city pound, stupid. Or maybe he's got an identification tag. At any rate, that's your business. Shall we say, 'Till then?'" And Pete swung majestically out the door on his way to the shower.

Danny considered the dog calculatingly. Then he went to Pete's dresser and from the top drawer took a Hershey bar. He broke off a piece and tossed it toward the heater. Hans snuffed at it like a vacuum cleaner, then wolfed it down through the loose-fitting muzzle with one savage gulp. So, too, with a second piece.

"The third time's a charm," Danny observed hopefully. He advanced, gingerly holding out the remainder of the candy bar. The dog took it as daintily as a little girl eating ice cream at her birthday party. The long red tongue circled moistly around his fingers.

[Turn page]



TOPS FOR QUALITY

BIGGER AND BETTER



Danny petted the dog's head, making sure the muzzle was well fastened. His hands ran down the dog's neck, and his fingers plunged deep into the rich, heavy fur at the dog's throat. "You sure won't ever need steam heat, baby. Not with all this fuzz." His fingers touched a small chain, no bigger than an artery in the lower arm. And then, buried deep in the fur over the dog's chest, he saw the little tag, no larger than his thumbnail. The tag was brass and the lettering on it said:

RETURN TO OWNER
1403 Lake Shore Drive
Reward

"Lake Shore Drive? Well, my little Gold Coast chum, let's call and find out about you."

Danny jumped down the stairs to the wall telephone in the lower hallway.

When he returned to the room Pete was tying a bright floral tie around his neck. He looked something like a nice solid head of cabbage surrounded by nosegays. He glanced apprehensively in the mirror before him, his eyes directed at the reflection of the dog which was in turn surveying him hungrily.

"I thought to find you gone when I returned."

Danny shook his head. "Take it easy. I've been taking steps."

"Only not big enough. And how would we like our head cracked open tonight? By brute force?"

"Listen, pal. He's got a tag all right. I tried to call the owner—unlisted phone. No dice."

"Brother, you can say that again."

"And it just so happens this dog comes from Lake Shore Drive. You've been entertaining royalty, and you're behaving like a stupid peasant."

"Never mind my court manners."

"Well, I was just thinking. You could run him home this P.M., and know what I'll do? I'll split the reward with you."

"Ha! Why don't you take him? He might kill you on the way, and think what a thrill that'd be for Charlie. He'd love to get his hands on you down there in the cooler."

Danny shrugged helplessly. "But I've got a couple of jobs to do." He nodded at a pile of five heavy textbooks on his desk. "Besides, I couldn't take Tige on a streetcar; he's used to limousines and taxis, and you know me, Petey."

"Yeah. I know you. Broke again?"

"Well?"

"Well, nothing. Seven thousand bucks wouldn't persuade me to get in a cab with that fiend." Pete thought a moment, brushing noisily at thick, wiry hair. "However, I might enter a business deal with you. I'll

stake you to the cab. That ought to be about a buck."

"And just where do you come in?"

Pete shrugged expansively. "Oh, we'll split any proceeds fifty-fifty."

Danny snorted. "I find the dog. I take him back. And for a buck I'm supposed to share twenty—twenty-five dollars? Straighten out!"

Pete grinned savagely. "I've got you by the rear, kid. You've got to get rid of Tige, because if you don't I'll howl like hell. So unless you want to walk five miles with this magnificent animal—" Pete shook his big head conclusively. "You better accept my terms and like them. In fact, just to be big about it, I'll make it two bucks."

"Judas, Petey, what a banker you'd make! With a mind like yours you could work in an amputation each time the suckers laid down their right arms for a loan."

"Sure," said Petey with a smile. "As I see it, if I'm going to be a society doctor, I might as well brush up on my technique."

CHAPTER IV

December 17

ON SCHILLER STREET the taxi reeled north onto the Drive, into the Gold Coast; the habitat of wealth and smartness. And maybe of Hans. Danny looked at the beast almost fondly.



The driver had been a little difficult. He hadn't wanted a dog in his cab,

smearing up the windows. It took Danny's best Irish coaxing to get them both in. The driver looked around disapprovingly throughout the trip, although now it was almost over he began to soften up, working for the extra dime tip. He even managed to eke out a withered substitute for a smile.

Number 1403 was property management at its suavest. A glass-fluted canopy sheltered the entrance and the shining brass coach lights. Dan was just reaching for the wide bronze bar that traversed the heavy glass door when Hans suddenly jerked tensely at the leash. Hans's throaty, winded whine became a scream as he strained with all the strength in his straight, lean legs at a car parked just off the corner to the north.

The car leaped abruptly from the curb, but as it turned swiftly around the corner Danny got a moment's glance at the driver. He couldn't see the face, but he did see a familiar brown felt hat set at a familiar angle, gray suede gloves at the steering wheel, and the upturned collar of Mr. Ferguson's heavy brown tweed overcoat. Danny turned

back to the door.

The lobby was ostentatious charm on a careful budget—soft green walls, paintings with dim little lights above them, a large plant or two, chairs and sofas you looked at but never saw.

A bell on the counter was marked, "Please ring."

Danny rang and then leaned over and patted the flat top of Hans's head. In a moment the door opened and a woman came out. Her face fell into a routine smile, a blond apartment-house manager's smile.

"Yes?"

"My name is Michaels. I wonder if you could direct me to the owner of this dog. I believe he lives here."

The woman glanced over the counter at Hans. The pencil line that replaced her eyebrows raised almost imperceptibly. "Maybe you'd better talk to Mr. Hughes. Just a moment, please."

Hans had begun to play good dog. He sat and docilely watched the manager's door.

In a moment it opened. The man who came through was slick, small, dark. His suit was pressed to sharp points, to match a small waxed mustache. His smile was automatic.

"Yes?"

"I'm looking for the owner of this dog." Mr. Hughes scarcely glanced down at the animal. "A tag gives this address."

Mr. Hughes cleared his throat nervously. "The owner has—is away."

"Perhaps you have a forwarding address?"

"No, Mr. and Mrs. Sorenson left rather hurriedly. They left no instructions." Mr. Hughes looked at Danny cautiously. "May I ask to whom I am speaking?"

Danny took his hospital card from his shirt pocket, and the watery blue eyes flickered down at it. "My name is Michaels. Dr. Daniel Michaels."

The face relaxed with shaded recognition. "The reason I've been so inquisitive, Doctor, is our house rule against pets. This building doesn't, as a rule, accept them." Mr. Hughes's smile took on a persuasive twist. "I thought you might be checking for the owners. A man has to be careful."

Danny grinned. "Nothing like that."

"I'm sorry, Doctor, but I have no idea when the Sorensens will return."

"But if you could just keep the dog until they do—"

"Unfortunately there's no room here. We don't know when the Sorensens will be back. Besides, that dog is vicious!"

"Vicious?" Danny laughed gaily, but it struck out a little thin. Mr. Hughes seemed unconvinced. Danny went on: "I've got to find a place for him tonight."

"Really, I don't see how I can help you."

The narrow, sloping Hughes shoulders hunched.

Danny's voice got deeper. "This is a good dog. Your tenant put out a good spot of money for him. He'd really be burned if you tossed him out into the street."

The mustache twitched as the face behind it went into a frown. "I'm sorry. I haven't anything else to suggest."

"When did Mr. Sorenson leave?"

"It was last Sunday; four days ago."

"And Mrs. Sorenson—did she leave with him?"

"No." Mr. Hughes ran a pudgy finger inside the tight striped tab-collared shirt. "Not with him. She left about a week or so before he did."

"They didn't give you any idea where they were going?"

"No!" Hughes's round face went indignant, his light eyebrows drawing together. "I don't make it a practice of snooping into the affairs of my tenants."

Danny flashed his man-to-man smile. "Oh. I didn't mean that. I just thought perhaps something you couldn't avoid noticing; his luggage, or—"

The loose skin over the vacuous face trembled as Mr. Hughes shook his head.

An idea struck Danny suddenly. "Say! This dog has certainly been to a veterinarian. They couldn't have bathed him in the apartment, a big dog like this."

Mr. Hughes looked horrified. "I should hope not!"

Danny went on as the idea grew in his mind: "Well—if he's been to a vet, perhaps there'll be medicine up in the apartment. The name of the vet would be on the bottle, and we could board the dog with *him*."

"Well, I don't exactly know." Mr. Hughes thought it over. "I mean, I don't know that we should enter the apartment."

"But certainly your maids must go in and out to clean up."

"The Sorensens never had maid service."

"Well"—Danny shrugged—"it's our only chance to take care of the dog. I'd hate to take a nice well-kept fella like this down to the dog pound. You know they don't hold 'em there very long, and Sorenson will have a fit when he comes back and finds you let the animal go."

Hughes thought a moment, then looked around at the door behind him with uneasy concern. He sauntered over and opened it. "I'm going upstairs for a minute, dear."

THE key rattled in the lock, and then the door swung open quietly. Danny peered over and past Mr. Hughes's slick round head as it disappeared to the right.

"Just a minute, Doctor. You wait out

there. I'll see if I can find anything."

"Okay." Danny looked down at Hans ruefully. "This sure must be kindness-to-animals week," he observed. "Just what I deserve for chasing rewards."

Hans was straining at the leash, pointing at the chink of open door before him. Then unexpectedly the leash, looped loosely around Danny's hand, slipped, and the dog flashed through the door into the room.

"Hey!" cried Danny. "Come here!" Hans had no intention of obeying. Danny hurriedly followed into the large disordered living room, kicking the front door closed behind him. Signs of hurried departure were evident everywhere. An empty dresser drawer lolled ajar like a stupid kid's mouth, trailing out spaghettilike strands of crumpled clothing. A narrow door stood open, revealing the small bathroom, finished in vivid green tiles. Hans was standing motionless before a black-and-white porcelain bowl at the foot of the washbasin.

Danny grinned. Of course. The dog hadn't had anything to drink for hours. He filled the bowl from the tap. The dog nearly knocked him over going at it.

Danny stood waiting, looking about the tiled room curiously. Of course, he told himself, people usually don't keep dog medicine along with their own. But here he was, and here, behind the shining mirror, was the cabinet.

The mirror was cold against his fingers as the door swung open quietly.

On the top shelf was a small narrow bottle filled with a clear oily liquid. Danny reached up and turned it to read the label. The bottle nearly slipped out of his hands.

The label read: "Chaulmoogra Oil."

The small room was so quiet that it rang in Danny's ears. He slipped the bottle into his pocket and returned to the bedroom.

He looked down at the floor. Beside the bureau was a wastebasket. Against it leaned a cigarette carton. The brand name was printed in English script across the end of the carton. It said: "Old Virginia Ovals."

Old Virginia Ovals! Judas! Maybe . . .

John Doe #847 smoked Virginia Ovals. That *could* be a coincidence. But the dog was no coincidence. Hans belonged here, all right, and he *had* raised the ruckus at the morgue. Not only that, but Danny vividly recalled the welter of scars on John Doe's thin fingers and a significant group of symptoms on the dead body. Add those symptoms to this bottle of chaulmoogra oil, and what did you get?

Danny's mental chaos was interrupted by the sound of a key fitting cautiously into a lock that came to him through the doorway leading to the living room.

Unhooking Hans, Danny looked out of the bedroom door across the wide, modern living room and paused. Someone was fumbling with a key at the front door, which swung quietly open, and a young woman stepped quickly in.

Her dark-skinned face was framed by a tight-fitting turban of bright green, in vivid contrast to the shining blue-black hair that hung in loose folds down to a beautifully luxurious silver-fox cape. Her lips, a heavy crimson gash above the curve of a soft chin, were slightly parted. Long black lashes accentuated by a tracing of black on her lids rose to expose startled dark brown eyes.

"Hullo."

Danny's voice was sheepish, despite his effort to make it casual.

The girl looked up at him in startled surprise. A large bright green suede purse hung open from her arm, and she was automatically tucking a ring of keys into it. A green-gloved hand snapped the purse shut, and she took a few quick steps backward toward the door.

"I'm sorry," she said hastily. "I must have got off at the wrong floor."

Whatever Danny might have said was interrupted by Hans, who started whining loudly and straining at the leash to get toward her.

The girl spun around and disappeared into the hallway, and by the time Danny, dragged along by Hans, reached the doorway the girl had disappeared around a corner. Hans was barking loudly, angrily.

Mr. Hughes scurried in from the kitchen and asked angrily:

"What's going on here?"

"Oh—a woman just came into the apartment by mistake. Said she got off at the wrong floor—the dog scared her."

Mr. Hughes's lips pursed.

"I'm not surprised. What's he doing in there?"

"He got away, and I came in after him."

Hughes grunted with disapproval. "Well, let's get along. There's no sign of who the vet was in here." Then he fit the key into the lock and the bolt clicked as he threw it, locking the door. "Well," he said, "that's that. Guess you'll have to make other arrangements for the dog."

Danny nodded. His fingers closed around the medicine bottle in his pocket. "Only one thing I can think of," he said. "That's to take him to Sergeant Myers."

Hughes looked up dubiously from a ring of keys through which he'd been sorting. "You mean you'd palm off that brute on the Army?"

Danny shook his head. "No. On the police."

December 17

SERGEANT MYERS heaved across the wide reception room at the morgue like a giant bull. Charlie Hankenmeier looked up at him wistfully.

"Sort of a quiet day, Sarge."

The sergeant nodded and made for the door eagerly. The clock above Charlie's head said five-thirty. After standing up his old lady last night on account of a wild-geese chase the sergeant had no time for idle chatter. Last night it had looked for a while as if Dorothy Lamour and the double bill at the Sterling might be the rocks on which his marital vessel would flounder. In desperation he'd agreed to forego the comforts of a cigar and the fur-lined slippers tonight. Anything to remove the police-siren whine out of his old lady's voice. And to the sergeant, a promise was a promise.

He was lumbering hurriedly down the wide steps as a familiar voice called out to him.

"Hey, Sarge!"

The sergeant stopped dead in his tracks, his big arms swinging at his sides. Only one voice he knew had that youthful ring.

It was Danny, all right, being towed up the sidewalk by what looked like a wolf. The sergeant groaned as he saw the uncertain grin on the handsome Irish face.

"Judas, Sarge. I'm glad you're still here!"

"Well, as it happens, I ain't. I just left." The sergeant glanced down at Hans disapprovingly. "I always knew you'd end up as a veterinarian."

The kid leaned down and patted the dog's head. "I'm just practicing to be a blind man."

"After last night, you should! Now look, Danny, much though I'd enjoy exchanging the time of day with you, it just so happens that due to a little whim of yours I missed taking my old lady to a show last night. So I had to promise to take her tonight. So I'm already late."

"But, Sarge! This is important."

The sergeant thought of so many swear-words all at once that none of them could edge out. "Important! Now look, Danny. My old woman won't stand for no nonsense. Neither will I!"

Danny cut in abruptly: "But what if you exposed something big, Sarge?" Danny's head made an enthusiastic, admiring switch. "Just think! Your picture in the paper, your name in the headlines." Danny's eyes gleamed. The sergeant wasn't one to be hasty. "Yeah?" he said skeptically, but he listened.

"I can just see it, Sarge." Danny's dark eyes narrowed inventively, and with a sweep of a hand he managed to create headlines,

pictures, captions, which set the sergeant's nerves tingling.

"Why," Danny went on, "I'll bet the chief'd have to let you be Santa Claus at the orphans' party. You could write your own ticket. Why, there'd even be people who'd say that a man of your caliber ought to be chief!"

The sergeant sighed. Then he squared his shoulders. "No!" he bellowed. "It's no dice, Danny." He started for his car.

"Okay, Sarge." Danny's voice followed him casually. "Oh, by the way, could you tell me how to get in touch with McWalters?"

"McWalters!" The sergeant spun around. "Why should you want to see McWalters?"

"I've got to give someone this story. I was hoping it'd be you." Danny surveyed his nails carelessly and shrugged. "I suppose as long as McWalters is going to be Santa Claus I might as well give it to him. Those kids at the orphanage'll like having their Santa Claus a big public hero."

"Well, after all," the sarge said pettishly, "the morgue is my detail. If there's any stories here I'm the one to know about them."

Danny shrugged. An expression of complete unconcern twisted the dark face, jutting out an ample underlip. "However you want it, Sarge."

The sergeant sighed. "Okay. Now give."

Danny looped the dog's leash over his arm and rubbed his hands together. "Well, to begin with, after last night I decided that hereafter the only business I mind is strictly my own. But today I seem to have blundered into something big."

"Yah?"

"Yah. But before I go on, we've got to make a deal. I'm in Dutch with Doc Elliot over at the hospital." A flickering gleam of acknowledgment lighted Danny's eyes. "All I want in return for this information is your promise to fix me up again with Doc Elliot."

"I got to hear more before I promise anything. If you're on the level, you're in."

"It begins with this dog." Danny indicated Hans with a flicker of his eyes. "As you may recall this is the baby that howled at us when we looked at John Doe #847 last night."

The sergeant nodded impatiently.

"I didn't know what to do with him. There's a tag on his collar for an apartment on Lake Shore."

The story caught on a snag as it swept through the sergeant's mind. "But you said last night that some girl took the dog with her. Said it was hers. That Sutton girl. You said—"

"She was mistaken. The dog was returned to me this afternoon, so I decided to cash in on the reward."

The sergeant listened intently to the rest of the story. How Danny went to the Lake Shore apartment. How, while Hughes went in to investigate for the name of a veterinarian, the dog broke loose and Danny went after him.

How, in the bathroom cabinet . . .

"And here it is." As Danny completed his story he drew a small bottle from his pocket and handed it to the sergeant.

The sergeant read the label puzzledly: "Chaulmoogra Oil." What does this add up to?"

"I can't be sure until I make a little test on John Doe #847. If he has the same thing wrong with him that I think, you've got John Doe identified. Also, you've got a big story. A hell of a big one."

"And where do you come in?"

"I don't. I go out. My hands are washed of the whole business, and it's all yours from here on in."

"Well, what are we waiting for?" Myers asked briskly.

ONCE in the inspection room downstairs, the sergeant tried to conceal his admiration for Danny's deft activities, but it was hard.

Danny had quicksilver, the fluid easiness to be found only in good doctors, and even then, rarely. An intangible something: dynamic, skillful, inherent . . .

First Danny felt expertly at the bones and nerves in the elbows.

The sergeant grunted as Danny hesitated a moment, then picked up a slender scalpel. "You ain't going to cut, Danny?"

"Just scrape a little culture off the inside of the nose."

In a moment the scalpel tapped gently on a small slide of glass. The sergeant felt like a wonder-struck child at a Punch-and-Judy show as Danny moved quietly to the pathology room and snapped on the light and then as he took a small bottle from a cabinet at the end of the room.

"What's that, Danny?" The sergeant was shocked at the reverent subservience in his voice.

Danny surveyed the slide carefully to see if the bacteriological smear was dry. "Carbolfuchsin stain."

A bright carmine-red dot of dye hit the slide. Danny set it down carefully, struck a match, and held it over the Bunsen burner which lighted with a little puff and jetted up an even blue-white flame. When the culture was faintly steaming he took the small glass to the tap and rinsed it in water. Then he took a second bottle from the shelf, poured a little into a small flat basin.

"And what's that?"

"Acid alcohol."

"What is this? Black magic?"

"No, Sarge. You see, some bacilli are 'acid-fast.' We catch them first with the red stain. Then this acid alcohol takes the color out of all the other substances except the bacilli we want to study. Then we dip the whole works in methylene blue."

"And where does that get you?"

"It stains everything but the bacilli; makes them stand out by themselves, so you can't miss 'em."

As Danny spoke he held the slide under water, then took a third bottle from the shelf; a small drop of bright blue hit the slide and diffused across the small shining surface. He took it to the microscope.

"And what's all this going to prove?"

Danny looked up an instant soberly. "Maybe we'll find the guy's engine number."

He adjusted the focus with steady fingers. The sergeant noticed that the kid breathed more rapidly.

"Here! Let me look!" The sergeant crowded at Danny.

It didn't look like much down there, although the colors were pretty. Outlined in bright, glittering red against a sky-blue background he saw a series of minute clusters of long, slender rods.

"It don't look like no monogram or draft number to me!"

"But it's all right there, Sarge." Danny took one more careful look into the microscope. "John Doe #847 is one Alex Sorenson. Alex Sorenson of 1403 Lake Shore Drive."

Danny looked up at the sergeant intently. The fleshy eyebrows had lifted; the round, lined face was puzzled. "Sorenson? Lake Shore Drive?"

Danny nodded.

"Jeese!" The old man's voice was impatient at Danny's pause. "Go on, Danny. What's the rest of this story?"

"You've got the rest of the story right in the palm of your hand, Sarge." Danny indicated the small bottle which the sergeant was still clutching moistly.

"Chaulmoogra oil. Dammit, Danny, get to the point!"

"I found that bottle in Sorenson's apartment, which'd indicate he used it." The sergeant nodded. "These slides prove John Doe #847 had a damned good reason for using it too. And for a very rare disease. So rare, in fact, that it proves they're one and the same guy. The dog cinches the deal."

"But what? What's so rare? What does it prove? What've they got, rabies or something?"

"No, Sarge. You use chaulmoogra oil—" Danny snapped out the light under the microscope. "You use it for leprosy!"

CHAPTER V

December 17



AT THREE minutes past midnight Danny walked slowly up the stairs of the interns' dormitory. A crack of light shone under some of the doors, but the hallway was dim and quiet. Danny pushed open the door to his room. The lights were out, and heavy rhythmic breathing

from the cot in the corner indicated that Pete was asleep.

Danny closed the door behind him and crossed the room. As he slipped his coat onto a hanger in the closet Pete's light snapped on.

"Hi, kid." Danny grinned when he saw Pete's tousled head. "Thought you were asleep."

"Never too sleepy to take a cut on twenty bucks."

"Roll over, pal. You're talking in your sleep." Danny slipped out of his cotton undershirt nonchalantly, then sat on the edge of the bed and worked on his shoelaces.

"I vaguely recall a little business deal. If you'll be so kind as to explain—"

Danny scratched his shoulders contemplatively. "I'm in no mood for annual reports to the stockholders. I have nothing further to say."

"Oh yes, you have!" Pete surveyed Danny suspiciously through heavy lids. "Seems we had an asset in the person of a man-eating monster. Seems I enriched the treasury with two fine old etchings of President Washington, surrounded by mundane little remarks like: 'One Dollar—Payable to Bearer on Demand.'"

"With your two bucks, little man, you bought an interest in a business proposition. Well, your stock hit bottom."

Danny ducked into the closet to hang up his pants and to snatch his pajamas off the hook. When he re-entered the room Pete was awaiting him. "Begin. What happened?"

Danny hastily sketched the visit to the Lake Shore apartment and the tests at the morgue. Pete was excited.

"Talk about psychic diagnosis!"

"What was so psychic about it?"

"You pick up a bottle of chaulmoogra oil, and bang! You diagnose leprosy."

"Nothing psychic about it. Y'see, when I looked at John Doe's hands down in the morgue I happened to notice his fingertips were covered with small scars. That's what set the old ball rolling."

Pete shook his head enviously. "I still say you're a lucky little character."

"Well, all hell broke loose. In the first place, the sergeant did nip-ups. Wanted to recommend me for the Tribune Medal."

Pete said: "Humph!"

"All I wanted was to have the sarge fix me up again with Dr. Elliot. But the old man didn't see it that way. He'd snatched the coroner in some trouble because the boys should have caught the leprosy when they did the autopsy, and he wanted to rub their noses in it."

"Yah. The way they ride the poor sarge, I can understand that!"

"In the second place, they shot out a squad car to pick up Hughes at the Sorenson apartment. And they called in the Federal Health Services, a Dr. Seaver."

"Wow! Some fireworks!"

"But fireworks wasn't all I set off. They called in one Walter Danforth, an attorney."

"Sounds like a Kiwanis convention."

Danny nodded. "Hughes got there first. They took him down and he positively identified John Doe #847 as his tenant, Alex Sorenson. Said there was no question of it."

"And how did he like the thought he'd been running a leper colony?"

Danny snapped a finger and pointed at Pete. "He doesn't know. They want to keep that quiet for the time being, so for Judas' sake, don't spout off."

"If I had a hat I'd keep all this under it. So then?"

"So then Dr. Seaver arrived. They'd called him out of a medical meeting. He's quite a guy, Pete. Tall, slender, handsome as hell, and no fooling around. I told him everything I knew. Of course they're in on the deal in a big way because of the leprosy. And one very queer thing came out. They have no record, and never have had, of any Alex Sorenson. So now they're out to locate Mrs. Sorenson, because maybe she's contracted it too. Maybe she never knew her old man was carrying the bug. And they're also out to locate the doctor who diagnosed leprosy and prescribed chaulmoogra oil, and then didn't report the case to Federal Health. That'll mean his license."

"And what theory do they have for the fact a guy who lived in a ritzy Lake Shore bagnio ends up four days later as a down-and-out bum?"

Danny smiled grimly. "The sergeant thinks that Sorenson, discovering he had leprosy, committed suicide when the futility of it all struck him. He thinks Sorenson left his cushy apartment, took to drinking to drown his troubles, was rolled by a bum somewhere, and ended up in rags. Sort of a junior temperance lecture."

"Sounds phony."

"Sure it does. So does everything else. Dr. Seaver isn't convinced. He's not ready to reach any conclusions until he's checked on Sorenson's past activities, and that won't be easy." Danny gave Pete a wink and took a toothbrush and tube of paste out of a glass on his dresser. As he reached the door Pete said: "And how about the dog?"

"The police are holding him at the pound. Sort of a silent witness. I guess it stumps the sergeant. You can't stand over a dog with a piece of rubber hose and say: 'So you won't talk? Well, then, take this!'"

DANNY closed the door behind him quickly and set off for the bathroom. When he returned Pete was still propped up on one elbow. "You know, I was just thinking, Dan."

"Bragging again."

"How about the little episode with the queen of Evanston? Where does she come in, if at all? What did you tell Sergeant Myers and Dr. Seaver about her identifying the dog and then identifying Sorenson as her father, and all that?"

Danny sighed troubledly. "I tried to soft-pedal it. Judas, Pete, I don't want to get her on the rack."

"If you ask me, she's a little haywire. Maybe a little talking would cleanse the soul."

"That's her problem, not mine. I told Dr. Seaver the bare facts. I told him that Ferguson brought the dog back and said Marian had been mistaken. I even bowed my head a little and said that she naturally was hysterical and upset as a result of my having sneaked her into the morgue as I did, that she *could* have been mistaken."

"Did that satisfy Seaver?"

The close-cropped head shook. "No, I'd already talked too much. Seaver said as long as there was any doubt, just as routine, tomorrow they should get in some of the people who originally identified the burned body out in Hubbard Woods as Sutton. That's where Danforth came in."

"Danforth?"

"Yeah. He was Sutton's former attorney before the accident. He and some dentist made the identification at that time. So the sergeant called Danforth's office to make an appointment. Danforth was there; he was just leaving; he offered to drop by on his way home. Right then."

"Oh-oh!"

"Seaver had to leave. His meeting was that big medical conclave over the Kenney treatment and he just couldn't miss it. Of course Seaver didn't have to be there; it was straight routine. Danforth'd say yes—or no—it was, or it wasn't, Sutton."

Pete held the thoughtful pause for a moment, then dropped it like a hot light bulb, shattering it. "Yeah?"

"Well, I wish Seaver could have stayed, because this is the part I didn't get. Danforth seems to be okay. One of those big hearty guys—hail fellow well met. But there's something—something—"

"Something what?"

"I don't know. Phony isn't the word; neither is tricky. Maybe it's just that he's got a big booming voice and a wonderful flow of words that pour out like warm oil. But inside he's sly, as smart as a whip. He doesn't quite match."

"You don't know it, but you're describing half the lawyers in the country."

Danny's words came carefully, slowly: "Hughes had already left. So had Seaver. Only the sergeant and I were there. Well, Danforth came busting into the morgue like it was a lodge room and he was candidate for Exalted Master. We were a bunch of old buddies in three minutes. He gave me one of those warm, sincere grips that cripples you for life. Just like all his life he'd been waiting to meet *me*, and by God, here we were at last."

Pete chuckled. "He no doubt added rather loftily that he considered it a duty—nay, an honor—to assist the fine men who daily risk their lives protecting our lives, our homes, and our women-folk with their splendid work, irrespective of inconvenience, loss of time, or financial remuneration."

Danny grinned. "Right on the button. You must have been there!"

"Nope, it's just that he's a fine judge of character, that Pete Aldrich," said Pete modestly. "But of course the sergeant ate it up."

"Sure he did. Well, we took Danforth downstairs. For some reason I watched him; his face, his expression. He didn't bat an eye when they yanked off the sheeting. He just stood there, his eyes like a couple of steel ball bearings. Damn it all, Pete, he was shaking his head—no—before he even saw what he was looking at."

"What'd he say?"

"He said: 'Oh no. No, that's not Alfred. Strange, though. There is a resemblance! But it's not Alfred Sutton. No. No, that's not Alfred.'" Danny lowered his youthful voice in imitation. Pete could hear the undertone of the glib attorney's voice.

"Sort of like he was reading a will, handing down a decision. And meanwhile thinking about something else."

Danny nodded. "He put on quite a little act, about how gripping and dramatic the sergeant's work must be. You know, the battle between life and death, the two great realms."

"Oh Gawd!" Pete slapped a flat palm re-

soundingly against his wide forehead.

Danny again imitated the great booming voice, dramatically thrusting a legal palm at his pillow. "This poor soul here, for example. Alex Sorenson, you say? What were his hopes, his dreams, his fears? What was his story, hidden behind the still, white mask of death?" Danny grinned. "It was just rhetoric, but the sergeant was in the mood of the thing, I guess. With that tired, brave weariness that only the sarge can display, he told Danforth that the investigation wasn't thoroughly completed; that none of the details were established, and the case could therefore not be discussed. Period."

"Good for the sergeant! Now turn off the light and let's have some of that blissful quiet you always hear about."

Obediently the light went out and the room was plunged in darkness. Danny had felt sleepy and tired, but now he was wide awake.

"Danny?" Evidently Pete wasn't finding much sleep either. "Have you see Marian's mother in the last year or so?"

"Quiet, please."

"Because maybe you ought to. Leprosy's slow-working stuff, Dan. And if he had it then—well, it's possible Marian's mother might have it too."

December 18

THE day zanged past Danny as only days at County Hospital could. When a place is Misery Headquarters for more than three million people, it's no romp in the park for the Emergency staff. Danny worked through the day with only a seventeen-minute break for lunch. He worked, keeping his mind too full of his job to meander into the shady realm of conjecture.

But that shady realm was awaiting him as he stepped out of the tall gray building into the early darkness of the cold December evening.

He started walking; walking fast, straining the tawny muscles in his legs, trying to leave conjecture behind.

At Van Buren Street he took the Van Buren car.

The motorman beat an inquiring note on his foot bell. He wanted to make this green light. But it was too late. He saw Danny. "Hi, Doc," he said.

Danny looked up and said, "Hello."

"Ain't seen you in a helluva while." The motorman punctuated with a stamp on the bell; the conductor pulled the cord, and the car jolted forward. "Still out at the County?"

"Yeah. Still on the job."

"Remember me? You fixed up my missus last summer. Gallstones. Sure did a swell job of it too."

"She was a good patient. That's more than half of it." A good, safe thing to say. There'd been more than twenty gallstones while he'd been in Surgery in August. "How's she coming along?"

"Just swell!" The motorman ran his gloved hand over the window before him. The rain was beating down, and little drops of moisture gathered on the inside of the pane.

"Running a little late?"

"Yeah." The motorman made a wry face. "Got a new man back there, and he ain't worth a damn at beating lights." The head took a contemplative sideswipe. "And still the supervisor gives you hell if you're late."

"But suppose it's a tough night—ice and stuff on the street—and it's dangerous to jerk a big load along fast?"

"The supervisor still gives you hell, but he tells you that the safety of the passengers comes first. But damn close behind comes the schedule."

Danny took a sharp, deep breath of the sweet, wet night air. He couldn't escape it, even here on the front platform of the Van Buren Street car. Sure, rules were okay, until the safety of the passengers came up. Even Dr. Elliot, who made the rules, would agree to that. Clearly Danny's first duty was to the passengers he'd pulled along on another kind of ride.

He had to get to Mrs. Ferguson. He must make sure that John Doe #847 was not Alfred Sutton. If they were one and the same, then Marian and her mother must be told about the disease. There must be immediate tests, and then, if by some remote chance they had it . . . His mind wouldn't carry on the thought; it was too terrible.

This, then, was it. You can't play around with danger on wet slippery tracks—or with leprosy.

He swung solidly from the car. His step, as he sloshed across the wet, puddled pavements, was regular and determined.

He dropped a coin into the drugstore telephone. In a moment a maid was calling Mrs. Ferguson to the line.

"Hello?" The voice was tense, nervous.

"Mrs. Ferguson, this is Dr. Daniel Michaels." Danny purposely waited. But there was no sound from the other end of the line. He talked rapidly. "Something important has come up; something very important to you."

"Doctor—please—I don't want to seem rude, but really, Mr. Ferguson has asked you not to call."

"Wait a minute, Mrs. Ferguson. Just disregard, if you can, what happened the other night. I want to be helpful. I'm sure if you'll listen to me it will save all of you a great deal of—unpleasantness."

Danny hurried on to state the facts—slightly distorted to save her from any avoidable

strain. "The police are working on the matter I discussed with Marian. They know Marian was mistaken, but they're still puzzled by her identification. I've explained she was suffering from hysteria, but they're very apt to call her again to clear up that first error."

"Oh no, Doctor! They mustn't—involve Marian any further in this thing!"

"Mrs. Ferguson, if you'd like to come down, I could arrange it so the police needn't know. Then, if Marian was mistaken, you could verify that error officially. If not, well—" He ended with a gulp.

She broke in thoughtfully: "You're—you're quite sure the authorities needn't know?"

"Not unless you tell them."

The voice assumed tones of desperate decision. "Where and when might I meet you, Doctor?"

Danny had the words all ready. "If you'll be at the bottom of the ambulance ramp—that's around the corner on the side of the building—at three o'clock tomorrow, most of the morgue attendants are off duty. The sergeant doesn't get there until four or four-thirty. I'll be inside, and I'll open up for you at three."

"I—at three, then. Three o'clock tomorrow."

He heard the receiver settle slowly.

December 19

The next day at three-thirty, when he went to open the big doors for the sixth time, he told himself it would be the last; she wasn't coming.

But there she was.

She was still pretty, much like Marian, except that her face was thinner. Beneath the green felt hat it had a pale, drawn cast. He noticed the green clip, a big, rich one, on the lapel of her simple gray tailored suit, and she had a Persian-lamb coat thrown over her shoulders. Even the faintly applied rouge and the faint color of her lips failed to conceal the anxiety in the even-featured, delicate face. Her fingers clutched at the shining black patent-leather bag nervously.

"I'm sorry to be late, Doctor." For an instant she looked as though she'd turn and run.

He glanced down at his wrist watch. "Everything's all ready. You're sure you want to go through with it?"

She tried to smile. "I'm here, Doctor, although it's been one of the most indecisive trips of my life." Then she stepped inside resolutely as Danny closed the large door behind her.

Danny looked at her dubiously. She was trembling, breathing rapidly. He bent his head toward her, but she only smiled again with that same weary assurance. He held her

arm firmly. With each step into the big room the trembling increased. He found himself thinking guiltily: Hypersensitive and excitable, needs sedatives and rest. No undue excitement or mental strain. . . . And yet here he was—a doctor—subjecting her to the exact opposite.

They stopped before the drawer behind which John Doe #847, alias Alex Sorenson, lay on his tray, covered by the rough sheeting. Steel rolled against steel silently as the drawer slid open and a gust of cold, damp air came with it. Then Danny drew the sheeting away from the thin blue face. He should have known she'd scream.

He caught her as she slumped to the floor.

CHAPTER VI

December 19



THE sound of her screams had rattled back and forth off the hard tile walls, filling the room, and almost immediately Danny heard distant footsteps overhead and the swish of the big door as it opened at the top of the stairs. God above! What could he do with

her!

He tried to lift her, but in falling one of her black patent-leather slippers had caught under the roller wheel of the cart behind them. He struggled to free her, but her slender body was as evasive as a handful of water. Finally the cart rolled slightly and her small foot was pulled free. He was lifting her, surprised at how light she was, as footsteps clanked down the iron stairway.

Danny looked desperately around the room. Then, carrying her slight weight, he dodged around the roller table and ducked into the dark little autopsy room.

He heard Sergeant Myers' voice. "I heard it. Down here someplace."

Charlie's voice, higher and thinner, whined words that Danny couldn't understand.

"Someone's down here." You couldn't miss the deep, thick voice of the sergeant.

They were closer now, and Danny made out the words in Charlie's falsetto. "Sure. Daniel Michaels is, somewheres. I let him in."

Their feet flapped along the narrow hallway as Danny turned and lowered Mrs. Ferguson's limp body onto a steel table. Beside it was a stack of newly laundered sheets. He snatched one up. It crackled like paper, fanning out the icy air as he spread it out over her. In a few steps he was back at the side of John Doe, looking innocently up as Ser-

geant Myers burst through the door. "Well, for the luvva God!" The sergeant's round, ruddy face was splotched with impatient anger. "Danny!"

"Hello, Sarge." Charlie's head appeared timidly in the doorway behind the sergeant. "Hello, Charlie."

Charlie's voice had the whine of a vacuum cleaner. "Sarge and me, we heard screaming."

Danny looked as surprised as he could manage. "Screaming?"

The sergeant thrust his head forward on a red bull neck. "Yeah! What're you up to down here?"

Danny cleared his throat to gain a few moments. "I just came down for another look at Sorenson, Sarge. Judas! You don't see leprosy every day."

The old man's face screwed up into an appraising scowl. "And the noise? The screaming?"

Danny looked down at the open drawer before him. "How d'you know it wasn't just the drawer? Maybe I pulled it out at an angle; ran it off the track."

He tried to run the drawer back into its place at an angle. He had never heard the drawer slide so quietly. The sarge's eyes narrowed and his mouth twisted with pettish exasperation.

"Now look, Danny—"

"Sarge, when I pulled out that drawer, maybe something was off the beam. But I promise it'll never happen again."

That was a vow and, Danny hoped, not too much of a lie. He'd been off the beam all right, even if the drawer wasn't, and it was opening the drawer that had produced the scream.

For a moment the silence, particularly from the small dark room behind him, roared in his ears. He had to get the sarge and Charlie out of here while it lasted. He was running short on his ration. At any time Mrs. Ferguson might come to and treat them to a scream that would curdle the blood in a tarnip.

In his wild search for a means his eyes fell on the sergeant's puffy, wrinkled hand resting on the sheet beside Sorenson's body. He looked at the hand troubledly, and his voice was filled with self-reproach. "It's not enough that you're in danger of your life and health, but I have to go around butchering things up." His wide shoulders gave an abject little shrug.

The sergeant rose to the bait. "Danger of whose life and health?"

"I mean, messing around down here every day; a million kinds of infections floating around the place."

Charlie protested in a high-pitched whine, but Danny went on: "I don't mean the place isn't clean, but just think! There's everything down here. Smallpox, pneumonia, scarlet fever, and now—leprosy."

"Yeah? And what's that got to do with me and my health? Damn it, Danny! What're you trying to get at?"

"I didn't mean to worry you, Sarge, but I noticed you touched the sheet that's been covering Sorenson there."

The sergeant spread out his hands and surveyed the wide hairy hands with their rough, splayed fingers. His face was a little worried now.

"But, Danny—"

"Do you wash your hands after you've been down here, especially after you've touched a diseased person like Sorenson?" The sergeant shook his head guiltily, and Danny's eyes narrowed with professional disapproval. "You know, Sarge, perhaps you'd better let me give you the once-over." He took the sergeant's arm. "Come on upstairs. We can lay you out on the coroner's table."

The sergeant was about to submit, then he suddenly jerked his arm away. "Now just a minute! I come down here to find out about some screaming. I heard it. So did Charlie." Charlie nodded submissively. "And all of a sudden we end up talking about me having leprosy. If I didn't know you so well—"

[Turn page]

Now She Shops "Cash and Carry"

Without Painful Backache

Many sufferers relieve nagging backache quickly, once they discover that the real cause of their trouble may be tired kidneys.

The kidneys are Nature's chief way of taking the excess acids and waste out of the blood. They help most people pass about 3 pints a day.

When disorder of kidney function permits poisonous matter to remain in your blood, it may cause nagging backache, rheumatic pains, leg pains, loss of pep and energy, getting up

nights, swelling, puffiness under the eyes, headaches and dizziness. Frequent or scanty passages with smarting and burning sometimes shows there is something wrong with your kidneys or bladder.

Don't wait! Ask your druggist for Doan's Pills, a stimulant diuretic, used successfully by millions for over 50 years. Doan's give happy relief and will help the 15 miles of kidney tubes flush out poisonous waste from your blood. Get Doan's Pills.

(See.)

DANNY shrugged. "Just trying to help an old friend, that's all."

"Come on now." The sergeant took command. "Let's clear out of here. And no more messing around with Sorenson. Understand? And incidentally, there are a couple of questions I want to ask you."

Danny forced a smile as the sergeant and Charlie turned toward the door. "Be right along," he said. "I'll pick up my coat."

The sergeant had swung the door open and was about to lumber out when it happened. From the small dark room behind them came the sound, distinct and unmistakable. A long, deep groan mixed in with a catching uneven breath.

Danny sighed as the sergeant spun around and pounded across the floor to the autopsy room. The lights blazed on with a sharp click. He was right behind the sergeant when the old man shouted: "Charlie! Come here quick!"

Once they were through the narrow door Danny rushed past them. He reached the slowly moving sheeted figure a moment before the sergeant. Just an eyelash ahead. "This is a job for me." Then he lifted the cover from the face gently. "She needs reviving, and she's got to get where it's warmer. Charlie, I need some smelling salts or spirits of ammonia. Sarge, round up a blanket and a glass of water while I carry her upstairs."

The sergeant barked unintelligible questions over Danny's words, but Danny whirled indignantly on him. "Quit being so helpless. Get that blanket!"

The sergeant hastened off reluctantly as Danny raised the now-conscious woman. Mrs. Ferguson's pale lips were moving with troubled, unspoken words, and beneath her blue eyelids her eyes were rolling distractingly.

The white sheeting dropped to the tile floor as he carried her gently across the bright room, then up the hallway and the narrow iron stairs.

He whispered to her all the way, trying to reassure himself as well as her. "Everything's all right, Mrs. Ferguson. Just keep your eyes closed; act like you're still unconscious. Let me do the talking." There was no sign of recognition in the distorted face, so he asked: "Can you understand me?"

Finally her head gave a tired nod only barely perceptible against his taut left arm. He carried her into the coroner's office, a gloomy cubicle near Charlie's wide-topped desk, and set her down on an old black leather settee. He reached for her pulse and counted its regular beat.

As he gently lifted one of her eyelids the sergeant churned into the room with an old blanket in his arms. Simultaneously Charlie arrived with the ammonia. Both men stood

close behind Danny, watching as he fixed the blanket around her. When there was nothing more to be done he turned to Myers.

"Now!" The sergeant said explosively. "Who is she?"

He had to tell. "A Mrs. Ferguson."

"Ferguson? Oh! This is the lady whose daughter come in three nights ago? The one who said Sorenson was Alfred Sutton?" He turned back to the limp form. "How'd she get down there?"

"Not past me, Sarge." Charlie took up the moment of silence. "I been at my desk all evening." His long gnarled finger pointed at the desk outside the door.

The sergeant whirled on Danny. "Damn it, Danny! I told you to lay off! You know the rules! Dr. Elliot said you'd promised. Well, as long as you got her here, what did this one say?"

"Nothing. She fainted."

"Sure she did!" bellowed the sergeant. "I suppose you gave her a big build-up and scared the wits out of her. Told her the guy has leprosy and so has everybody else who even looks at him! Damn it, Danny, I'm fed up. Damned well fed up!"

Danny had heard Mrs. Ferguson's sharp intake of breath at the word "leprosy." He spun around, knelt beside Mrs. Ferguson, and his voice was gentle but pointed. "Just lie back, Mrs. Ferguson. Don't say *anything!* Just lie back."

Her blue eyes fluttered open. Mixed horror and fright were in them, an expression so abjectly desperate that it stopped Danny's breathing for a second.

The sergeant leaned over Danny's shoulder solicitously. "You going to be all right, lady?"

She nodded weakly and started to rise. Danny tried to restrain her, but she pushed his arm away with an unexpected force. With a deep frown she said just one word, a command: "Please." Then she stepped unevenly toward the sergeant. He supported her arm. She was rocking now. Danny knew she was going to be sick in a moment, good and way-back-to-breakfast sick.

The sergeant was using his low, pleading voice, the one that was designed to make you talk before you'd realize what you were saying. "Was that Mr. Sutton down there, lady? Dr. Michaels, here, he's been insisting—"

Mrs. Ferguson looked away from the sergeant unsteadily, but her voice was vehement. "No! No! It's not Mr. Sutton. There's a resemblance, but it's not Mr. Sutton!"

The sergeant tossed an angry look in Danny's direction. Mrs. Ferguson went on. Her voice, growing in composure, was a miracle of self-control.

"I'm sorry to have caused a disturbance.

If I had known my coming would be in violation of the rules—”

SHE paused, and the sergeant broke in reassuringly: “It’s all right. Don’t worry a bit about it.” Then again the insistent question: “You’ve never seen the gentleman downstairs before?”

“Never before.” She gazed past them, her eyes fading as though she were looking miles away. “Never before. Mr. Sutton has been dead for three years.”

Danny watched her closely. He’d missed a guess. She wasn’t going to be sick. With sheer force of will she had put the sickness down. He was flooded with admiration for her courage and composure.

Danny stepped to her side. “Mrs. Ferguson, you mustn’t talk any more. You must rest—”

She drew away from him to the protection of the sergeant. “May I go home now?”

The sergeant’s eyes narrowed. “Perhaps the doctor’s right. Perhaps you’d better wait here for a time. We can just sit and talk. I’ll send Mr. Hankenmeier out for some tea at the Night Owl. It’s only across the street.”

The sergeant had clumsily overplayed his hand, for now she moved a step away and her hand went to her throat. “You mean I’m not to be allowed to leave?”

“Oh no, ma’am.” The sergeant was groping for words, a very phony Sir Walter Raleigh in a derby. “I’ll have one of the boys drive us out to your house right this moment.”

Yes, thought Danny, and if she still won’t talk you can twist her wrist one route.

But she wasn’t being fooled. “I’m quite able to drive myself,” she said. She was a handsome woman in her defiant independence. “The fresh air will revive me.”

“And perhaps,” said the sergeant, “I might drop out to your house this evening for a little chat.”

She surveyed him steadily. “Yes,” she said. “Perhaps you might. May I go now?”

Danny stepped quickly toward her. “Mrs. Ferguson, may I drive you home? There’s something I’d like to explain to you.”

She turned her back on him with cold deliberation and appealed to the sergeant. “Is there some way, Sergeant, you can prevent this young man from bothering us? Really, he’s becoming quite unbearable.”

The sergeant gave her a friendly pat on the arm. “I’ll fix that, Mrs. Ferguson.” He turned to Danny and put two hundred and ten pounds of muscle behind his words: “I’m going to see Mrs. Ferguson to her car. You stay here till I get back. See?”

Danny stayed. He was sitting on the leather settee, his head down, one hand fingering the brown worsted over one knee, when the sergeant came storming back in like the

month of March.

“Okay, Danny,” he bellowed. “Now start talking. This isn’t some damned game! This is our jobs, Charlie and me and the captain, and we’re serious as hell about it. And I’ll be everlastingly damned if I’ll let a smart kid make a monkey out of me!”

Danny took a deep breath and leaned back. The old boy was in no mood to be fooled. His anger was as sharp as an old maid’s knee.

“Okay, Sarge, I wasn’t trying to make a monkey out of you. I’m the monkey for being so sure it was Sutton. Seems I was mistaken. All I can say is—I’m sorry.”

“Yah!” The sergeant plopped his weight down on the corner of the desk. The room was silent as he snapped savagely at the end of a fresh cigar, lighted it, and puffed in furious reflection. “You ought to be sorry.”

The seat of Danny’s pants was sticking to the gummy, grimy leather, and he had a job ahead of him. He had to see Mrs. Ferguson, talk to her fast and straight about the leprosy. She’d heard the sergeant, all right. Even the corpses downstairs had no doubt edged away from cabinet 847.

The sergeant tilted his head, and the blue smoke streamed slowly out of his wide mouth and up over his face like a white blanket. “But I don’t quite get it,” he said thoughtfully. “Seems like a hell of a lot of strange dames floating around here over a guy they never seen before.”

“You can hang that on me.” Danny’s voice was hurrying again, like a barrel rolling down a hill. “No sense in both of us being chumps. I got them both down; they both say it isn’t Sutton; so does Danforth. And it’s in your records. Sutton died three years ago.”

The sergeant spun around with an amazing agility. “Yah? but you don’t think so. Else why’re you always trying to disprove it?”

Danny tried to lasso his thoughts; they were getting away from him. “Well, I was knocking myself out over a resemblance, and the dog—” He stopped himself sharply, wishing he could bite off his tongue.

THE sergeant’s bewilderment increased. “Yeah? The hound seemed to know the corpse, too, didn’t he? And then the Sutton girl knew the dog—seems like a connection there too.”

Danny could hear the wheels going around in the sergeant’s mind, slowly but thoroughly. Oh, how I’d like to slip you a good shot of barbital, Danny thought. You’re getting to the point and I can’t stop you.

The sergeant drew out his words thoughtfully: “It’s an idea, maybe. Letting Mrs. Ferguson see the dog.”

Danny interrupted: “They’ve already seen

him, and he isn't theirs—just a resemblance.”

“Hell of a funny bunch of resemblances,” the sarge grumbled. “We'll see what the dog thinks of their looks.”

“Listen, Sarge,” Danny urged. “It's all my mistake. Don't waste any more time on it, and, damn it, you oughtn't to bother that woman again. She's had a lot to stand because of me.”

The sergeant snorted. “What the hell side are you on, kid? You drag people down here like it was a goddamn night club, trying to make them identify Sorenson as Sutton. But the minute I try to pitch in with you, you jump me. Why shouldn't I run out later this p.m. and take the dog?”

“But Danforth said it wasn't Sutton, and as long as *he* says it isn't, I don't see why you should bother Sutton's former wife again.”

The sergeant's fleshy underlip jutted out thoughtfully. “Maybe you're right,” he said. “Maybe I better follow up with a little more questioning to Danforth too.”

“Too?”

“Yes. Too. Also. In addition. Because maybe Mrs. Ferguson has something she wants to tell me.”

Danny decided to make one last desperate effort. “But look. The whole deal ties up. We know Sutton's been dead for three years. You've got a guy downstairs planted with a name.”

The sergeant interrupted, momentarily gloomy: “That's *all* he's planted with too.”

“What d'you mean?”

“We been trying to check on that guy Sorenson for two days now. So's Seaver down at Federal Health. But no matter what string you try to follow, you end up the same. No dice. No dope. No nothing. I guess maybe I better take no chances. I better get there to Evanston this p.m. after all!”

DANNY slouched down on the green plush seat. He'd moved over by the window when the occupant of that seat had gotten off at Wilson Avenue. Now he looked out at the dark kitchens and porches along Winthrop Avenue.

The Shoppers' Special was moving rapidly along here—but not rapidly enough. He had to get to the Fergusons' and be gone by the time the sergeant arrived. On the other hand, it was moving *much* too rapidly, carrying him back into the center of a tangle he had started himself. Well, once started, he couldn't avoid it now.

It was a bewildering puzzle, and he couldn't figure out the angles. First there was Sutton in the morgue. Danny *knew* it was Sutton; Marian *said* it was Sutton, then although Mrs. Ferguson's expression of recognition and her scream had admitted it, she had denied it was Sutton. Marian now refuted her own

identification and, in the bargain, denied Hans too. But Hans wouldn't be denied—that was one of the false notes in the picture. It was like a patient with all the pneumonia symptoms but no fever. You just can't have one without the other. It doesn't happen. The Fergusons were trying to do it, but it didn't fool Danny, and it wasn't going to fool the sergeant very long.

Maybe he'd better start with an apology. They surely couldn't get steamed up if he came to apologize. The hell with an apology, he thought. I'll just tell them straight that the guy had leprosy. I'll tell them that if it is Sutton, they needn't necessarily have contracted the disease, but they ought to get to a doctor for some tests, and do it at once. And that's my exit from the case.

Danny turned his eyes into the car and for the rest of the trip studied his fellow passengers. That boy up there could use viosterol. . . . His father's got sinus—salt water and metaphedrine. Cut eggs out of his diet. And that blonde—that blonde—that blonde!

The girl turned suddenly and looked straight into his eyes. She smiled very briefly, showing a beautiful row of white even teeth. Then she returned to her *Harper's Bazaar*. Danny grinned. That blonde can keep right on with the treatment she's getting. . . .

CHAPTER VII

December 19



MARIAN SUTTON sat in the chintz-covered love seat by the fireplace in the spacious living room, reading. Trying to read. The words and lines flashed past, leaving nothing but thoughts of other things. The page was a white blur, and behind it the orange-red shadow of

the hearth fire flickered and twisted against the darkening soft green walls with their latticed ivy design that surrounded her. She closed the book slowly over her fingers and looked reflectively about the room.

She remembered the day she'd moved here with her mother—and James Ferguson. She must have been an awful child then. She must be a child still—sitting here, still feeling, in memory, the congeniality and contentment that had come to this house with them.

Until three weeks ago. Everything had changed so suddenly, so frighteningly. Suddenly the laughter had gone out of the house. And then Danny had called and had taken her down into that frightful room, and

she'd looked down at the narrow, sharp-featured face, and suddenly cold, wild horror had scalded up over her.

It hadn't been her father. She must make herself believe it hadn't. She'd always been so calm and self-sufficient. But down there in that bright cold room, momentarily she'd become hysterical; something had snapped. That must be it. It had to be!

And yet it still didn't explain the cruel, racking strain she still sensed in her mother and Jim Ferguson, nor her own miserable, unalterable loneliness in the suddenly quiet, sober house.

She rose and resolutely tightened the narrow belt around the burgundy silk dressing gown. As she passed the dark window of the rosewood break front she caught a moment's glimpse of herself. She looked short and slight and naively unsophisticated.

Well, that was an impression she'd correct. She went to the antique mirror over the hall commode. She took out a lipstick from the drawer below the mirror and made deft, automatic touches with it. That helped a little.

Her slippers padded resolutely across the soft blue-gray carpet toward the stairs. As she reached them the doorbell chimed.

"Hello, Danny."

His words came hesitantly. "I'm sorry to intrude, but I've got to see your mother."

"No, Danny. Please. Mother just came in. She isn't well and she's upstairs resting."

"This is important, Marian." The terse words were so urgent that, without realizing it, she found herself opening the door for him.

She went up the wide stairway quickly. Her mother was sitting on the edge of the chaise longue, reading. As she looked up her eyes were filled with fright.

"Mother, Danny Michaels is here. He says he must see you at once, that it's very important."

The silent pause was long and uneasy; then, as if resignedly accepting her fate, Mrs. Ferguson bowed her head submissively.

"All right, dear, tell him I'll be right down."

Marian felt like a child dismissed as her mother walked away into her dressing room. She started down the stairs slowly, trying to force a composure that she didn't feel.

Danny was standing in the lower hall. He looked up at Marian questioningly.

"She'll be down in a moment, Danny." She noticed that he still had on his topcoat, his hat in his hand. "Let me take your things. Come into the living room."

He leaned forward, elbows resting easily on his knees, and extended his hands toward the fire. She realized she should say something. "I guess before I ask you any questions you're entitled to an explanation."

"Only if you want."

She looked down at her hands. "Honestly, Danny. I don't know why I ran away from you the other night. I suppose that place did something to me."

"Well, of course, Marian," he said easily. "It gets everyone. I understand that."

"When I saw that man I honestly believed it was Father." She felt his eyes flicker up at her face and went on quickly: "Mother set me straight, of course."

Danny said with real sympathy: "I imagine the death must have been enough of a shock at the time without reminding you of it."

Marian spoke matter-of-factly: "Well—no—Mother and I were away at the time. They had already separated. There was nothing we could have done. Father's partner in the law firm, Walter Danforth, attended to everything for Mother."

"You mean Danforth identified your father after the accident?"

SHE answered directly: "Yes, Mr. Danforth and a Dr. Fuller—I think he was my father's dentist."

Danny's next question was straight to the point.

"Has your mother ever had any reason to doubt that identification?"

Marian started and asked sharply in return, "Why should she doubt it?"

Danny shrugged and wouldn't answer, so she went on defensively: "I was just startled out of my wits at the morgue by that amazing resemblance. When I came home and told Mother and Jim about it they were afraid what I said and the resemblance might be used by the newspapers to revive the story of my father's death."

She could feel Danny's eyes appraising her and her story. She talked on: "Father had always been in the newspapers a great deal. Mother hated that. She was afraid that the *Tribune* would break into another rash."

Danny nodded. "He was supposed to be fast and sharp. I remember the Johnson bribery trial particularly. All the evidence was against Johnson, and yet your father got an acquittal."

"Father always did. The papers called him 'the crooked tool of the Chicago underworld.' And of course he was defending Tony Scotti when he died."

Danny grinned. "Yes, I've heard of him, but I guess I was buried pretty deep in medical school about that time. Just what was he charged with?"

"Scotti was indicted for bank robbery. Two guards were shot. The robbery got four hundred thousand dollars. It was a nice clean case for Father." Her voice had a cut in it.

They sat in uneasy silence. She couldn't tell any more; not now, not yet. Certainly the distant past was safe, but not the last three weeks.

"And how about the dog, Marian?"

She shrugged helplessly. "I thought it was Hans, but I hadn't seen him in three years. He disappeared right after the accident. We thought he'd just wandered off through loneliness. He was Father's dog, really." She swallowed noisily, conscious of the improbabilities in her explanation. "Probably at the morgue I was so unafraid, he just naturally took to me as though he'd known me." Then she added: "As for my mistake, of course all police dogs look exactly the same—"

"Yes, of course." He didn't look as if he believed a word of it, but at least she had stopped the penetrating questions.

He broke the silence first: "I suppose it's my turn to explain why I'm here, but I'd rather wait until I've talked with your mother, if you don't mind."

"Of course." She reached for the amber cigarette box and offered it to him. He took a cigarette and held a match for her, then for himself. "We didn't have time to say, 'Haven't seen you in a long time, and what are you doing?' last time we met, did we?"

Danny grinned. "Maybe it'd be a good idea if we just skipped that last time and started fresh right here."

She nodded. "It's been almost eight years, Danny. Quite a gap to leap."

"Oh, I'd heard good reports of you from time to time. Pete told me all about you. He told me you were something quite fancy in a belted back."

"You know Pete! Yes, I saw him at the Pump Room last summer." Marian blew out a puff of smoke. "What about you, Danny?"

"Just a quack in the making. I love it, though."

"You're through in—?"

"In June, and then it's high-ho for trumpet and drum. Army Medical Corps. I'm going to try to be a flight surgeon. I'm curious about you, Marian."

"Now you're going to laugh at me. I can see it coming."

"Give me a try."

"I run a business. A coal business. That is, I help. Bess Sampson—I guess you never knew Bess—married George Gerhardt. He got a commission in the Navy, and Bess was going to run the business. Only she found she was going to have a baby, so I took over."

"There is a chuckle in you shoveling around coal."

"You should hear me cuss out the drivers. If I don't pick up three new swearwords a week I consider myself a miserable failure. And of course with the oil shortage and everyone converting to coal, we're just

swamped. As for bookkeeping, I'm really a marvel. At any given time we can show either an enormous loss or an enormous profit. Just juggle a few figures around here and there."

Danny made a grimace, but again, somehow, their eyes met. No, she wasn't fooling him at all. This was just small talk, covering talk, and he knew it. As Danny shoved back a sleeve and looked at his watch she heard her stepfather's car drawing up the gravel drive which passed the end of this room.

"Marian, I'm sorry to cut things short, but I'm due back on duty in just a little while. Won't you see if I can speak with your mother now?"

He followed along behind her as she went to the foot of the stairs. At the top of the stairs she turned to him; they exchanged smiles. His was a reassuring grin, and it flooded up the stairs against her like warm sunshine.

She rapped gently on the door. "Mother, Danny's waiting, dear."

She opened the door. The large room was dark and empty. Its emptiness was punctuated only by the faint ticking of the clock on the low ruffled vanity dresser.

She noticed that the door to the bathroom was closed. A rim of light outlined it. For no reason that she could explain her heart was suddenly pounding in her throat. She clutched at the doorknob frantically, but it wouldn't give. Then something, some faint reflection of red light, glittered like a dark pool at her feet. She looked down. All the strength drained out of her in an enormous, crippling surge, and she screamed.

CHAPTER VIII

December 19



DANNY watched Marian up the curving stairs to the upper landing. She walked like a show girl in the big finale. Not the hip-undulating kind of show girl, either. Her back was good and straight, her head up, an even, graceful gait that had a certain fluidity and

beauty. The severe hair-do piled atop her head was cute, but he liked it down around her shoulders in soft rolls of gold, the way he remembered it. This way she was like a queen.

He watched her lift the hem of her dressing gown and step out of sight. The square collar and belt were piped in white. The belt covered the back. Pete would want to know that.

He looked around the hall. It was tall-ceilinged, one of those two-story hallways, with a wide, spacious landing across the back. To his right was evidently the dining room, closed off by louver doors. One of them was slightly ajar, and he saw an informal table, a sideboard, and a china cabinet. Above the dado was a soft scenic wallpaper, hydrangeas mixed in with magnolias and graceful, inverted twining buds.

The door farther back beyond the stairs was closed. Danny looked around again. This was a good house, rich in the comforts ample money and quiet good taste can supply. He hoped he was wrong in fearing it was a house now menaced by tragedy.

He heard a door slam shut and the deep rumble of a man's voice. Anxious to avoid Ferguson before he saw Mrs. Ferguson, Danny turned back to the stairs and then, from the big room upstairs, he heard Marian screaming!

He was rushing up the stairs even before Marian had called his name. What had happened he didn't know, but her voice was agony.

As he reached the upper hallway he was conscious of Mr. Ferguson's heavy steps running across the hallway downstairs behind him. He didn't stop to look back.

Marian was supporting herself in the doorway.

"In the bathroom." Her voice was breathless, sick with fear. She indicated the door at the back of the big room. He reached it in a few steps and he felt an inert weight holding it from the other side. As he pushed against this weight his eyes dropped to the floor. The pool of red had reached a minute crack in the hardwood floor and plummeted along the indentation. In an instant he'd pushed the door open enough to squeeze through.

Mrs. Ferguson was slumped down on her face, her left arm trailing awkwardly from her body. The blue sleeve of her house coat was blotted with red. Danny turned her over gently. She was unconscious; the front of her gown was a large blot of deep, darkening red. He hastily grabbed her wrists. Blood bubbled from each of them in short, jerky spurts. Instinctively his movements became automatic, swift, and sure. His thumbs pressed against the inside of each arm above the wound in a temporary check for the even, spurting stream of blood.

"Marian!"

Dazedly she appeared in the doorway behind him. He spoke sharply, authoritatively. "Marian! Get two towels, cloths—anything handy. Pull yourself together. It's important that you do everything I say!"

"Yes. Yes, Danny."

She hastened to the bathroom cupboard

and jerked out two hand towels. Her short, rasping breathing filled the room; deep, convulsive sobs of beginning hysteria. He hoped she'd get control of herself because he couldn't help her now. Anyway, so far, she was following his commands.

"Open them up. Now wrap one twice around your mother's arm, just below the shoulder. We've got to get on a tourniquet."

She knelt beside him and followed his orders in frantic, nervous haste that made her awkward at first.

"Okay. Now tie it loosely; tie the ends. That's right. Now get a hairbrush, anything you can twist to tighten the tourniquet."

As Marian went to the shower stall Danny looked up to see Ferguson standing above him, utter horror consuming his face.

"There's been an accident." Danny's voice was authoritative. "I need some scissors right away."

Ferguson looked down at Danny a moment, then disappeared into the bedroom again as Marian knelt beside him, a long-handled bath brush in her hand.

"Swell."

He supervised her as she tied the towel a second time in a square knot over the handle and then twisted it slowly so that the proper pressure would be exerted. The desperate importance of each moment seemed to sustain her, now giving her a stiffly automatic competence.

Now he could release the newly freed hand to direct the application of the tourniquet to the other arm. A hairbrush, tied in a looped towel, tightened the binding as it was turned gently.

"Okay. Now look, Marian. Go down in the kitchen, take a small kitchen pan, boil some water for ten minutes. I'll want to wash out the wounds."

SHE looked at him a moment; then she turned quickly and was gone.

"Will these do?" Ferguson appeared in the doorway with a pair of large sewing scissors in his shaking hands.

"Fine. Mr. Ferguson, I'm going to need some supplies. Number-O plain ligature, a surgical clamp, sterile gloves. I'll need some tincture of iodine, a hypo of novocain to anesthetize these wrists. A roll of three-inch gauze and adhesive tape. . . ."

Danny glanced up at Ferguson and went on commandingly: "You've got twenty minutes. I don't have to loosen the tourniquets until then. She hasn't lost enough blood to hurt her, but it depends on you. She'll be all right if you'll hurry."

Ferguson finally found words. "I'll hurry, Doctor." Then he spun around and left the room quickly.

Danny started to work, cutting away the

lower sleeves of the robe. No need to risk contaminating the wound.

When this was done he gently lifted his patient, and a tiny blade of blue metal dropped from the folds of her robe and tinkled to the floor.

Marian reappeared in the hall doorway and hurried into the room. "Edna had some water boiling in the kitchen, Danny. I poured it into a little shallow pan and started it boiling again. What can I do now?"

"I've got to look at these wrists, Marian; find out just how serious things are." He glanced at her apprehensively.

"I'm all right now, Danny. How about Mother?"

"She'll be all right."

As he turned back to the figure on the bed Marian moved the lamp and held it directly behind his shoulder.

He grunted with relief. This first wrist wasn't bad. He gently lowered the arm and crossed around and surveyed the other wrist.

"We're lucky. Only the radial arteries are severed; the tendons are okay, and so's the ulnar artery. I'll clamp and tie the radial, then whip up the gash. There'll be plenty of circulation to the hand without the supply from the radial." He looked up at Marian and nodded. He felt for a pulse along Mrs. Ferguson's neck and counted it off while he watched the minute hand of his watch.

"What should we do now?" Marian was in a fever of impatience to do something more for her mother.

"Not much we can do until Ferguson gets back and the water's boiled."

"Can't you get her out of the faint, Danny? She looks so—so—" Her voice trembled, then broke.

"It keeps her relaxed. I hope she stays under until I get the stitches in."

"I knew this was coming." Each syllable was cold self-accusation. "It's Father. I hated him. I should have known. I shouldn't have left her here alone."

Danny looked quickly up. Pretense was gone now, and she was really going to explain, but three notes on the door chimes interrupted them. She didn't seem to hear it, and Danny spoke sharply to bring her back.

"The door, Marian. Get the door. And bring back that sterile water, also another larger basin. Set the pan of sterile water in ice for a while to cool it off. There's too much to do to stand around talking right now. You can tell me later."

She left the room silently, closing the door behind her. Danny bent down over his patient. Her breathing was deep and free. He pushed back an eyelid; the unconsciousness was lifting. Probably get at least one wrist fixed before she regained conscious-

ness. Hell, he should have ordered a hypo of morphine. Better keep her quiet until morning.

He examined the inside of the arm, pressing the soft flesh between his fingers, and then he temporarily loosened the tourniquet to allow a refreshing of the circulation. He repeated the procedure with the other arm. Then he stepped quickly into the bathroom. With the quick swoop of a large bath towel he got most of the blood from the tiles. He dropped the towel in the tub and rinsed it beneath the spout. Marian and Ferguson were upset as it was, without having this to do later.

He went to the cabinet above the washbasin and found some Lysol, which he uncapped and stood on the rim of the bowl. Then he washed his hands rapidly, methodically. He filled the basin again, poured a little of the disinfectant into the warm water, and plunged in his arms and then shook the water from them. As he stepped back into the bedroom he heard a car beside the house on the gravel driveway. It had stopped abruptly with a loud scream of brakes and slipping of rough gravel. Danny smiled soberly. Ferguson was really hurrying.

Mrs. Ferguson stirred restlessly. A low moan came from her lips. Damn it, why doesn't Ferguson come up here? And what has happened to Marian?

HE WAITED for the bang of the front door. Impatiently he walked to the window behind the desk and tried to peer out through the slanted blinds, but it was blackly dark outside. In annoyance he turned back, and something in the chintz-covered wastebasket caught his eye. It was a dull olive-green book with gold lettering on the cover. The lettering spelled: "Landors, *Diagnosis and Treatment of Rare Diseases.*" Danny stopped for a long moment. Well, that was the last link in the chain. There was no doubt now. It was Sutton in the morgue. . . .

Ferguson opened the door. He had a black case in his hand. "How is she, Doctor?"

"Doing fine. You were quick."

"I went to Dr. Dermody's. He's only two blocks away. His wife gave me his emergency bag. She said all the instruments were sterilized. . . . Dermody's coming as soon as she can locate him. He's our family physician."

Danny opened the bag eagerly. A small bottle of tincture of green soap; gauze, wrapped in folds of white unbleached linen. A glass container with sterile needles. At the bottom of the bag he found two other linen-wrapped bundles. One was doubtless the surgical instruments; the second, surgical gloves. He was in luck.

Danny nodded his approval as he carefully opened one of the white sterile packages and saw the surgical instruments which were kept inside. He spread the towel open on the bed without touching the instruments. He took up the hypo syringe and filled it with morphine.

"This is fine, Mr. Ferguson. Everything I'll need." Danny walked briskly to the bedside.

Mr. Ferguson spoke finally in a voice that was wooden, colorless, offhand. "A Sergeant Myers is downstairs. He insists on seeing my wife."

Danny drew in breath between his teeth. "That's out of the question. After I give her this morphine she'll sleep until morning."

Ferguson looked down at the woman on the bed. His voice reflected the tenderness in his eyes. "You're sure she'll be all right?"

"Yes, sir. I promise that." He patted the arm above the tourniquet with alcohol. "Did you tell the sergeant about this?"

"No."

"That's good. Just say she's had a nervous collapse. After this afternoon, the sergeant will know what that means."

Ferguson was suddenly alert. "What do you mean—this afternoon?"

Danny pushed the needle gently into the soft white flesh. "The sergeant will understand."

"But I don't."

Danny turned to him. "Sorry, I'm going to be busy here for a while. Just tell Sergeant Myers she can't be seen. Her doctor forbids it. That is, if I am her doctor temporarily?"

"Why, yes, of course. I'm deeply grateful for what you've done."

"Then please go down; try to get rid of the sergeant, and send Marian to me. I may need her help." Danny felt for the pulse again as Ferguson turned to go. "Mr. Ferguson, I'd change my coat. You've a spot of blood on your sleeve."

Ferguson stopped only long enough to alter his direction. He walked rapidly into the bathroom and through its second door into a room beyond.

Danny was ready now for the surgical gloves. He returned to the bathroom, gingerly dried his hands on a clean towel, and sprinkled some talcum powder over them.

When he returned to the room Marian was beside the bed, gently rearranging the hair away from her mother's quiet face. A small shallow basin of sterile water lay in the larger basin which was filled with ice. Danny took a sterile bandage, dipped an end in the smaller pan, and tested the water on his wrist. It had cooled sufficiently to go ahead. "It's okay now. Throw out the ice, will you?

We'll use that pan to rinse into." He slipped his hands into the gloves; the rubber snapped about his wrists. "I'm going to need your help. Can you take it?"

"I can." From the bathroom her voice sounded different to him.

"While you're there I'll need several clean towels." This was going to be ticklish work; the arteries were small.

Marian spoke in a strained voice as she returned to his side. "A policeman is downstairs, Danny."

He didn't raise his head. He was deep in an examination of the wound.

"He said that Mother was at the morgue this afternoon." Marian's voice was an accusation now.

Danny doused one of the square-folded gauze pads in the sterile water and nodded at a small bottle of green-yellow liquid he had set out beside the surgical instruments. "Pour just a drop of that tincture of green soap onto this pad."

THE sweet-scented liquid trickled to the wet bandage, and he manipulated it so that it was mixed in with the water. Danny proceeded to bathe the lower arm soberly.

"He says you asked her down." It was an indictment.

"Look here. There's something about that man in the morgue that was important to your mother. That's why she came." Danny took a second square of gauze and rinsed the wound with clear sterile water to remove the traces of soap. Without being told Marian had slid the larger basin under the limp arm to catch the bloodstained water that dripped off the fingers.

"Why have you tried so hard to involve us with that man?"

Danny took up the surgical clamp and probed carefully until he had secured the tips of the artery. Then he looped the slender number-O ligature quickly around the artery above the clamp and secured it with a knot. "Because he's your father!"

Marian was silent as Danny rose and loosened the tourniquet. He wanted to be sure there were no other bleeders before sewing up the skin edges. He looked at the nasty gash again. Now that the radial artery was stopped the blood flow had stopped too.

"Why couldn't you just let his life end? Mother doesn't deserve this!"

He patted the skin area around the wound with a new gauze pad, making sure it was dry. Then he painted around the skin edges with tincture of iodine, being careful that none of the brown liquid got into the tender tissues of the wound.

"Take that glass vial, please." Danny ignored her silent question. "Now break the

seal and twist open the lid. Be careful; don't spill the needles. Empty them in with the surgical instruments." She did as she was told, and he selected the smallest needle and took the black silk suture.

Three stitches would hold the skin together. No, better take four.

"It was all settled, Marian." He talked slowly as he pulled the first stitch, twisted the needle, and slipped the knot close to the skin. Then after he had cut the suture with the scissors he went on: "Then night before last we found something in the body at the morgue. I had to warn your mother."

She looked away as the needle slipped again into the soft flesh. Her voice was shrill with indignation. "I'd said it wasn't my father."

He didn't try to answer that. He drew the second stitch tight, then the third. He worked on quietly, competently, and finally had to speak. "I can feel your resentment, Marian. Please believe I didn't mean to involve any of you."

"You brought the policeman here; that's enough for me." Marian's anger mounted; her voice was rough. "Your coming drove Mother to this!"

"No, it started when you came down there and said: 'That's my father!' If you knew he was dead, why did you come?"

"I couldn't help it. I was terribly upset. I didn't realize what I was saying. Oh, why did I go? Why did I have to try to help?"

He glanced up at her: all the resistance in her had faded. He felt terribly sorry for her. "I know how you feel, Marian. I was just trying to help too. Here—take a couple of those tongue blades." Danny nodded at a small package of smooth wooden slats. "That's it. Now hold them against the back of the wrist." Danny placed a dressing over the wounded wrist and started unwinding a roll bandage to hold it secure. When it had progressed far enough to secure the miniature splint she had been holding she took up the adhesive and tore off a strip without being told. She's made a good nurse, he thought.

Then he reached up and loosened the tourniquet. Not off, just considerably looser, enough to let a little blood flow down gradually into the arm. Later the towel would come off.

"Okay. Now move the chair around to the other side of the bed, please."

He sat again and reached for the other arm and started the same process of bathing, first with a small amount of the tincture of green soap, then with pure clear water. He picked up the scissors and cut the suture above the small knot; then he turned to her and asked steadily: "Marian, when did you

first realize that your father was alive?"

She answered quickly, as though she were relieved to drop lies and pretense and talk frankly to someone.

"I didn't *know*. I suspected. My first suspicion was one day a letter came for Mother. I was sure it was his handwriting. That was about three weeks ago. Two days later I picked up the extension downstairs and heard Mother talking to a man. It was my father's voice."

"And what did you do about it?"

"I didn't listen in. I wish I had! I came up and talked to Mother afterward. She was terribly upset. She denied it was Father. That night she and Jim sat up half the night, talking. I could hear their voices but not what they said."

"And then what happened?"

"Mother and Jim were forever talking together, whispering, and when I came into the room they'd stop." She looked about the big room unhappily. "Everything changed for us, Danny. Jim spent almost all of his time down at the office, and when he was home he was restless. About a week ago he told me they'd decided it'd be a good idea if I went out to California to visit an aunt. They wanted to get rid of me. I told them I wouldn't go. And then—"

"Yes?"

"You called that night and mentioned my father. I wondered if you'd seen him—if you knew he was alive. You seemed to. I thought perhaps—"

"You could help?"

She nodded, biting in her lower lip. "And instead I only involved them more deeply. They still didn't explain when I got home, but they insisted that I 'convince' myself I'd been wrong. Jim returned Hans to you. They hoped to cover up for the break I'd made. They were so terribly urgent and desperate that I consented without understanding why."

Danny pulled the last knot. He covered the wound with a gauze bandage, and Marian automatically took up two of the tongue blades and held them against the back of the hand until the roll bandage had secured them.

He shook his head, musing. "I've never known it to fail."

"What?"

"This is what always happens when you try to conceal facts from the right authorities."

"Is this your help? Doubting them, holding suspicions against them?" Marian's voice was suddenly shrill. "How did that policeman know about me? How'd he know Mother went to the morgue this afternoon?"

Danny wrapped the bandage around the

wrist and pulled it tight and fastened it. His face was burning.

"Myers knew about you because I told him. He knew about your mother because he came in while she was there."

"Yes! I suppose you had that all planned with him in advance! I suppose—"

"Marian!" His voice was sharp, but it didn't serve to check the sudden deluge of anger.

"You'd better go, Dr. Michaels! You'd better leave right now!"

Danny looked down at his patient and gently removed the tourniquets. Then he peeled off the rubber gloves and drew a quilted blanket up over Mrs. Ferguson's sleeping body. He'd done everything he could do for her now.

At the door he turned. His voice was soft. "Good-by, Marian. And good luck. I'm awfully sorry."

THE SERGEANT'S eyes were on him like a couple of red-hot coals as he paced mechanically into the living room. Ferguson watched him in a set, wretched glare, but that wasn't so important to Danny.

He had to take a grip on himself to rid his mind of the memory of Marian standing so defiant and protective beside her mother's bed. . . .

"Well, Danny?" The sergeant's big voice filled the room. "I thought I told you—told, hell!—ordered you to keep away from here!"

Danny turned to Ferguson. The older man's face was taut and stern. "I was invited," Danny said forcefully. "In fact, Mr. Ferguson asked me out to look at his wife, didn't you, Mr. Ferguson?" Danny threw a miserable but threatening glance at Ferguson.

"Yes. Yes, Sergeant."

Danny couldn't stand looking at the utter loathing in Ferguson's eyes.

"And how is the lady? Can I see her for a minute?"

Danny refused flatly. "It's out of the question. She's very upset."

"Yes," said Ferguson. "I'm sure you can understand, Sergeant, that after her experiences of this afternoon she'd be quite unable to see anyone." Again the fine eyes whipped against Danny with loathing.

The sergeant approached Danny, twirling his hat wheedlingly in his hand. "It'd only take a minute."

"In the first place," said Danny, "I've given her some stuff to make her sleep." He forced a grin into his stiff face. "Peeking in at a sleeping woman isn't exactly your kind of work, is it, Sergeant?"

"Not me! No sir!" The sergeant moved quickly to correct this erroneous impression.

Danny took the sergeant firmly by the arm

and propelled him toward the doorway. "Perhaps later, Sarge, in three or four days"—he glanced at Ferguson, but the elderly man did not change his expression—"even better, in a week, you could see her for a few minutes."

"You mean she's that sick, Danny?"

Danny nodded. At the door he stopped. "I'd like to leave a note for Dr. Dermody, Mr. Ferguson." Danny pulled a pencil and memo pad from his pocket. He scribbled on it hastily and then handed it to the older man. "You'll see that he gets this when he comes?"

Danny picked up his overcoat. "Now, Sergeant, maybe you'll give me a lift to town?"

"Oh, I could go a little farther than that," the sergeant said viciously.

Ferguson had followed behind them quietly. The porch light snapped on.

"Perhaps," ventured the sergeant, "I might run out, like the doctor says, in a few days or so?"

"As soon as Mrs. Ferguson's health permits, I'll call you." Ferguson opened the door and rustled the doorknob impatiently. "Good night, gentlemen."

The door closed behind them solidly.

They paced across the wide front porch and down the front steps, and then Sergeant Myers paused.

"Just a minute," he said. "I got the wolf with me. He's been tied up to a tree over there."

Danny followed the sergeant back on the dark driveway.

Their footsteps ground down into the loose gravel in an uneven cacophony. They reached a spot where two young maple trees grew close to the driveway, espaliered flatly against the stately side of the house.

Danny wondered aloud: "What's the idea of hiding the dog?"

"Wanted to spring him as a surprise." The sergeant sounded smugly self-satisfied, like Dan Dunn explaining his latest case. "Anyhow, he'd had a long car ride. I figured he ought to have out for a while." The sergeant bent down with a grunt and reached into the blackness beneath the largest tree. "Damn it, I left him right here."

His bones cracked noisily as he straightened up to take another look. "Yep. This is the place." He groped about in the darkness intently. Then a match flared in the big hand. The winter wind licked at it eagerly.

The sergeant straightened up with an oath. "I'll be damned!" He put something in Danny's hand. It was the end of Hans's leather leash, broken off a few inches from the hand loop. The dog was gone!

CHAPTER IX

December 20



DANNY had just reached a pause in the next morning, a brief thank-you-ma'am in the uphill fight through the deluge of patients crowding Emergency. He was taking a history on a broken-arm case when the telephone called.

A rich, smooth voice was waiting for him when he reached the telephone in the hallway.

"Dr. Michaels? This is Charles Dermody."

"Oh yes, Doctor. How's the patient?"

"Getting along, thank you. Of course we must expect a few days. I should like, though, to commend you. A very competent piece of work. And thank's so much for your note!"

Danny murmured modestly, but the voice cut in firmly ahead of him. "I'm at the house now. The patient awakened about an hour ago." Danny glanced at the round thick watch on his wrist. It was nine-twenty. Dermody went on: "She's suffering a little pain; we expected that. But in the main, she's encouragingly quiet and composed."

"That's fine, Doctor. If there's any way I can help—"

"Well, as a matter of fact, Doctor, I feel that the best treatment at present is quiet; no new strains, nothing upsetting or distracting." Danny could hear a gentle throat clearing at the other end of the wire. "In other words. I think it safe to assume the entire occurrence was an accident of hysteria and panic, which will not be repeated if we make every assurance her mind is not again temporarily unsettled as it was."

"Yes, Doctor." He didn't know exactly what he was saying yes to, but three years of pre-med had educated him in the strange science of talking with another doctor. Especially an overstuffed, ultraprofessional doctor like Dermody. "Dr. Dermody, of course Mrs. Ferguson has discussed with you the reason behind the—the accident?"

"She has, yes. I have her complete confidence, of course."

"Of course, Doctor."

"I should like to request that, since I am so close to the case, you permit me to take full and complete responsibility."

"Of course, Doctor. I had no interest in the matter at any time other than to call the possibility of infection to Mrs. Ferguson's attention."

"And you certainly succeeded in that."

Dermody's humor came across the wire with a stilted chuckle. "Of course, if a report is necessary to Federal Health, I shall follow the usual procedure."

The voice shut off with a faint click.

Danny turned from the telephone. As he stepped briskly down the shining linoleum corridor he jammed his stethoscope deeper into the pocket of his white jacket.

Well, that's that. Authority, law, and order prevail. But not me. And that's just what I wanted. . . .

Swab and cleanup—get the history, Miss Collins. Better hold this in a Murray-Jones until we send him upstairs. Now, this is just a little shot to ease the pain; the needle's going to tickle a little, like sitting on a mosquito. . . .

The Ferguson problems slid out of Danny's mind.

Night Emergency, in the person of Intern Maxie Strickland, came down with the flu that afternoon, and Danny was on twenty-four hour duty.

The Ferguson problem stayed slid.

The next two days were a steady drone of bandage, splint, suture, dressing. The only punctuation was a couple of telephone calls from Sergeant Myers, neither of which Danny could answer. And there was the message from Dr. Dermody's office out in Evanston: "Our tests showed negative response; the patient is improving."

Finally Dr. Elliot's office did a big switch. Ben Hudson—pudgy, plodding Benny—transferred from Outpatient to Night Emergency. Danny had twenty-four hours off to catch up on his sleep. He slept six.

When he awakened he showered and dressed quickly and hurried out—to the hospital. There was the little matter of back work in etiology. After all, he couldn't put off his studies forever.

At four in the afternoon the big building's entrance was crowded: Christmas was only three days off now. Everyone was trying to get home. And no wonder. This was no place for Christmas, despite the sad, scraggly little tree surrounded by surgical cotton in the lobby, with two of the three strings of lights already gone out. The Christmas-dinner trays would bear discouraged sprigs of artificial holly—left over from last year and made in Japan. And perhaps, the budget permitting, they'd have green ice cream, frozen rocklike into Christmas-tree shapes, with the mild, haunting flavor of ether and rubber gloves.

Yes, people were trying to get home all right, with the same hysteria that must have pervaded in ancient Pompeii just before Vesuvius erupted. And as soon as they got out others would take their place, and the

same exodus would go on a day or two before New Year's. Followed by the same influx. It was a vicious circle.

He waved at Miss Larkin at the switchboard behind the wide oak counter and winked at the new girl running the elevator, and when he heard his name he turned quickly.

"Hi there, Dan!"

A big man in a blue uniform was walking over to him.

"Hi there, Mike! Walking a new beat?"

"Naw. I just come up to get some dope from a guy I brought over here yesterday. He was shot up by a couple of young hoods trying to stick up his delicatessen."

"Hurt bad?"

"He'll pull through." The policeman's voice was offhand without being calloused. Mike was a young cop, and young cops, like young doctors, feel compelled to be tough about everything. "Oh, by the way, Doe, I was supposed to give you a message."

"Okay."

"From Sergeant Myers. He's been trying to get you this morning. First he calls you here at the hospital. They say you're off duty. So he calls up to your room. Your roommate says you're over here." The policeman flexed his arms back and forth, exercising a bull chest. "So the sarge asked me to scare you up."

"What does he want, Mike? I thought he was off of me for life."

"Yeah? Well, it seems there's some folks over in Evanston." Danny nodded. "He calls 'em last night; wants to drop by. Talked to the old man of the house, who says his wife is sick as a dog, and it's no dice, but absolutely. So the sergeant calls this noon and gets the maid." Instinctively Mike's face lighted up. "She says this guy and his old lady are out."

"Out?" Danny repeated in absolute bewilderment.

"Yeah. So the sarge sort of busted his suspenders and says he wants to see you." Mike grinned. "When he finds out I'm coming here he pins the badge on me. I'm supposed to run you in. I got the car outside." Mike looked at Danny's sober face. "What's the matter, Dan? Caught yourself some trouble?"

Danny paused a moment. "I don't know, Mike. But an order's an order."

THE RIDE was at once a tribute to Mike's split timing and the fact that God looks over the Irish. Despite Commissioner Clarke's automobile heaters, Danny had a chill several times en route.

Six minutes and four miles later they lurched to a stop in front of a shabby build-

ing with two lights beside the entrance. Danny hurried from the car to the open front door and entered the sergeant's office hesitantly.

Over by a dust-splotted window the sergeant sat behind a dark oak desk. He was leaning forward belligerently at the telephone. The heavy little finger of his right hand was crooked as he held the receiver to his ear, intimating that this was a purely social call. He beckoned Danny, with glowering eyebrows, into a dirty barrellike oak chair against the wall.

"Hello?" The sergeant punctuated the greeting with a moody frown. "Mrs. McWalters?" He looked up at Danny sadly. "Sergeant Myers speaking. I have just heard of Sergeant McWalters' unfortunate indisposition. . . . What? . . . Oh." There was a long pause. "Oh. . . . Oh, is that so? . . . Well, you tell Mac I called to pay my respects. . . . Yes indeed, ma'am!"

The sergeant put up the receiver and glared down at it pensively.

Mike was still standing in the doorway beside Danny. "Jeese, Sarge. McWalters—he ain't dead!"

"No," said the sergeant heavily. "He ain't dead. According to his old lady, he's fully recovered."

The sergeant's watery eyes flicked up at Mike witheringly. "Okay, Mike," Myers said imperiously.

Mike took the hint. The door closed gently.

"All right, Danny. Start talking."

"I suppose you want to know a little more about my call to the Fergusons?"

"You suppose correct!"

"I went there because I was worried about Mrs. Ferguson when she left the morgue. I wanted to satisfy myself she got home safely."

"Nuts! Nice lyrics. When're you going to write the music?"

"It happens to be true, Sarge. And that was no lie."

The sergeant's eyes glowered. "And just what was you doing upstairs when I arrived?"

"It was a medical problem."

"What kind of medical problem?"

"I can't tell you, Sarge. I'm a doctor; I'm bound to secrecy."

THE SERGEANT had run into medical ethics before, so he merely sighed. "And maybe you can explain how, when she's so sick she can't see me last night, she can be well enough today to go out for the day!"

"I didn't know she had."

"Well, she did!" The sergeant looked down at the scribbings on his memo pad. "Her and Ferguson. Left their house at eleven ten

this A. M."

Danny smiled weakly. "Anyone'd think you had a watch on the place."

The sergeant's eyes hit against his like coals, and the big mouth hardened. "I have. I began to feel there was something phony there. I had a couple of the boys keeping a case on the house and everything that goes on. Gelsey called to report when the Fergusons skipped in their car and to tell me O'Harra's tailing them. He's to call me as soon as they get back."

"Oh." Danny tried to make his voice coldly matter-of-fact. "Sarge, I truthfully don't know what, if anything, is going on there. But look—the Fergusons are nice people; they're reliable. They're not the kind who go haywire."

"They aren't exactly the kind who come clean, either."

"They're just trying to mind their own business."

"Which is okay until it starts interfering with *my* business. Then *their* business is *my* business."

"I know, Sarge. But, y'see, until I started sticking my snoot into things they were doing all right. I feel responsible and—" Danny gulped.

"Oh, I get it!" The sergeant's small eyes gleamed beneath lowered eyelids. "It's that girl! Listen, Danny, this is no love clinic. I got my job to do and, come hell or high water, I'm going to do it!" The sergeant furiously sketched surrealistic designs on the back of an envelope with a stubby pencil.

"All I know is, there's something fishy out there, and I'm going to find out what."

"What's fishy about it? Sutton's dead; you found that out."

"Yeah. So I did, didn't I?"

Danny observed the sergeant's quizzical glare and frowningly decided he'd better listen and hold his tongue.

"The first thing that's fishy is about that dog. He belonged to Sorenson. Right? Also, Miss Sutton thought she knew him. Right?" Danny nodded meekly. "Could be Mrs. Ferguson knows him too. Right?"

Danny shrugged. "It *could* be. Sure."

"And we'd have found out if you hadn't been so damned fast to slip her the sleeping medicine. You knew I was going out there, so you knocked her out for a few hours."

Danny gulped dryly. "That was purely coincidental."

"Oh—of course. But maybe the way that dog disappeared wasn't! That's fishy—detail number one. Nobody's seen hide nor hair of the dog since that night. We've had the boys out in Evanston keeping a sharp lookout. Now if the dog was lost or strayed, wouldn't he show up somewhere?"

Danny gulped glumly. "He might."

"Okay. Miss Sutton told you she knew Sorenson's dog. Why? Why'd she say that if it wasn't true? She don't look like the kind of girl who goes around identifying strange dogs in front of the morgue for lack of something better to do."

Danny's mind was working at top speed. There were a few things he wanted to know,

A MELODY OF MURDER IS THE



DOCTOR WESTLAKE and his daughter Dawn, those famous detective characters featured in many of Jonathan Stagge's best-selling novels, again tangle with murder—this time to the tune of an old ballad! After the first three mysterious deaths, Doctor Westlake and Inspector Cobb realize with growing horror that there are many more verses to the ballad. They take every precaution to avoid further bloodshed, but—

Surprise follows surprise as a shocking and gripping series of events unfolds itself in *DEATH'S OLD SWEET SONG*—a novel in which Jonathan Stagge has mixed suspense, characterization and comedy into the picture of a small New England town frozen with horror at the violence it contains! A credible, compelling novel packed with thrills and entertainment from start to finish! Look forward to it.

but how was he going to work the sergeant around to a point where he could be asked questions and not have two riot squads heading north a moment after?

The sergeant broke the silence: "Well? I can see you cooking up something. What is it?"

Danny smiled oilyly. "Oh, nothing. I was just contemplating the hell I raised with my boner in identifying the guy as Sutton."

"Don't brood over it."

Danny swung his leg off the arm of the chair and walked slowly to the window. "After all, I hadn't seen him for eight years. I hadn't heard anything about his death. I knew him pretty well. Just what were the details, Sarge?"

The sergeant was interrupted as the outer door opened and Mike reappeared.

"Sergeant?"

"Yah!"

"Hennessey just come in with that guy you wanted brung in. He's waiting outside."

"Okay," grunted the sergeant. "Be just a minute, Mike." The sergeant wrenched open his desk drawer. "I got some business with this guy, Danny. You got to clear out." He drew a manila folder from the drawer and thrust it at Danny menacingly. "Here's the file on the Sutton accident right here. Read it yourself."

Danny took the thick folder eagerly. The sergeant nodded at a glass-paneled door across the room. "Read them in Kingman's office. He's out for the day. Only don't lose anything out of it. And for Chrisakes, don't start prowling around in Kingman's desk."

"Sure, Sarge. You bet." He opened the door the sergeant had indicated, and as he turned to close it behind him the main entrance to the sergeant's office opened, and Walter Danforth stepped in past Mike, the patrolman.

CHAPTER X

December 22



DANNY snapped on the light over the wide desk and thoughtfully spread the manila folder before him. The contents consisted of police reports of the wreck, photostats of the coroner's report on the condition of the body and his verdict of "accidental death," photostats of affidavits of identity signed by Walter Danforth and Dr. John Fuller, D.D.S., a carbon copy of the coroner's reports, and some faintly yellowed newspaper clippings from local papers, all dated in November and December, three years ago.

He noticed with surprise that the voices in the adjoining room came to him almost as clearly and distinctly as though he were right in the room of their source. He looked up and around and grinned as he saw the open transom. He hoped the sarge wouldn't see it too. Now Danny couldn't miss hearing everything even if he tried. And he wasn't

[Turn page]

HARBINGER OF GRISLY CRIME!

*Death's
Old Sweet
Song*

A Complete Book-Length

Dr. Westlake Novel

By

JONATHAN STAGGE

COMING NEXT ISSUE!



trying. He glanced hurriedly at the first clipping as Danforth and the sergeant exchanged affable greetings. (Danforth was speaking winningly of his complete willingness to co-operate and assist at any time and in any way.)

Nov. 19. Alfred Sutton, notorious criminal attorney, was killed last night when, one half mile north of the lighthouse on Sheridan Road, his heavy sedan careened into a ravine and burst into flames. When passing motorists reached the car, Sutton, trapped behind the wheel, had been overcome, and rescue was impossible.

Cook County Police investigating at the scene reported that Sutton must have lost control of the heavy sedan on the slippery road.

County Coroner Fox has set the inquest for today.

Sergeant Myers was reacting wholesomely to Danforth's eager offer of co-operation and was telling the attorney modestly that the police make every effort to dispatch their work without interfering with the lives of the city's splendid citizens. . . . Danny returned to the clipping.

News of Sutton's death came as a blow to Tony Scotti, facing sentence for the alleged robbery, on May 15 last, of the Mayfair State Bank. Sutton was defending Scotti, who had no statement to make when interviewed by your *Tribune* reporter.

The article went on to say that in this case, as in so many others, "this paper has again been 'first with the latest,' thereby bringing to Chicago citizens the news of tomorrow—today."

Danny looked up. The greetings in the adjoining room were almost over now.

"We really appreciate that attitude very much, Mr. Danforth. So many people, you know . . ." That was the sergeant.

Danforth's voice came in: "Your officer, when he called at my office, mentioned that there was some feature of my failure to identify the deceased as Alfred Sutton that was puzzling you."

"Not 'puzzling,'" corrected the sergeant hurriedly. "But we've had some sort of conflicting ideas on the matter."

"Oh?"

"There seems to have been some feeling from the very first that the body *might* be Mr. Sutton's. Well, this morning, as pure routine, we called in Dr. John Fuller of Glencoe."

"Oh yes!" The voice was heavy with interest. "I remember Dr. Fuller. As I recall it, he testified at the coroner's inquest along with me. He stated that the dental plates found after the automobile fire were a set he had made for Alfred Sutton."

"That's right. His testimony was largely responsible for the verdict of the coroner's jury that it *was* Sutton in the car. There wasn't much else left to identify."

Danforth treated the sergeant to a pained silence.

"Well, anyway, he come into the morgue. He took one look at the corpse in the morgue and said: 'That is Sutton!'"

Indulgent doubt was in Danforth's slow words: "I see."

"But when he inspected Sorenson's teeth he wasn't so sure. Sorenson had plates, too, only Dr. Fuller says they were definitely not plates he'd ever made for Sutton. Said there was some similarity in the dental problems involved, but that was about as far as he could go."

"Hardly legal evidence," said Danforth.

"Yeah. Particularly when he said he guessed he'd been wrong; it probably wasn't Sutton at that. But after all, he hadn't seen Sutton for three and a half years." The sergeant added dryly, "And you know dentists. They wouldn't recognize their own brother unless he was sitting in a dentist's chair with his yap open."

Danforth laughed patronizingly; that big boom-boom-boom laugh.

"So we were right back where we started, only the Sutton question was on our hands again. That's why we've asked you to come in, Mr. Danforth."

"Oh?" Danny could picture the bushy eyebrows raising questioningly.

"There are just two questions. First, we wondered if you might know if Sutton ever went to any doctor. A doctor might know of any scars or marks on Sutton. Of course if we found the same scars or marks on Sorenson it'd tie the two together."

Danforth deliberated cautiously. "I'm afraid I can't tell you a thing about that, Sergeant; I knew absolutely nothing of Sutton's—private life. It's certainly quite possible he was seeing a doctor; he was always nervous, irritable, not exactly robust." Danforth's tone was quizzical, faintly injured. "It seems rather strange, Sergeant, that you still feel it necessary to check farther when both Dr. Fuller and I have testified that it isn't Sutton."

THE SERGEANT scurried to correct and appease the prominent attorney. "But you see, Mr. Danforth, another little item has come to our attention."

"Yes?"

"Unfortunately, I'm unable to discuss the case fully as yet. But there are certain ramifications which have attracted the interest of the Federal Health Bureau."

"Oh?"

"Perhaps you've already been questioned by them?"

"No," said Danforth more easily. "Although if there's any way I can help—"

"Dr. Seaver, in charge of the bureau, has mentioned, let us say, an unusual fact. It is possible that Mr. Sorenson had an ailment which might"—the sergeant cleared his throat—"might have altered his facial features."

"Altered them?" The voice started low and ran the scale in effusive interest.

"Coarsen them, you might say. Make the features heavier."

"Is that so?"

"In the light of that fact, I thought it worth while to check with you again." Again the sergeant's voice became hesitant. "I wondered if, discounting the fact that the features might be 'coarsened,' so to speak, you would be less sure of your statement that it is not Sutton."

There was a pause. Quite a deep, thoughtful pause. Then Danforth's voice boomed out richly: "Sergeant, I truly don't believe I can alter my original statement. No, that simply isn't Alfred Sutton. I'm very certain of that."

"Oh." The sergeant seemed glum and disappointed.

The Danforth brotherly smile carried through, even in his voice. "I hope I haven't destroyed some complicated theory you've been developing?" Danny stopped breathing as Danforth asked the question. The sentence had carried a smile, all right, and the fine Danforth ease. But it had carried another element, too. An element that perhaps was more noticeable when you could only hear the voice but not see the strong round face with its florid, open-and-aboveboard expression. It was an element of—eagerness? A hidden anxiety? Danny couldn't quite define the thing himself. But it was there.

"No," said the sergeant guilelessly. "Of course, Mr. Danforth, we work on any and all theories. Doesn't pay to discount any possibility of error, y'know."

"Of course," said Danforth easily. "The thorough job is the only job." There was a pause. "Cigar?"

"Well, don't mind if I do!" crowed the sergeant.

Danny heard a match strike against a grating. He could almost smell the smoke. Coronas, no doubt. Something that cost at least two bits a throw.

"Tell me, Sergeant," the attorney went on conversationally, "you were on the Whitcomb case, weren't you?"

Danny grinned. Danforth was some politician! He'd dug that one up especially for the occasion. The Whitcomb case was years

ago, and it had nothing to do with the business at hand. But it had been the sergeant's case all the way. Even now he loved to talk of it, telling of his masterful deduction, his defiance of all the other experts, and his final smashing solution. Danny could picture the sergeant glowing like neon.

"Quite an interesting case, that one," mused the sergeant. "Y'see, this guy Whitcomb . . ."

Danny sighed. He'd heard the story a million times. It was good for at least five minutes. He looked down again at the clutter of papers in the manila folder and came across a yellowed newspaper clipping dated November 20.

Superior Court Judge Clement L. Vandegrift yesterday refused petition of Arthur Mander, new legal counsel for Tony Scotti, for a new trial on charges against Scotti of robbing the Mayfair State Bank last May. Mander pointed out that he had been previously acting in the case only as advisory counsel and that the recent death of Alfred Sutton, prominent criminal attorney, had interfered with the fair and just defense of Scotti against the charges preferred.

Judge Vandegrift, in refusing the petition, stated that all facts and evidence of the case had been thoroughly presented and that he had no doubt Mander could sum up the evidence before the jury with all . . .

Danny skimmed through the rest of the story. Evidently the trial had gone on despite the petition. He raised his head and listened to the two voices in the adjoining room.

"Well," said the sergeant skillfully, "y'see, when Whitcomb reported his wife's death to the police, he . . ."

It was still going on. Danny returned to the manila folder. There was another newspaper clipping, and he scanned through it.

Nov. 21. Chicago. The coroner's jury today set the cause of the death of Alfred Sutton, prominent Chicago criminal attorney, as accidental.

Meanwhile, the shades of Sutton's past activities were reflected in the courtroom of Superior Court, Judge Clement L. Vandegrift, where Tony Scotti, whom Sutton was defending brilliantly at the time of his demise, anxiously watched his trial draw to a close. District Attorney Charles Waldoon demanded the full extent of the law for the one-time henchman of Tom Boyle, South Side vice lord. Scotti has repeatedly averred that continuance of his trial is unjust, claiming that the sudden loss of Sutton as his legal counsel has interfered greatly with his defense. (See Section II for our gripping special feature, Beatrice La-Mour's thrillingly dramatic interview with Mrs. Tony Scotti, wife of the accused and erstwhile showgirl, titled: "My Husband Is Innocent!")

Danny ran through the rest of the papers in the folder and then closed it thoughtfully.

Sergeant Myers was just winding up his narrative.

The big voice came to him clearly, overburdened with self-effacing modesty. "So that was that. Whitcomb'd knocked off his old lady after all, just like I said all along."

"My," marveled Danforth. "You certainly showed great perception and foresight."

"Oh, nothing at all," grumbled the sergeant. "Just my job, that's all."

"What we need is more men like you." Danforth's voice was electric with admiration. Then Danny heard the chair creak. Danforth was evidently rising, preparing to leave. "Well," he went on, "I imagine I'd better be on my way. A man of your caliber must have to assume a much larger than proportionate share of the work of the department."

The sergeant grunted in pleased modesty. "It's my job, as I always say," he repeated.

"And," went on Danforth, "if there's any way I can be of assistance, please let me know."

"Well, I'll admit we are sort of messed up right at the moment," grumbled the sergeant. "Sorenson's a out-and-out mystery man. Can't trace what he done or where he's been. He traveled fast and light."

DANFORTH grunted amiably. "You'd think someone out at the Lake Shore apartment'd have something to offer. After all, a man can't come and go without being seen or heard occasionally. Of course you've checked that thoroughly. . . ."

"Yep. But it don't get us anywhere."

Danny heard the doorknob turn and then the creaky squeaking of the hinges as the door swung open. The two men exchanged good-bys, and then the door closed firmly.

Danny grabbed up the manila folder. He banged his knee on the edge of the desk and tipped over the wastebasket in his hurried trip to the door to Myer's office. But at the door he stopped dead. He'd have to handle the sergeant carefully.

Danforth had slipped just once during the conversation. He'd let a cat—maybe not a very big one—out of the bag, but it was a cat, no matter how scrawny. Danny had caught it. Evidently the sergeant hadn't. Only it had fallen in a conversation from which Danny had definitely been excluded.

The sergeant looked up at him and majestically tapped the ashes off the Corona into the spittoon at his feet as Danny sauntered solidly into the room.

Danny handed over the manila folder.

"Okay, damn it. Now I hope all your questions are answered. We men of the force"—the sergeant paused dreamily, recalling Danforth's generous tribute—"we got

too much work on our hands to fool around with damn-fool kids."

Danny gave the old man a capricious grin. "It answers all but a few questions, Sarge."

The sergeant sighed. "Okay. Let's get it over with. Then look, Danny. You'll promise to leave me alone?"

"Sure. I was sort of interested in the business about Tony Scotti, the interrupted trial. I was in medical school at the time; had no time to read the papers. Sutton's death was pretty tough on him."

The sergeant nodded patiently. "The case was a mess. When Sutton checked out there was a hell of a blowout. Then the state attorney dug up some evidence that Sutton'd been dickering to buy out a couple of jurors. Then in what was left of Sutton's brief case in the car they came across a stack of scorched fifty-dollar bills. The story went around he was on his way somewhere's to buy somebody off."

"It's a wonder Scotti got off; he must have been pretty discredited."

"Got off?"

"Yeah. I mean here he's accused of robbing a bank, shooting two guards, buying off the jury, and still he gets acquitted."

"The hell he did. He was convicted. Of course he only got ten years."

"Yeah? And that was three years ago; so what is he doing running around loose now?"

The sergeant shrugged. "He got paroled. Served only thirty-five months. Not a bad rap for four hundred grand—if he got the four hundred grand. I guess maybe he knew the right people in the right places. It usually helps."

"And what's Scotti doing now?"

The sergeant surveyed Danny wearily. "He's perfectly legitimate. He's running a couple of night clubs; has an interest in them. The Blue Sky Club and the Club Casablanca."

The sergeant looked down at his desk impatiently and drummed his stubby fingers against the scarred top.

"Sure," said Danny, taking the hint. "I've got to be going." He turned to the door, asking casually, "By the way, did Danforth give you any help?"

The sergeant glowered. "Mind your own business."

Danny surveyed his nails, then polished them on his lapel. "Oh, I was going to mention. Sitting in the next room as I was, with the transom open, I couldn't help hearing some of the things Danforth said." Then, as the sergeant's big face flushed with irritation: "Oh, I wasn't eavesdropping. But I was just wondering—"

The sergeant's face turned from red to

blue. Anger shot up through his voice like a geyser. "You keep your hands off this, damn it! I told you before, and I'm not going to tell you again! You got this whole business so butchered around I can't find out *what* end is up!"

"But, Sarge, this is important!"

The sergeant interrupted by rising wildly. His chair clattered back onto the floor. "Now look! So far I've got you plenty well fixed up with the authorities at the hospital. Right? But so help me, if you don't lay off me and this case, I'll blast you out of there so fast you'll think you're Halley's comet!"

Danny watched the sergeant's big fist pound out each syllable on the desk top emphatically. He forced a grin. "Okay, Sarge. Only don't say I didn't *try* to tell you!"

"Don't worry! I won't!"

THE SERGEANT righted his chair, crashed back into it, and ran confusedly through the scatter of papers on his desk. It was at this inopportune moment that the telephone chose to ring. The sergeant grabbed at the receiver.

"Myers! Yah!" The sergeant's voice sounded as though he'd been gargling quicklime. "What! *Where'd* you say you found him? . . . Well, I'll be damned! . . . How about O'Hara? Now look, Gelsey. You stick right there, see? And call me when O'Hara gets back. . . . You're damned right! There's some funny business out there. . . . Yah! I'll wait here!"

When the sergeant turned to Danny a deep frown distorted his wide red face.

"So!" he roared. "The Fergusons are nice, clean people, are they? I told you something was phony. But, oh no! They're old friends of the family, and I'm supposed to lay off!"

"What d'you mean, Sarge?"

"That dog was a pretty good piece of evidence. He could identify anybody who knew Sorenson. Anybody else he'd eat alive. Maybe, even, he could identify Mrs. Ferguson."

Danny's neck cricked as he nodded stiffly.

"Well, Gelsey found the dog, all right."

"Good," Danny's shoulders hunched. Good, or was it?

"Good, hell!" The sergeant seemed to explode. "The hound's deader than a campaign promise. Gelsey found him. Buried out behind the Ferguson garage with his neck broke!"

Danny couldn't find an answer to that. He could only stare at the sarge and think unhappy thoughts. The smell of the sergeant's furiously gleaming cigar, mixed with the other heavy odors of the room, was getting him. The old boy puffed like a chimney in a factory where plenty was going on.

"Okay, Danny. Now what d'you think?"

"Hard to tell. But certainly you can't jump to conclusions until you give the Fergusons a chance to talk."

"Yah! If they ever come back! Maybe they decided to blow out of there for good."

"And maybe," said Danny mockingly, "they had to go to the doctor's. Maybe they decided to run down to the market. Maybe—"

The sergeant was so angry he threw a good nickel's worth of cigar into the white enamel spittoon. The flame hissed and was quiet.

"Certainly you can't think the Fergusons killed the dog! What if the dog *had* acted like he knew them? Dogs can be wrong, just like us humans. Anyhow, it's not evidence."

The sergeant forced his fingers furiously through the thinning tangle of colorlessly brown hair over his fat round head. "We'll know about that when O'Hara calls, and that better be soon!"

Danny rose. "Maybe I better leave."

The sergeant looked up craftily. "And maybe you better not! If there's any explaining to be done, I want to find out just where *you* come in. Damn it all, you stay! And keep still! I gotta think."

Danny sank back into one of the hard, stiff chairs and lighted a cigarette unhappily. For once in his life he didn't want to talk. This was too much of a mess; there was no rhyme or reason to it. Hans—with a broken neck—buried out in back of the Ferguson garage. Who—who in hell'd do a thing tlike that? And why?

It was a little over fifteen minutes—long, torturously confused minutes—before the telephone rang. The sergeant slapped down the papers through which he'd been sorting aimlessly and took up the receiver with a big tense fist.

"Yeah? . . . What? . . . O'Hara! Where in hell are you?"

O'Hara's voice whined and rasped over the wire. Danny strained forward, trying to hear the words, and suddenly the sergeant spewed forth a cloud of smoke which set Danny to coughing until the story was too far gone to pick up the threads. It was quite a narrative, though. The sergeant sat like a figure in a wax museum that has just been stabbed in the back. His big pale mouth was agape so that his rows of crooked teeth were showing clear back to the incisor molars.

Abruptly the sergeant shouted into the phone. O'Hara, Danny observed, could hereafter be described as the policeman with one eardrum. "O'Hara, bring them in! If the old man says the old lady can't stand it, damn it, bring them in anyway!"

Then he crashed the receiver down on the instrument so hard that the bell chimed in the connection box down near the floor. He looked up at Danny with wild, puzzled glints

in his eyes and shook his head savagely. "Phony is no word for it!"

"Now what?" he asked anxiously.

"O'Hara just called. He's been trailing the Fergusons. They just got back home."

"Oh." (What a small, blank "oh" that was.)

"And you, perhaps, would like to know where they been all day."

"Only if you want to tell me, Sarge."

"Oh, I'll tell you, all right," bellowed the sergeant. "They went down to Crown Point. Why? They went down there to get themselves married!"

CHAPTER XI

December 22



FORTY-FIVE minutes later a fat, solid little man whose gray suit fit tightly in wrinkles across a large, round back ambled into the sergeant's office. The skin fit so tightly over the round florid face that it shone like a blown-up balloon. When it popped into a smile the small

mouth stretched away from prominent buck-teeth. It was O'Hara.

"Well, here we are, Sarge. We brung 'em in, like you said."

The sergeant grunted.

O'Hara fished around in his vest. The vest was so snug that two of the buttons had sprung off, leaving two gaps through which a cheap white shirt struggled to escape. In fact, all of O'Hara looked as if he were fighting to get out of his clothes. He flapped out a small notebook.

"We got 'em waiting outside. Here's our record." He scowled as he tried to decipher his rough notes. "They left the house and got into the car at eleven-ten. Backed out the driveway and headed east." O'Hara looked up a moment. "I told Gelsey, I says: 'Gelsey, I'll tag 'em. You stay here, keep an eye on the place.' So I followed them. They took Highway 46 down to Crown Point, arriving at"—again the eyes narrowed and returned to the notebook—"at two-eighteen, perceeding to Johnson's Wedding House on Indiana Street. Marriage was duly performed in the parlor at two-thirty. At which time the Fergusons returned to Evanston. Arriving at five twenty-three. That's when I called you, Sarge. First chance I got."

"Okay. How about the dog?"

O'Hara smiled. "Oh, Gelsey ran into that purely by accident. He was walking around behind the house and he seen this fresh-turned dirt behind the garage."

"Okay." The sergeant was moodily contemplative. "Show the Fergusons in now."

Mrs. Ferguson came in first. She wore loose-fitting tan gloves, almost the size of men's driving gloves, and they came up over the end of the coat sleeves, concealing her bandaged wrists.

Ferguson came next. His face was tight with repressed anger and concern.

And then came Marian. . . .

She turned to Danny instinctively, and the look she gave him before walking on with her mother would have frozen the heart of a snow man.

Ferguson was asking indignantly: "Sergeant, I should like to know why we have been brought here."

"Siddown, Danny!" barked the sergeant.

Danny sat down contritely. Damn it all, this wasn't fair! A stronger man than he couldn't have stood the hot, angry hatred that emanated to him from the Fergusons—and from Marian. Lord knew what she must think of him! That he was a spy, a stooge, a double-crosser.

That was one impression he'd correct. Right now. After all, the accused has the legal right of knowing what charges are being held against him.

"Sergeant," he said rising briskly, "I think you'd better explain what my status is in this case."

"Shuddup, Danny!"

"And you'd better explain just what the Fergusons' status is too."

"Danny, if you don't shut up, I swear I'll—"

His forcedly glib conversational tone was bouncing hollowly against a rapidly swelling wall of anger from the sergeant. He had to talk fast. "You have no grounds for holding them, you know. Suppose they did go to Crown Point and went through a remarriage ceremony, and even if you did find the body of the dog buried behind their garage—they can explain it, I'm sure."

He could feel Ferguson listening, intent.

The sergeant's gruff voice was choked off with furious rage. Danny took that chaotic moment to slip in his final message to Ferguson. "And if you're trying to tie them up with the body in the morgue, even Walter Danforth says it isn't Sutton. So what's their connection to the case?"

Now he'd done it. He retired to his chair weakly. He could hear Ferguson take a long, deep breath. Marian was looking at him now. Her full, soft lips were parted in amazed relief, and the resentment had dissolved, softening the blue-green in her eyes.

THE SERGEANT was in the unhappy position of finding not a word fit for mixed

company. His eyes spoke a few you wouldn't find in a truck driver's vocabulary.

"Danny, so help me—"

Ferguson stepped to the corner of the sergeant's desk and leaned over it. The knuckles on his hands went white as they closed nervously over the thick desk top. "Sergeant, I must appeal to you. My wife is very ill; this drain on her strength could have extremely serious consequences."

"And how," glowered the sergeant stubbornly, "about the trip to Crown Point? Am I supposed to believe that trip was taken for her health?" The sergeant was building up. "How about the dog? Just how did it happen that a dog I brought out to your house ended up buried behind your garage?"

Danny saw Marian's puzzled look. She hadn't known about the dog, then.

The sergeant bellowed on: "That dog belonged to Alex Sorenson. He was the only means we had of locating anybody who'd ever known Sorenson."

"And that's why you brought him to our house." Ferguson's voice was stiff.

The sergeant nodded. Obviously realizing that Danny's interference had ruled out the vindictive type of cross-examination so dear to his heart, he lowered his voice placatingly. "Now, Mr. Ferguson, there's no sense in losing our tempers. I thought if we'd get together we could get the answers to some questions that are very important to us right now. On the other hand, if you're—well, upset by anything, we're here to help you."

Ferguson glanced back at his wife; she nodded him on. Danny noticed the depth of affection that passed between the two in that short, meaningful glance.

Ferguson revolved a wide gold band on his third finger thoughtfully. "And, if I, as you might say, 'come clean,' may we leave at once?"

The sergeant was equally thoughtful. "Yes, if your story holds together—as I have no doubt it will." The old man tacked on the last seven words discreetly.

Ferguson thrust his well-groomed hands into the pockets of the double-breasted coat. He started pacing back and forth nervously. His words came slowly, each one carefully considered.

"I met Alfred Sutton and my wife—then Mrs. Sutton—six, almost seven, years ago. I was administrator of a trust fund. Although my wife was sole beneficiary, Sutton attempted to alter the terms so as to secure the money for his personal use. During our conferences I saw that the Sutton marriage was far from tranquil; that, in fact, Sutton was negligent, overbearing, and cruel. My relationship with Sutton became extremely un-

pleasant. As I tried to assist and comfort Mrs. Sutton our friendship grew naturally to sincere affection."

The sergeant nodded knowingly, his eyes half closed.

"Four years ago my wife asked Sutton for a divorce. Her life with Sutton had had severe repercussions on her physical and nervous well-being." The deep voice blazed into the room, harsh with loathing. "Sutton refused. Although he had no capacity for caring for anyone but himself, he was intent on refusing his wife any other happiness."

"Well"—the sergeant shrugged—"if he was such a beast, how could he stop her?"

"He couldn't stop her, but he made it as unpleasant as he could. He threatened to name me as correspondent and bring a countersuit against his wife."

"Uh-huh." The sergeant nodded Ferguson on.

"Three years ago I met Sutton by appointment at the Ellis Club. Mrs. Sutton and Marian had gone to California. I told Sutton what I thought of him: I told him, too, I'd be willing to pay him all I could afford if he wouldn't contest the divorce. He wouldn't promise anything, and I lost my temper. I'd have had him down if he hadn't stayed behind his desk. Then I discovered he had a listening device, which had recorded everything I had said: the threats, the offer of money—"

"Mmmm," said the sergeant. "Evidence for his records."

"Yes, to use in his suit against us. I should have thought of it." His voice was heavy with self-reproach. "Then Sutton said he had an important engagement and he left me there to contemplate my stupidity."

"And when," said the sergeant, "did this meeting take place?"

"It was on November 18. Three years ago." The silence in the room was interrupted by the noisy ticking of a clock, nothing else. "Just one hour before Alfred Sutton's car crashed into the ravine in Hubbard Woods and burst into flames."

Before the sergeant could comment Ferguson went on hurriedly: "I must admit that his death came as a relief. I found that I could be helpful in settling Mrs. Sutton's affairs. As the estate was settled, we found that Sutton had carried an insurance policy, paid up, for several years, to the amount of twenty-five thousand dollars. Otherwise, the estate had been completely dissipated." Ferguson swallowed noisily. "A year later Mrs. Sutton and I were married.

"We had no desire to touch the insurance money. However, it was there. Mrs. Ferguson insisted that it be used for Marian's education and upbringing."

"Fair enough." The sergeant tapped a pencil against his forehead. "After all, Miss Sutton was a rightful heir, as you might say."

"We felt the unhappy period of our lives had ended. Until three weeks ago."

"Yah?" The sergeant sat forward eagerly.

"Three weeks ago my wife received a mysterious phone call. The message was incoherent. The speaker claimed he was Alfred Sutton and demanded forty thousand dollars."

A LITTLE whistle escaped from the sergeant's lips. Danny noticed the tone of Ferguson's voice was changing a little—more guarded and cautious.

"We assumed that the call had been made by one of Sutton's underworld friends—or enemies—who might be acquainted with our situation and had decided to capitalize on it." Ferguson looked up at the sergeant appraisingly to see how he was accepting the story.

"But forty thousand dollars!" exclaimed the sergeant. "What if you refused?"

"Well, if I was convinced that Sutton might 'return from the dead' unless I paid, I would have to return the twenty-five thousand dollars to the insurance company."

"It's better than forty!"

"But the blackmailer thought we would be willing to pay to avoid the notoriety and so that our marriage would not publicly be known as illegal."

"But Sutton'd been declared legally dead. Your marriage was perfectly up-and-up." The sergeant looked up at Ferguson's aristocratic, sensitive face. Then he glanced at Mrs. Ferguson, who sat limply in the chair, her eyes cast down nervously at her hands. "Well, of course," he admitted. "I can see it wouldn't of been good." The sergeant resumed the pencil tapping against his forehead.

"A letter arrived."

"A letter? What'd it say? Do you have it now?"

"Unfortunately it has been destroyed."

The sergeant grunted.

"It showed, however, that our blackmailer had made himself well acquainted with Sutton's life. He told us of details and incidents—God knows where he had learned them—in Sutton's life. He told us of the dog, Hans, and claimed that he had come back for Hans the night after the accident and had him still."

The sergeant grunted a second time.

"Even the letter itself—the text was typewritten, but the signature had been studiously made to approximate Sutton's handwriting. Also the handwritten address on the envelope."

The sergeant sat forward suddenly. "But look! If you *knew* it wasn't Sutton, what ground'd he have to stand on?"

"I asked our blackmailer that question three nights later when he telephoned to establish our meeting place. I knew enough about Sutton's past practices to feel we could make any 'return from the grave,' either threatened or real, very hot for our impostor."

"Sort of counterblackmail," grunted the sergeant.

Ferguson nodded. "I was eager to see him face to face and find out who it was, so a meeting place and time were determined. I was to go at midnight, December 15th, to the pro shop at the Diversey golf links."

"Yes?" The swivel chair creaked as the sergeant leaned forward expectantly.

Ferguson smiled grimly. "I went without the money that was expected."

The sergeant grunted. "If you weren't going to pay, why'd you go at all?"

"Because, Sergeant, I wanted to see if our blackmailer was Alfred Sutton or—"

"Then there *was* a question in your mind!" The sergeant's voice leaped across the wide desk, interrupting.

Ferguson shrugged off the implied question. "If it *was* Sutton, then we'd have to accept what might befall us; the repayment of the insurance, the discredit to our marital relationship, the notoriety we have attempted to avoid."

"And if it *wasn't* Sutton?"

"If it *wasn't* Sutton I was prepared to tell whoever it was to do his damndest, that he couldn't bluff me."

"So you went there." In his eagerness the sergeant couldn't wait for the remainder of the story.

"I did. I waited until two-thirty. No one arrived." Ferguson swallowed dryly. "I arrived back at my home at three-thirty."

"I see." The sergeant leaned so far back in his chair that for a moment it appeared as though he'd crash on over.

"Then the next night—I can only explain it by saying it was one of those grim coincidences—the doctor here saw your man, Sorenson, in the morgue and was astonished by the resemblance to Alfred Sutton. Marlan, not fully acquainted with the situation, but in an excited and hysterical condition, said that it *was* her father. Later, when she became more calm, she retracted her statement."

The sergeant looked at Ferguson quickly. "And how can we be sure it *isn't* Sutton?"

"You have Danforth's word on that, I believe?"

"Yeah." The sergeant's voice was weary with confusion. "But how about the dog?"

Ferguson floundered. "I cannot explain that fully. It resembled Sutton's dog. However, we returned the dog the next day to the doctor."

"Yes," grumbled the sergeant. "That's right."

Ferguson glanced at Danny briefly. "I might explain, Sergeant, that in returning the dog to the doctor I noticed the owner's tag on the collar. It was vaguely possible that the dog was involved in some way with our blackmailer. On my way home I dropped by the apartment on Lake Shore Drive. I was considering going in when I saw the doctor coming. Not caring to become further involved, I left at once. The doctor may have told you that."

THE SERGEANT glowered at Danny. "No, he didn't."

"The next day the doctor called my wife. Unfortunately I wasn't there. She, of course, was equally upset and concerned. When offered the opportunity of verifying—in her own mind—the fact as to whether it was Sutton, despite our certainty, she accepted the doctor's offer to come to the morgue. As you know, she said at once that the doctor was mistaken. I arrived home very soon after she had returned. She had become emotionally upset to a point of—unbalance. Dr. Michaels had arrived. He sent me out to procure a sedative and—a few other items necessary for the treatment of her condition. Meanwhile, you had arrived with the dog. I didn't see him in the darkness as I pulled the car into the driveway. He leaped at the headlights. The car struck him, and when I got out of the car I found that he was dead."

"Yes?"

"I didn't know what impression that might make. I couldn't stop to think straight. I was desperate to get back to my wife. In my confusion I thought it would be best to make it appear the dog had broken loose. I concealed him in the garage and buried him later that night."

"I see. But how about the trip to Crown Point?"

Ferguson took a deep breath and glanced at Danny with a subtle dart of his eyes. "I merely felt, Sergeant, that under the circumstances I should do everything possible to—ease the tension in my wife's mind. I felt that all the doubt and confusion and uncertainty into which we'd been thrown—baseless though it was—might be partially erased by her realization that nothing in the world might ever separate us."

Hoity-toity, thought the sarge, and even Danny winced at the implausible but high-sounding explanation for the marriage. The sergeant put it into the skeptical question:

"But if you were so sure it wasn't Sutton in the morgue, I don't see why you'd go to all that trouble."

The man turned away from the sergeant with an unhappy shrug. "That's the whole story, Sergeant. Unconvincing, perhaps, but then the truth rarely is convincing. Now I implore you to let us go. My wife must not be kept here any longer." He spoke with a desperate imperiousness.

The sergeant took a rasping deep breath. If nothing else, Danny observed, Ferguson's narrative was so involved that it would take a little time for the sergeant to digest it. Already the old man's mind was virtually grumbling, like an overfull stomach.

"Of course," said the sergeant. "There may be further questions later. It isn't all clear to me yet, and—"

"We'll be at your disposal at any time, Sergeant." The light was flickering back into Ferguson's eyes as he saw the sergeant's confusion, and a faint humor crept into his voice. "Are we now allowed to say good-bye?"

The sergeant's face wrinkled, and finally he nodded soberly. The Fergusons rose with alacrity and lost no time in leaving.

The last thing in the world Danny wanted to do was talk to the sergeant right now. He escaped under the cover of the moody silence that emanated from the old man after the Fergusons had left. . . .

Danny stood mutely aside as the Fergusons passed through the swinging gate and disappeared through the doorway. He watched Marian, very straight and lithe, and for an instant he caught her profile framed against the darkness.

Good-by, Marian, he thought. Good luck. It was almost as though she'd heard. She hesitated a moment, then turned slowly.

She whispered something to her stepfather, and then she turned up the stairs toward him. She extended a warm hand to him. "Danny, I want to thank you—for what you said when we first arrived."

"That's okay, Marian."

"And I want to apologize for what I said out at the house." She looked up at him earnestly. "I never really thought you were with the police, Danny. I was blowing off steam."

He nodded again. "I understand, Marian. Your father's story was fine, but sooner or later he's going to find out what every one of us but himself knows by now—that it is Alfred Sutton in the morgue and that your stepfather knew all the time that it was Sutton who was blackmailing him."

"But he can't prove it, Danny."

"No, not yet, but he's no fool, Marian. When he thinks it through he may think

farther than we want him to. He can even think that Ferguson was unable to raise that money; that he went to the appointed meeting place with a different purpose."

"To kill Father." Her voice was a whisper; then she looked up at him, the deep blue in her eyes sparkling against the anxious face. "You don't think that, Danny!

"What I think doesn't matter, Marian." Danny looked away evasively. There were too many tangled threads in the weaving of the story. When you looked at Ferguson and his gracious home you couldn't believe he'd kill. And yet the motive was there; of wanting to protect the one you love.

Her hand came out and clutched his arm. "Danny, what can I do?" He looked down at her, at the terror in her face.

Ferguson's voice echoed up the hallway to them. "Marian, the car's here!"

Her head flipped toward the distant doorway, and she brushed her eyes with the sleeve of the tailored suit. "Danny, I've got to go now to help with Mother. But couldn't I see you again—tomorrow, maybe? I've got to talk this out with you!"

He looked down at her. "Of course," he said. "Tomorrow, Marian? At lunch? I'm out at the hospital until noon."

"At Degner's?"

He nodded.

He could still smell the sweetly faint, subtle scent of her perfume even after the door down the wide hallway had swung shut and the darkness had swallowed her up.

CHAPTER XII

December 23



DANNY drank the last of his coffee and smashed the flaming tip of his cigarette in the red glass ash tray. Across the small round table Marian watched him questioningly as he blew the smoke thoughtfully from his nostrils. She was wearing a tan herringbone suit

and a yellow Angora sweater. They made the gray, troubled look about the wide-set eyes less noticeable. So much less noticeable, in fact, that every young man under eighty who hurried past ran into the collapsible serving table which was placed in the aisle directly beyond the small booth. The snappy young men in uniform who passed were tutored in methods more direct. They just gave her a sociable smile. And then ran into the serving table.

This effort to talk things out had been useless. In the first place, Degner's, during the height of the Christmas shopping season, was a madhouse of scurrying, rushing people; clattering trays and jingly silver; sharp notes above the roar of conversation and laughter. All these outer signs of confusion might not have been so distracting if you had a straight, solid line of thought to follow. But Lord knew that was one thing Danny didn't have right now. If he had any line at all, it was a vicious, pretzel-like maze with no exits, no start, and no end.

Marian spoke first. "What are you thinking, Danny?"

He looked up at her and tried to give her a smile. "I don't know, Marian. I'm afraid we haven't got very far. Maybe it would have been better to admit the truth—that Sorenson is Sutton; then the police would have had a starting point from which to work—the auto accident in Hubbard Woods. Just who died then, if not your father?" Danny's head shook slowly. "I'm afraid that no matter how it goes, Ferguson will have a lot of questions to answer."

"He's told everything, Danny; I'm sure of that."

"So am I. Oh, of course he said it wasn't Sutton to stall the sergeant, but that isn't sawdust the old man wears under his hat. He'll catch on eventually."

Marian sighed. "What can we do, Danny?"

"I think we'll have to start on a completely new track. Let Ferguson's story stand by itself. We assume that he had nothing to do with Sutton; that Sutton didn't show up that night on the Diversey links. What stopped him?"

"Maybe nothing did except a couple of poisoned drinks at a cheap bar somewhere, or some bootleg stuff he bought to bolster his courage."

"From what I've heard of your father, he didn't need liquor to bolster his courage. He had a corner on the market."

Marian smiled faintly with her eyes.

"Anyway, we've got to assume there was more to it than that. After all, if he was as hard up as he seemed to be and expected to fall heir to forty thousand bucks, he'd hardly spend that very important afternoon ginning himself up. He wouldn't do anything to risk missing the big pay-off. No, Marian, we've got to assume more happened behind the scenes than any of us know about. Why didn't he show up? What or who interfered with his plans, preventing him from keeping that appointment?"

"Oh, Danny." Her slender hands resting on the checkered tablecloth, nervously revolved the heavy water glass. "Where can we begin?"

"As long as we know it *wasn't* your father in the car up in Hubbard Woods—who was it? And meanwhile, what happened to your father between that time and the time he re-appeared as Alex Sorenson? And then what happened between the time he last left the Lake Shore apartment and ended up on the lower level of Wacker Drive—a drunken bum?"

"It seems so mixed up."

"But it's the only way left. We'll have to start talking and asking questions, and keep our eyes open and keep listening. Talk to people who knew your father." He looked up at her directly. "You knew Walter Danforth, didn't you?"

"Oh yes. He was Father's law partner."

"What did you think of him?"

"I always thought he was pretty oily." Marian grimaced reminiscently, her head tilted. "He was a great backslapper. Only you could never be quite sure whether you were going to get a slap or a stab."

Danny nodded his assent. "It's just a hunch, but I think he still knows more than he's told. Y'see, he made one slight slip in the sergeant's office yesterday. Maybe it wasn't a slip. But in his whole manner there's something—phony. I think we'd better start out by paying him a call."

"But, Danny"—her hand restrained him for an instant—"how can we approach him? Certainly we can't tell him we know he's lying about his statement that it isn't Father in the morgue. If we did that—"

"—we'd be placing your stepfather in a not-too-fortunate light. No, we won't do that, Marian."

"But—"

He gave her a sly wink of reassurance. "Just watch me. I'm smarter than a fox in the middle of May."

"I hope," she said with an effort at lightness, "that it doesn't matter that this is the middle of December."

At one-thirty Danny and Marian turned into the 100 North LaSalle building. They made their way to the back of the elevator as it shot heavenward. No wonder, he thought, we get so many cases of misplacement among the office girls. These elevators would shake up the insides of the plaster woman in the anatomy class.

IN THE thirty-fourth floor he helped Marian through the crowd in the car to the wide marble-floored hallway.

As they entered, a small glass window with a decorously small hole in it opened across the room. The girl behind the glass didn't match. She looked like something out of Captain Billy's *Whiz-Bang*.

Danny had to grin as the girl languidly

took up the telephone extension. "Mr. Danforth," she sang in proper English drawing-room manner, "a Miss Sutton—Miss Marian Sutton—is here to see you."

In a careless swirl of purple hair she turned to Marian disinterestedly and indicated the doors in the left wall. "Won't you go right in?"

The double doors swung in noiselessly, exposing a long dark hallway. At the end of the hall was a larger, more commanding door. It opened as they approached, and Danforth appeared genially in the opening.

"Hello there, Marian!" Then the wide-set eyes turned to Danny and narrowed imperceptibly. Danny found himself shaking hands with Walter Danforth. He led them into the large private office and seated them on a long modern sofa. His voice was carefully modulated, forcedly conversational. "We've done a little revising since your father's offices were here, Marian." Then he nodded at the door. "It's vacant. Has been ever since your father—" He cleared his throat meaningfully.

Marian swallowed dryly. "I'd—rather like to look at it, Mr. Danforth."

She started to rise, but he motioned her back with a well-manicured hand. "It's locked, Marian. From *this* side, at least. Your father had it arranged so it'd open from *his* office but was locked from *this* side."

Danforth turned to Danny casually. "Well, Doctor, I haven't seen you since we met at the morgue."

Danny nodded. "That's right. Mr. Danforth, we're still puzzled by the whole affair." Danny forced a sober laugh. "Marian and I are trying to straighten out a few very important questions."

"I see. . . ." Danforth's tone showed he obviously didn't see.

"The police, for some reason, aren't quite satisfied. They've been bothering Mr. and Mrs. Ferguson, and naturally Marian is anxious to stop their questions permanently."

Danforth smiled expansively. "But why is it necessary for them to ask questions? After all, Sutton died three years ago. Of course there's some mystery in the Sorenson matter. But what connection has that with Alfred Sutton?"

"Mr. Ferguson had a very odd phone call—from a person who said he was Sutton. Now this Sorenson looked so much like Sutton that we believe he might have been the blackmailer, capitalizing on the resemblance. We hoped you might give us some idea of who that might be."

Danforth shook his head ruminatively. "I'm afraid I can't be of much help. I knew very little about Alfred Sutton or his friends. He was a secretive man, very withdrawn.

He even had his own personal secretary." He turned to Marian. "I think you remember Miss Mulberry."

Danny was surprised at his own sharpness. "Certainly you were close enough to Sutton to have some ideas, some opinions!"

Danforth rubbed a finger behind his ear judiciously. Then one corner of the straight heavy mouth twisted upward. "I certainly shouldn't like to have you feel I hadn't tried to help." He shrugged. "You ask the questions and I'll supply the answers. Make them as leading as you want."

Danny ran his tongue over his teeth. "First of all, what was your personal opinion of Mr. Sutton?"

Danforth rubbed a thumb across the soft palm of his hand before he answered. "Before his death I liked Alfred Sutton well enough with a sort of healthy respect. I admired him for being shrewd, clever, as sharp as a knife. I knew he found loopholes in the law that no man had ever found before and that he knew how to use them to the best advantage of his client." Danforth paused self-righteously. "After his death we all found that Alfred was not only shrewd, but unscrupulous. Had I known at the time of some of his—practices, I should have dissolved our partnership at once."

Marian posed the next question. "But his personal life?"

"I knew little of your father's personal life. I never felt I really 'knew' him. He was unfathomable to me, at least." The words came judiciously. "I always felt—without any real proof—that he was consorting with distasteful companions. But certainly it had nothing to do with our office arrangement. He took no interest in my personal affairs, and I had no reason to interfere in his."

Danny spoke eagerly. "But what special people did he seem to be close to?"

Danforth turned. "I know very little of them. I always felt, with no verification, that he and Tony Scotti were very close. I know, for instance, that at one time Scotti assigned a couple of his men to watch over Alfred. That was during some trial in which Alfred's life had been threatened. Then again, as you know, Alfred was defending Scotti at the time of the unfortunate accident which resulted in Alfred's death. They were together quite often." Danforth shrugged. "It might have been a purely business relationship; it might not."

"Nevertheless, it's the sort of thing we'd like to know. Were there any others?"

"Alfred had few office visitors. It was impossible to distinguish which might have been legitimate office calls; which social." The deep voice purred over the last word meaningfully.

"But if he was carrying on an active practice—"

Danforth looked up at Danny insinuatively. "It's true, isn't it, Doctor, that some men in your profession keep an office only as a cover for their real activities?" Danny nodded. "Well, that might have been the case with Mr. Sutton too."

"But where else might he have based his operations?"

"I really don't know. He spent a great deal of time in a couple of cabarets which Scotti owned."

Danny rose and went to the window and looked out at the red tower of the Morrison and the lower squareness of the Boston Store roof. He'd like to ask a few questions about the mysterious Mrs. Sorenson, but after all, when it was necessary to assume Sorenson and Sutton were two different people . . .

HE TURNED resolutely. "Mr. Sutton had a reputation for being quite a hand with the ladies, didn't he?"

Danforth smiled caustically. "Yes, he gave that impression. However, in Alfred's case it would be impossible to supply any names." The long well-groomed fingers played at a letter opener, turning it end over end on the dark green blotter. "You might say he was the 'restless' type. So far as I know, he never maintained any such friendship for any length of time."

"But if we could only learn of them we might find they could help us."

Danforth, obviously eager to finish what he considered a foolish conversation, smiled dryly. "I don't see where this is leading you—nor, for that matter, where you're trying to go."

"Just one more question, Mr. Danforth?"

The handsome head nodded impatiently.

"Just who, of all Mr. Sutton's acquaintances, would you think might know the most about him?"

Danforth again thought carefully. "Tony Scotti, I guess. If you'd like to see a small collection of newspaper clippings on Sutton's death Miss Ellis can show them to you."

The big man rose slowly. The interview was over.

Danny stood with Marian for a moment in the reception room. He wished that in some way he could cheer her up.

"Well," she exclaimed, "any new theories?"

"Not yet. Why don't you run through Mr. Danforth's files? I'm going to call Sergeant Myers. And there may be another little call I'll pay." His hand closed about her arm softly, reassuringly. "Keep your chin up. I'll call you here at five. Okay?"

"Okay."

He closed the glass door behind him. The

cold white metal in the telephone booth made him think of the morgue.

"Hello. I'd like to speak to Sergeant Myers, please."

"He ain't in."

"Who's this, Mike?"

"Yah."

"Mike, this is Danny Michaels."

Mike laughed evilly. "Jeez, kid who you think you're calling?"

"I take it I'm not in so good with the sarge."

"Dan, if the old man laid hands on you right now you'd end up looking like you'd tangled with a thrashing machine. He's been out all p.m. He's trying to find out what doctor Sutton used to go to, if any."

"Mmmm. But he's still not sure it's Sutton in the morgue?"

"He isn't sure of nothing, but he's covering all the angles. He still don't think the Fergusons, or Danforth, even, are coming through with the cold turkey."

Danny grunted unhappily. This was probably going to be it. If the sergeant once located Sutton's doctor he would certainly be able to identify the corpse as Sutton. The lid, to coin a phrase, would be off the coffin.

"Nuts, Mike. I guess I've butched up the whole works."

"That seems to be the sarge's general impression, Dan. He just thinks you're one hell of a big heel." Mike laughed boisterously, a series of loud masculine hoots and shrieks across the wire.

"Look, Mike. Do me a favor? I want to get in touch with Tony Scotti."

Mike laughed unrestrainedly.

"Damn it, Mike, this is important! I can't explain, but I've got to see Scotti."

When the laughter finally stopped, Mike, still choking, said: "Yah? What d'you want to do, commit suicide?"

"I can't explain, but I'm on the square, Mike."

The seriousness of his voice finally sobered the patrolman. "I'm awful sorry, Dan. We got so damn many regulations. We ain't no information bureau—captain's orders. I'd really like to tell you, but you know how it is. . . ."

"Sure, Mike, I understand." Danny paused unhappily.

"But I'll say this, Dan." Mike's voice was lowered. "I never heard of any regulations against telling you where I'd start looking if I was you. Purely friendly, you know."

"Why, yes, Mike."

"Well, for instance, I guess maybe if I was you I'd start at one of them big hotels on Clark Street."

"Oh. Like the one that guy jumped out of last month?"

"Well, not exactly. I'd figure a guy like Scotti might think it was haunted. I'd probably sort of figure he'd stay in a hotel about two blocks north of there."

"I guess you're right," mused Danny.

"Then I'd sort of figure a guy like Scotti wouldn't be afraid of extreme height."

"You mean you'd start at the top floor and work down?"

"Yah. That's it."

"And you'd probably figure a guy with Scotti's dough would have a suite."

"Yah," said Mike. "Even overlooking the lake, maybe."

"I guess you're right, Mike. Thanks a lot. It sure helps to talk these things over with a pal. And that's what you are; a pal."

"Oh, don't mention it, Dan. And keep your nose clean."

THE clerk eyed Danny suspiciously. The suit was well tailored and pressed, but after all, no baggage!

"I'm very sorry," he said finally in a crisp voice. "Our top-floor suite is occupied at the present time."

"But," said Danny contritely, "if I could just see it. My aunt is so particular."

The long-haired head shook in a brisk negative. "We have strict instructions that our tenant not be disturbed. However, we have attractive suites on other floors, and—"

Danny's head shook equally sadly. "No, I'm afraid they won't do. Let's see, I'll have to write her and let her know. That's suite—" Danny snapped his fingers as though attempting to prompt himself.

"Suite 2801," said the clerk.

"Oh yes, of course," Danny said. "Well, thank you very much."

Danny walked along the wide, quiet corridor on the twenty-eighth floor to 2801. He rapped professionally.

The door swung in quietly, about a quarter of an arc.

A wide, swarthy face with a flattened nose appeared in the opening. "Yes?"

"I'm Dr. Michaels." Danny's voice was firm and self-assured. "I'd like to see Mr. Scotti."

"Mr. Scotti don't want to see anybody."

Danny hadn't sold vacuum cleaners for nothing. "I think if you'll just tell Mr. Scotti that Dr. Michaels is waiting outside he'll decide differently."

The dark eyes narrowed suspiciously. "Yah? Well, wait just a minute."

The door shut and Danny took a deep breath. In a moment the door opened again.

"Mr. Scotti wishes to know upon which business you're calling."

Danny smiled indulgently. "I can only explain to Mr. Scotti."

"Yah? Well, wait a minute."

Again the door closed. The next time it opened it swung wide.

"Okay, come in."

The feeble afternoon glow was struggling through slanted Venetian blinds. Beside one of them, seated at a large white desk, was Scotti. His face was lean and swarthy. His sharkskin blue suit fit him well, almost too well, revealing sharp, angular shoulders and a sunken powerful chest. Scotti indicated a near-by chair with an oblique glance. "Okay, Doctor?" The voice had a harsh, rasping toughness.

Danny forced a wry grin. "Mr. Scotti, I might as well come clean. I'm here because I wanted to talk with you about Alfred Sutton."

"What about Sutton?"

"I understand he was a friend of yours."

"Yeah?" Scotti shrugged. "Who told you that?"

"I've been down at Sutton's old offices."

"Oh, Danforth." The voice was contemptuous. "What else did he tell you?"

Danny shrugged uneasily. "Oh, he said a couple of times when Sutton's life was threatened you had some of your—employees keep a watch over him."

Scotti's dark face twisted into a distorted smile. "You come right to the point, don't you, kid?"

Danny grinned. "Why not? I couldn't fool you if I wanted to."

Scotti leaned back, his hands closing powerfully over the arms of the small frame chair. He surveyed Danny through lowered, slanting eyes. "So what?"

"Danforth suggested maybe you could tell me of any enemies Sutton might have feared. Or who his closest friends were."

"Maybe I don't follow you, Doctor. Just what's this got to do with the price of eggs?"

Danny made an expansive gesture with his hand that explained nothing.

Scotti leaned forward again, his left arm crossed before him. Beneath the soft blue material Danny could see a sinewy biceps flex. "Sutton was killed three years ago. What're you trying to prove?"

"Simply that someone has been trying to pose as Sutton returned from the dead. Some friends of mine are messed up with the thing; I'm trying to clear it up."

Scotti had been storing some chewing gum beneath his tongue because now he began an even methodical chewing. "And what've I got to do with that?"

"I'm merely trying to learn who might have known Sutton well enough to put on a pretty good act of imitating him."

The wad of gum shifted between Scotti's front teeth; he chewed contemplatively be-

tween tight-clenched lips. "Where'll that get you?"

Danny made a futile gesture with his hands. "I'm trying to get all the dope I can about his business, his friends, any—women who might have been around. . . . You see, Mr. Scotti, they've dragged a couple of innocent people—Mrs. Sutton and her present husband—into this thing. They're getting set to hang everything on them but the kitchen stove."

"That's a little habit the police got," commented Scotti. Then he surveyed his fingernails and snapped his pointed finger ends past the ball of his thumb. "And so the cops sent you here."

"No sir, that's wrong. I came up here on my own. I'm not connected with the police; I'm acting for myself." Danny grinned unhappily. "In fact, if they learned I'd come here they'd kick the living Christmas out of me."

Scotti surveyed Danny calculatingly. Then finally the sober sincerity of the youthful voice seemed to convince him.

"Well, I'll tell you, Doc." Scotti rubbed the sharp knuckles of his right hand into the palm of his left. "Sutton was a lawyer. If he was anything else I never knew it. As for the girls—" He paused. "Well—"

The shrug of the wide shoulders was an eloquent answer. They were just girls.

"But their names, maybe, or—"

Scotti interrupted: "Look, Doc. I don't know." The intensity of his scowl twisted into a weak smile. "If I come to you for sleeping pills, I don't ask you who you're sleeping with, now do I?"

Danny grinned. "I'm just having trouble getting started. You see, Danforth said—"

"Danforth! Why the hell do you listen to that old crackpot!"

"He was just a place to start."

Scotti leaned forward, licked his fingers, and took the gum from his mouth. As he dropped it into the metal wastebasket he peered up at Danny again.

"A place to start. Yeah."

"He told me—"

"He told you!" Scotti interrupted. "Maybe there are some things he didn't tell you!"

Danny licked his lips. "I wouldn't be at all surprised."

"Sure, that's the right idea. I guess he wouldn't tell you about some of the red-hot arguments him and Sutton used to get in. Maybe he wouldn't tell you even if you were to ask him."

"Arguments?"

Scotti nodded. "About some of the cases he tried to swipe from Sutton. All attorneys are crooks in one way or another, only some of them don't make no pretenses about it.

And as for his thrilling stories about threats to Sutton! Maybe he didn't tell you of some of his own threats to Sutton."

"You mean—?"

"I mean you said you'd started out with Danforth. For my money, maybe that's where you'll end up, too, if you keep your eyes open. So what else can I tell you?"

Danny rose. "I guess maybe that's all for Lesson One."

Danny was just turning to go as a door at the side of the room opened. Scotti looked up, a flash of annoyance on his face.

Through the door came a girl, a dark brunette, smartly garbed in a dark red dress, with a cape and pillbox turban of silver fox.

As she glanced hurriedly about the room her dark eyes stopped on Danny for an instant, widening in surprise. "Oh!" she said; then: "I—didn't mean to break in, but I've got to get out shopping."

Then she whirled around and left the room, leaving Danny to stare after her in suppressed excitement. Scotti frowned.

"Well, Doc, you'll certainly know my wife again when you see her, won't you?"

Danny came to with a start and a sheepish grin. Yes, he'd know her again. Just one week before he'd seen her, while he was prowling over the Sorenson apartment. This was the girl who'd come in and had said: "Ooops! So sorry! Wrong floor!"

CHAPTER XIII

December 23



DANNY pressed through the crowded hotel lobby toward the street.

As he swung through the wide doors a grimy-faced kid stuck a tattered magazine into his face.

"Lookit the first page," the kid said dramatically. Then he inserted the magazine into the loop Dan-

ny's arm made as he searched for a coin. As the signal changed he darted off.

Danny looked down at the magazine. It was a cheap picture weekly. The cover revealed a bathing girl, a sailor cap perched jauntily over one eye. On the first page three loosely clad girls were pictured revealingly. Judas, he thought, I must look like a wolf. Then in the lower corner of the page, cutting across a well-turned thigh, he saw the writing.

"Must speak to you. Be careful you aren't followed. Take first 51 bus that crosses Washington going north after three o'clock."

He was being followed.

That big guy in the green covert-cloth top-coat followed along after him like a bad reputation.

He looked at the big lighted clock over the State Street entrance to Field's. Quarter of three. That gave him just ten minutes to shake Butch and get out on State Street for the 51 bus.

Danny sauntered past the men's toiletry section, turned left, and entered the scented realm of the ladies' toiletries.

As he walked along the wide aisle before the elevators his eyes fell on a neatly lettered sign topped by a large Red Cross:

LESSON THREE
FIRST AID
TODAY—3 P.M. SHARP
AUDITORIUM—7TH FLOOR

He got his idea then.

A LARGE expanse of bare cork-tiled floor had been cleared, and folding wooden chairs were set up in even rows. Already a good many were filled with chattering, excited shoppers who were thumbing through their first-aid textbooks and rustling with packages.

Danny felt Butch turn and veer to the right as he left the elevator. Danny walked solidly down the center aisle and hopped up onto the low speaker's platform. He raised his hand in a silencing gesture. "Good afternoon, ladies!"

The hum of conversation wilted and died.

"I've been asked to put on a special brief exhibition of essential bandages," he went on airily. "Your regular instructor will be here shortly."

He gave them his best smile; it seemed to placate them. Danny turned. There was an odd assortment of splints at the back of the stage, also a small pile of folded triangular bandages of unbleached muslin. Butch was leaning against a pillar at the back of the clearing, picking at his teeth with his thumbnail.

"As we all know, we learn the basics more readily if we have a real patient on which to illustrate." He wagged a finger authoritatively. "I wonder if there is a gentleman in the audience who'll be so kind as to step up onto the stage."

Heads turned and wagged back and forth; there was a loud rustling of paper bags and creaking of wooden chairs.

"You! Back there!" Danny indicated Butch. "You look like a good red-blooded American."

Butch started. His wide, heavy face flushed. The thick lips formed the word "Me?"

Danny nodded. "It's all in a good cause,"

he said sharply. Brother, you don't know how good a cause. "Surely you'll step up and help us? We'll just take a moment of your time." Danny flashed a winning smile. "He's bashful, ladies. Perhaps a couple of you in the back row there had better urge him."

There was a general round of laughter. Then applause. Over it Danny heard a small woman turn to her friend and say: "Such a charming man. So much more interesting than Miss Tillamoodly."

Butch peered about furtively, like a trapped animal. Two elderly ladies in the back row approached him playfully. He extended his hands, fending them off. His face was the color of red plush, and the white gleamed around the pupils of his eyes. Finally, reluctant, he was led to the stage. There was another enthusiastic round of applause and laughter.

"Thank you very much, sir." Danny again raised his hand for silence and forcefully helped Butch out of the green topcoat.

"Now," he said, "I should like to imagine that our patient has three injuries; a broken collarbone, a broken wrist, and a broken pelvis. I should like to have six women volunteers who have had experience in bandaging such injuries come to the stage, so that we may see how quickly and efficiently we can work to relieve our patient's pain and suffering. Volunteers?"

Twelve hands rose in eager unison, and Danny chose the six closest.

Danny turned to Butch. "Now, sir, so that all the ladies may see us at work, will you kindly assume a prone position on this table?"

Danny indicated a wide long table in the middle of the stage. Butch peered down at the sea of intent faces and gulped noisily.

With a firm grip on a massive arm Danny led Butch to the table. Unwillingly Butch allowed himself to be laid out. Danny divided the six ladies into three teams of two each and indicated which injury each team would treat.

"All right," he said gaily. "Go!"

THE ladies sprang into action. While two expertly padded and secured a splint which extended from Butch's elbow to the tip of his fingers with triangular bandages, Butch's right arm was lifted gently so that the right hand rested on his left shoulder, making a V across his chest. Then two carefully applied and knotted triangular bandages strapped the arm closely to his body. Meanwhile a third team, holding a long splint against Butch's side, like a crutch, had tucked seven bandages under the heavy body and legs, and agile hands tied the bandages across and over. Butch's face shone up at Danny helplessly as the women worked over

him. Finally all six ladies were finished.

"Excellent," exclaimed Danny. "Four minutes! Thank you very much."

Then, authoritatively, he stepped down off the platform and walked through the center aisle. Butch let out a bellow. At that point Danny broke into a run. Fortunately an elevator was waiting.

It was only a matter of seconds after he reached the bus loading zone that the big clattering monster ground to a stop.

He took a quick look along the crowded rows of seats downstairs, looking for the small silver-fox hat. No sign of Mrs. Scotti down here. He made his way up the narrow curving stairs to the upper level.

Mrs. Scotti neither turned nor indicated recognition as he sat down beside her.

As they turned onto Michigan Avenue Danny had an opportunity to survey the girl at close quarters. She wasn't as young as he'd thought. Her sensuous face was faintly lined beneath the make-up.

As they passed the Tribune Tower their eyes met and she recognized him with an impulsive jerk of her head.

"Well!" said Danny. "Fancy meeting you here."

Her full lips clenched shut. Otherwise she allowed his witticism to die on the vine.

"You were right about being followed," Danny went on. Again she glanced behind her apprehensively. "Don't worry. I shook him like a four-bit thermometer."

The lips formed into a sullen smile. Then her hand fell on his arm and her fingers tightened persuasively. Danny found himself thinking of Marian. Strange. Marian could never get such an intimate, sensuous quality into such a small gesture.

She spoke finally. "Why did you come to Tony's apartment? Did you tell him about having seen me before?"

"At Sorenson's." He said it brashly. If this was his ace, he'd play it like an ace.

Her head dipped sharply.

"No, I didn't. I was there to get information, not to give it."

"Did you learn everything you wanted?" She injected a note of carelessness into her words, but even so they were as shining and artificial as a wax apple.

"No. I've just begun."

He turned to her, but she shrugged austere. "You talk so nicely; go ahead and talk."

"Okay. What do you know about Mrs. Sorenson?"

She lifted her arm and adjusted the tilt of the small hat. "Mrs.—who?"

"Mrs. Sorenson. She's the lady whose apartment you walked into last Saturday. Remember?"

"I got off at the wrong floor. I explained that."

"You had a key."

Her voice was rigidly controlled; a vocal tightrope walker brandishing two umbrellas and not doing very well. "The door was unlocked. I had instinctively got out my keys and put them in the lock. When they didn't work I tried the doorknob and the door opened."

Danny tested that against his memory. He'd thought at the time he had heard the key turning the bolt. But he couldn't be sure.

Her voice went on evenly: "When I discovered my mistake I naturally went downstairs and called on my friend there." Mrs. Scotti looked out of the window as though the interview were over.

"Well," mused Danny, "why all the concern whether I'd told Mr. Scotti, then? That seems a simple enough explanation. He's no doubt got off elevators at the wrong floor himself. You can explain it to him just as you've explained it to me."

She shrugged nervously this time.

"And if he asks why you went to such elaborate pains to get me up here on the bus for this little fish fry, you can tell him we just wanted to be alone."

Danny gave her hand, closed on his arm, two sharp pats and lifted it away as he arose carelessly. "Well, I'll probably be visiting Mr. Scotti one of these days. And by the way, tell Butch—the guy who followed me—I'm sorry to have inconvenienced him. I'll be seeing you. . . ."

SHE looked up at him a moment, then reached out and took his hand. "No. Don't go. Please."

As she drew him down into the seat beside her Danny hunched his shoulders. "I should imagine Mr. Scotti's a pretty jealous type. He probably wouldn't like the idea of another man—that's me—in your life. And he impresses me as the kind of charac-

ter I'd rather not tangle with."

Her words lashed out at him: "You're pretty funny, aren't you?"

He turned on her directly. "Not funny, Mrs. Scotti. Only you might as well know, I want the truth or nothing at all. I'm not messing around for my health. A couple of good people are up to their ears in trouble, mostly because of me. I'm going to get them out of it if I can." She peered down at the back of the seat before her. "We might as well reach a perfect understanding now. It seems I've got something on you. If I told Scotti about your visit to that apartment it could lead to some questions you'd like to avoid."

"Go on."

"That's all there is. Now it's your turn to talk."

"And just what do you want to know?"

"First, I want to know just what your connection with Alfred Sutton was. Call him Sorenson if you want to."

"Alfred Sutton was my husband's attorney." Her voice was so deep he could scarcely hear it over the loud rumbling of the bus.

"I know that."

"When he was working on my husband's case I saw him a couple of times." She amended the sentence with the punctuation of a deep swallow. "He wasn't getting on with his wife. I guess he liked feminine companionship. I used to arrange dates for him; some of my girl friends."

Danny nodded.

The large lower lip quivered against even, set teeth. "As my husband's attorney, of course, I became reasonably well acquainted with him myself."

Danny nodded.

"Well, during the trial Sutton was in that accident. At least everyone thought so. People identified the body, what was left of it." She stared down at her hands carefully. "Well, I happened to believe it was

[Turn page]

CAN YOUR SCALP PASS THE *F-N TEST?



***The Famous Finger Nail Test**
 "It's F-N, the test for men!" Scratch your head—if you find dryness or loose dandruff you need Wildroot Cream-Oil. Buy the large economy size.

YOUR HAIR CAN LOOK LIKE THIS WITH NEW WILDROOT CREAM-OIL



2 Only a little Wildroot Cream-Oil can do a big job for your hair. Keeps your hair well groomed all day long without a trace of that greasy, plastered down look! Your hair looks good and feels good too!

CREAM-OIL CHARLIE SAYS: "IT CONTAINS LANOLIN!"



3 Get Wildroot Cream-Oil from your barber or drug counter. **AND TUNE IN...** "The Adventures of Sam Spade" on CBS Network every Sunday.



phony, the story of his death."

"Did you tell Mr. Scotti?"

She shook her head sharply.

"What made you think something was hay-wire?"

She turned back to her hands. "Because one of the girls I knew was—seeing quite a little of Alfred at the time. He was in hot water over some deals." The words came slowly, hesitantly. "Anyway, my friend thought he seemed to be making preparations to check out. In addition, there was the matter of some money of Scotti's that Sutton was keeping."

"Oh yes," said Danny. "That's the money they said was burned in the car with Sutton."

She nodded. "There wasn't enough money in that car to—" Her voice broke off abruptly.

"—make up four hundred thousand dollars?"

She turned on him. "I didn't say that!"

"No. Go on."

"Anyway, it wasn't Sutton's money. It was Tony's, and there was never any sign of it from then on."

"Scotti never located it?"

"I don't know whether he did or not."

"And so—?"

"And so one day—it was a week ago—a friend called me. She said maybe I'd think she was crazy, but she *knew* Alfred Sutton was living in the same apartment building—right up over her apartment. Of course I was surprised, but she swore it was Alfred Sutton." She looked over at him carefully. "She'd seen Scotti and me with him plenty of times, so she had a right to know Sutton if she saw him, even after three years."

"I see." Danny nodded. He was listening carefully. There was a thin color of nervousness beneath the heavy varnish of her voice.

"Anyway, she called. She said I ought to come over and see for myself. She said she was sure she was making no mistake."

Danny nodded. "Did you tell Mr. Scotti?"

"No. No, I didn't."

"I should think it would have involved him and his interests very deeply."

HER VOICE was colorless. "He'd had enough trouble with the cops; I didn't know what rash things he might do if Viv was right and it *was* Sutton. Scotti was on probation; I'd rather have lost all that money than have him get sent back to the pen for good."

"I see. So you went to see your friend and talk it over."

She swallowed dryly and nodded. "And I got off on the wrong floor. Maybe my mind was so upset; I'd been thinking of the apart-

ment over Viv's all day long."

"I should think that'd have made you more anxious than ever not to get off on the wrong floor."

"Well, it didn't. Right after I ran into you there I went on downstairs. My friend told me Sutton seemed to have moved out; she hadn't seen him lately. I sort of figured maybe she'd had a brain storm and got her wires crossed."

"So you didn't tell Mr. Scotti?"

"No. I saw no reason getting him upset over something he couldn't verify. Then, having not told him, I was naturally anxious for him not to find out from someone else later. You, for instance. You said Scotti looked like a jealous type. Well, he is. And if he once gets into his head anyone's pulled a fast one—"

Danny nodded. "I can imagine." He grinned soberly and sighed. "But after all, it's all established that it isn't Sutton in the morgue. Sutton's old partner, Walter Danforth, went to the morgue and said it wasn't. I should think Scotti wouldn't be so burned if you told him. Danforth said there was a great resemblance but that it definitely wasn't Sutton. Scotti ought to understand your friend making as obvious a mistake as she did."

She rubbed her hands together nervously. "Yes, he should, shouldn't he?" Her eyes darted up to his face a moment, troubled and pensive. "Well, if Danforth says it isn't, I should think that'd be enough proof for you too."

Danny was thinking aloud, trying to hook things up for himself. "Sure, but, you see he made a couple of slips in front of the police. I don't think he's telling everything he knows. And when the police get him started talking, they'll really have some very potent questions to ask."

Her pointed tongue ran thoughtfully across her upper lip for a second. Then the girl sighed. "If you want my honest opinion, I'll tell you where they'll end up." Her voice was sharp and cynical again. "They'll end up with Alfred Sutton's lovely wife and that man she's married to now."

"What makes you say that?"

"Maybe Danforth's trying to cover up for them. But he ought to know, just like Mr. Scotti and I know, of some of the scenes Alfred Sutton had with that 'friend' of Mrs. Sutton's. If he didn't threaten Sutton twice a day, Sutton thought he was losing his grip. The boy friend wanted Alfred to give her a divorce so he could marry her himself, but Alfred wouldn't do it."

"Yes, I've heard about that." Danny nodded confusedly. He was out on the race track again, and every time he sped past the

grandstand there were just two people in it: Mr. and Mrs. Ferguson. They were clutching at one another for dear life and they were definitely not cheering. Neither was he.

"Well," Mrs. Scotti said. "I guess this is the end of the tour, isn't it?" She arose calmly. Then she looked down at him, her eyes narrowed. "I'm taking you at your word that you won't get me mixed up with all this mess. Tony's a little hard to explain things to once he starts asking questions. I guess my story's a little too simple to sound very believable."

Danny nodded. She drew the silver-fox cape about her regally as she slid past him and made her way down the narrow aisle, her high heels drumming against the slanted floor boards.

In a moment the bus stopped with a squeal of brakes. He looked from the window and saw her alighting. Her eyes flicked up at him but showed no sign of recognition.

Danny rode on for two blocks, immersed in gloomy darkness. Then he got off the bus, crossed the street, and caught the ingoing bus.

He was going back to Danforth's office—and Marian. And not with the bacon.

CHAPTER XIV

December 23



IT WAS almost twenty minutes before Danny leaped from the bus and made his way through the crowds that were jostling determinedly along the teeming sidewalk.

As he swung into the large recessed entrance to Danforth's building he was vaguely conscious of a small black coupé parked before the busy entrance. A voice came over the welter of traffic and confusion.

"Hey, Dan."

He turned. Mike was lounging behind the wheel of the police car. Danny bucked the tide of pedestrians and stuck his head in the low car door.

"Hi there, Mike. What makes?"

"Drove the sergeant down."

"Oh?"

Mike shrugged. "I guess I told you the sergeant was looking up some doctor who Sutton used to go to. A guy named Vicente." Danny nodded. "Well, the sarge found out something funny. Seems like this doctor doesn't live there any more."

Danny looked at Mike's red, happy face

thoughtfully. "Meaning what, Mike?"

"I don't know exactly, Dan. I'm just one of the boys. Seems Sutton'd been going to see this doctor pretty regular, and the night of the accident in Hubbard Woods an old lady was sitting in the window of her apartment, which was right over the doctor's apartment and office. She sees some guy in a big car draw up and go in, and then she hears a argument. In a moment the doctor and this guy go out together, still arguing. Well, nobody ever saw the doctor after that."

"Judas! Wasn't his disappearance reported?"

Mike shrugged. "You'll have to ask the sarge. Far as I know, the old lady never thought twice about the doctor checking out without notice, and neither did anybody else. He was sort of on the shady side; always on the move. Nobody missed him, so nobody bothered to report him being gone."

"So what does that have to do with Danforth?"

"The whole thing's phony. The sarge ran into this old lady while he was trying to locate the doctor. From what she can remember of the night the doctor checked out, the car and the guy that came in and then went out with the doc—it was none other than A. Sutton!"

"Judas!"

"Well, that sets the sergeant thinking. Jeez, he had the whole office chasing its tail. About all they could find out was that this doctor once got run in for illegal operations. He tried to crack out on the boys one night and jumped out the first-floor window and broke a leg."

"Yeah?"

"Well, Dan, it seems that after that accident in Hubbard Woods the autopsy showed that the body they found in the car had signs of a broken leg too. So—the sergeant puts two and two together and gets six, which he don't like. He reaches the conclusion it must of been the doctor in that car up in Hubbard Woods and not Sutton. Well, Danforth was the cooky who said it *was* Sutton, and no doubt about it."

Danny shook his head despondently. This was it.

"The sarge decided Mr. D. wasn't coming through like a scholar and a gentleman. So here we are again."

MARIAN was sitting far forward on the edge of the deep red leather chair. She anxiously held some roughly clipped papers.

"Danny, what's happening?"

"I don't know. You tell me!"

"I was going through Mr. Danforth's file. I found these." She held up her hand and

indicated a small clutter of newspaper clippings. Anyway, the sergeant came in. He was pretty rough. He told me to wait here; he wanted to talk with me."

Danny took her gently by both arms. "Look, Marian, I'm afraid we're in for some trouble. It seems that the sergeant has found out your father wasn't killed up in Hubbard Woods. They've established that it was a Dr. Vicente your father was going to at the time."

She nodded.

He went to the small cubicle across the room. The purple-haired girl had been listening to them intently.

"Look." His voice was authoritative. "Give me a piece of scratch paper, will you?"

The girl groped into the small desk drawer nervously.

Before he opened the door to the large office at the end of the corridor he wrote a short note on the slip of scratch paper. It said:

"On several occasions Danforth has mentioned the Lake Shore apartment. How does he know about it? Was he there to see Sorenson before Sorenson died? If so, why isn't he telling?"

He folded the note crosswise and opened the door cautiously.

Danforth sat behind the wide desk. The sergeant turned. "Danny! You get out of here!"

DANNY closed the door firmly behind him. "Look, Sarge." He indicated the folded note in his hand. "See this? It's got a hot question on it."

The sergeant's eyebrows lifted as he extended one hand.

Danny shook his head. "Not unless I stay. It's on the level, Sarge. If you can honestly say this note doesn't furnish you a good question I'll clear out."

The sergeant breathed deeply and nodded. When he had finished reading the cryptic message he looked inquiringly at Danny. Danny shrugged. "Do I stay?"

"Okay! Only keep your yap out of this."

As Danny sat down the sergeant turned back to Danforth. "It has just been brought to my attention you haven't been coming clean with us, Mr. Danforth." He handed the note to the attorney, who read it nervously. The sergeant went on firmly: "In the second place, that wasn't Alfred Sutton in the burned car up in Hubbard Woods. We got that proved. We know it was someone else, and we know who."

Danforth's heavy breathing was the only sound in the quiet room. He looked down at the hand on the desk top; it stopped its slow movement and clenched until the

knuckles were white. Then he looked up at the sergeant. The face wasn't ruddy pink any more; it was bleached. The irises in the pale brown eyes seemed to contract; small round islands against troubled white.

"Look, Sergeant. . . ." Danforth's eyes flicked to Danny's face accusingly, then back to the older man. "All right, I haven't 'come clean.' You're right; there are certain details I haven't told. Now I'll make a deal with you."

The sergeant's big head jutted forward aggressively.

"I'll tell you everything I know if you'll take it as easy on me as you can."

"You'll get a square deal; that's all I can promise you."

Danforth took a deep breath; it was wavering, uneven. "I didn't kill Sutton. Maybe I know who did. But I'm going to get clean of this whole affair. I could bull it through, Sergeant, and get myself out from under. Remember that when it comes time to make any charges."

The sergeant nodded.

"I'll start right at the beginning of the thing."

"Yah. That's right."

"I met Alfred Sutton twelve years ago. I had offices—not here"—Danforth looked about the big room unhappily—"I was out on Madison Street; the going was rough. I'd let it be known I'd like to find someone to share my office expense. Alfred heard, was looking for a similar arrangement, and we made the deal."

"Yah?"

"He made it clear we were to be a partnership in name only; it looks better on the door. But we were to keep hands off each other's affairs—completely." Danforth cleared his throat. "We got along. Sutton's success was quick. I was doing all right myself. We moved here after two years. At first it was more than we could afford, but it was a good front."

"I never got to know Alfred personally. Consequently I never knew the full scope of his practice, but I certainly had every reason to sense that it was dirty enough."

The sergeant nodded him on.

"Well, five years ago Sutton started playing the horses. He got on very well at first. Then the tides changed: he got into debt. He came to me for a loan. Twenty-five thousand dollars. I refused at first. Then I found out he'd been keeping close track of my affairs." Danforth's face twisted with the reminiscence of anger. "All attorneys in our work have to handle some affairs that aren't strictly—legitimate. Alfred threatened to expose me if I didn't come across. I finally did, after he'd signed over an insurance

policy to me as collateral. I tell you this only because it marked a distinct change in our relationship."

"I should of thought so," mused the sergeant. "I should of thought you'd have moved out on him after that."

"Oh, I should have, but I didn't. Business was too good." Danforth smiled uneasily. "As Sutton's partner, things went well for me, even though it was extremely unpleasant."

"Yah?"

"Then three years ago, when the Scotti trial came up, I knew something was out of order. Sutton seemed to be inordinately eager to clear up his affairs." Danforth looked down at his lap abjectly. "I decided one night to come down here and go through his records. He'd done just that to me!"

The sergeant, despite himself, clucked his tongue against his teeth.

"I didn't know what he had in mind. I was determined not to get caught holding the sack a second time. So I came down." The voice was scarcely audible now. "That was the night of November 18. Three years ago."

The sergeant's voice was a bark. "The night Sutton was killed up in Hubbard Woods!"

"The night he was supposed to be killed."

The sergeant sighed.

"I came down. Of course I didn't know about the accident. I was in Sutton's office, going through his files, when I heard a key in the lock. It was Alfred."

"Yah?" The sergeant shifted nervously forward. Two more inches and he'd be flat on the floor.

"He told me then about the accident. He didn't tell me who was in the car in his place, but he'd framed the accident all right."

"But—right during the middle of the Scotti trial?"

"That was part of it. I knew Scotti had turned over a large sum of money to Sutton for safekeeping."

"The money stolen from the Mayfair Bank?"

"I don't know where it came from. But it was a large sum. I think he'd have liked to kill me there and then to keep me quiet, but he was afraid to do that. It was more important to him to make a getaway, a neat getaway, with no signs of any mystery which might raise any questions."

"So then what happened?"

THE attorney's voice became a monotone, a series of toneless, short phrases. "He told me he'd make it worth my while if I'd do everything possible to make it appear he'd actually been killed in the accident."

"Such as testifying at the inquest that it was him?"

Danforth nodded.

"How much did that set him back?"

Danforth looked up at last, his eyes narrowed. "Fifty thousand dollars."

The sergeant whistled. "And for that all you had to do was keep quiet?"

Danforth nodded again.

The sergeant made puzzled gestures with his hands. "But why was he trying to pull such a fade-out?"

"He didn't explain. I didn't ask."

"He paid you the fifty grand right then?"

"Out of his wallet. It appeared that he had a great deal more. I couldn't tell."

"I'll be damned!" The sergeant's amazed face took in Danforth unbelievably, like a little kid who's just pulled the whiskers off his father and finds it isn't really Santa Claus. "So then?"

"The accident was reported—and accepted at face value. It looked like the incident was closed."

"Yah. I should guess so."

"Until"—Danforth swallowed—"until three weeks ago. Alfred telephoned. He was back in Chicago. He simply summoned me to the apartment on Lake Shore and told me if I knew what was good for me I'd be there as specified. I went."

"Yes?"

"He'd gone through whatever money he had; he wanted more. He told me he'd paid out to me—that fifty thousand dollars—not to mention the insurance I'd collected on his death. Now it was my turn to pay. He wanted his money back."

"I should of thought you'd have him by the nose. If you'd come to us he'd have been in hotter water than you."

Danforth nodded. Somewhere behind him Danny heard a door opening, the click of a lock. . . . In the adjoining suite.

"I told him I had to have at least ten days. Finally he consented."

The sergeant grunted as he rose awkwardly and went to the window. The Venetian blinds over the wide windows banged softly against the window frame, as though caught in a sudden draft. The back of Danny's neck felt as though cold fingers were barely brushing against the ends of the close-cropped hair.

The silence was torn by a sudden blast of noise, deafening, stunning, and the door behind Danny closed.

Danforth was slumping down slowly in the chair, a stupid smile on the large, relaxing lips. A spot of red appeared against the neat striped shirt.

The sergeant's voice was shrill. "Where'd it come from, Danny?"

Danny nodded with his head at the panelled door. As Danny worked frantically to loosen Danforth's collar he heard the heavy pounding of the sergeant's massive shoulder against the unyielding door. Then wood splintered and shrieked. Danny was working deftly, with all the agility he could muster. His right ear was ringing like a carillon gone berserk.

He took up the limp arm and pressed his middle three fingers against the soft under wrist.

"Danny."

His head jerked up. It was Marian. His fingers explored the thick wrist for the pulse. It had seemed to drain away.

"Danny! What's happened?" She looked at the limp, heavy figure slouched over the big desk, and her deep blue eyes widened in a horrified question.

"Yes, Marian. He's dead."

He led Marian gently back into the waiting room of the large office. He looked around for Purple-hair, but she was nowhere to be seen. He helped Marian into one of the deep chairs.

"Danny . . ." Her voice came to him as though from under water. He saw the package of cigarettes on the low table, lighted two at once, and handed one to her. His hand was none too steady.

"Danny, I saw something in those clippings."

"Not now, Marian. Later." He looked about the room wildly. He couldn't leave Marian here, and yet he should get back to Danforth. Just in case . . .

"Where's that secretary?"

"Downstairs, Danny," Marian's voice was breathless. "She said she was so nervous she'd developed a headache. A Bromo—the drug store downstairs. I told her I'd take any calls." She closed her eyes, and her right hand came up as she pressed at her temples with her gloved fingers. "But Danny, while I was here alone—"

Marian broke off abruptly as the hall door burst open and Purple-hair entered and stood loosely in the doorway. One look at Marian's pale face and she said: "What's the matter?"

"It's Mr. Danforth."

"What?"

He tried to grab her as she flew by, but she swung through the corridor doors, and he could hear her spiked heels beating against the linoleum. In a moment, as he'd expected, there was a sharp, piercing scream.

He looked down at Marian apprehensively. She was dazed, completely dazed. He'd better go back and get Purple-hair before she did anything rash.

She was leaning against the doorjamb like

a limp, willowy sack of flour. Her face was the color of a bruise; the heavy pink of her cheeks and the red of her mouth were deep tans and brown, veering on blue.

He took her firmly by the arm. "Come on," he said. "Out of here."

The girl turned to him crazily; he gave her a firm shake. She let him lead her away, back into the reception office. As he lowered her onto the sofa beside Marian she slumped as though she'd been unboned. He thrust his cigarette into her mouth, and she puffed on it mechanically, her nervous, jerky breathing acting like a bellows.

He turned to Marian just as she flung herself about and buried her face in the crook of her arm against the arm of the sofa and started to sob. As he started to move to comfort her he heard—distant in the long outside hallway—the sound of scuffling. Voices . . . Marian heard it too. Her head rose slowly as Danny went to the door, opened it, and peered out.

Everyone else was peering out of their office doors too. Up the center of the wide marble floor stormed the sergeant. He had someone in tow and was half tugging, half pushing. Danny couldn't make out the sergeant's words over the babble of voices from the curious observers and the dull roar which still echoed in his ears.

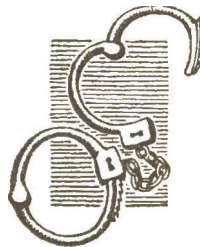
He adjusted his eyes to the darker confines of the hallway. Then, when he saw the sergeant's captive, it was as though someone had landed a fist squarely in the center of his stomach, knocking the air clean out of him. He seemed to lose his balance. His weight shifted against the door, which snapped shut neatly.

He turned to Marian. She was looking up at him questioningly.

The tall reluctant man beside the sergeant was James Ferguson!

CHAPTER XV

December 23



SERGEANT MYERS' excitement and exhilaration at the "chase" left him sharply as he propelled Ferguson into the large office and closed the door.

This was one hell of a way for a man to be preparing for Christmas.

He had to say something. He turned to Danny gruffly. "How's Danforth?"

Danny's head shook. "He's dead, Sarge. Shot through the heart."

"Judas!" The sergeant sighed. "Well," he

said, "I guess I got to make a couple of phone calls."

After he had spoken tersely to the coroner and the chief of the department he reentered the tight circle of silence again. He stood before Ferguson, his feet planted far apart. "You were running down that hall awful fast," he commented cryptically.

"Look, Sergeant, I can only tell the truth. I came up here to see Danforth. I came because I was curious. He had repeatedly said it wasn't Alfred Sutton in the morgue."

The sergeant nodded. "Sure. Sure. But we happen to know now it is Sutton."

"We've known that all along, Sergeant." Ferguson's voice was a deep, contrite rumble. "I sort of thought you had."

"It was our out from"—Ferguson shrugged—"I don't know what charges. I didn't feel that at the present time I should definitely re-establish the identity; everyone seemed quite intent on insisting it wasn't Sutton, and as long as you thought so, too, my wife—"

The sergeant nodded exaggeratedly. "But that excuse is out now," he said. "And frankly it doesn't look too good from any angle."

Ferguson's eyes dropped helplessly.

"But you was saying—?"

"I came to speak to Danforth. Knowing as I did that his identification was incorrect, I wanted to know why it was."

"You thought maybe you could buy him into keeping on with his statement it wasn't Sutton?" The sergeant's voice surprised him again; it had a strong ring of disbelief. He couldn't look at Ferguson and say "buy him off" without having something strain almost to snapping point in his credibility.

"No, I had no such idea," Ferguson said quietly. "I came to discuss the matter with him—to see if he was deliberately mistaken or what his reason was. As I entered the building I noticed a police car parked in front of the door. I thought nothing of it at the time. Then, when I entered the office, I found my daughter—Marian—here. She was alone."

Myers' head snapped around to Purplehair. "You," he barked. "Where'd you gone?"

The girl sobbed and tugged to get out her words. "I'd gone downstairs. Miss Sutton said she'd watch the switchboard. I—I had a splitting headache, and—"

The sergeant turned away, his eyes narrowed, and the secretary took it as a signal to stop talking.

Ferguson went on with the firmness of desperation: "Marian told me you—and the doctor—were here. She said something important was in the wind. Naturally I was

anxious not to be discovered. Marian said she had to wait for the doctor; for me to go—"

"Yah?"

"I was out in the hall"—Ferguson swallowed painfully—"when I heard the report of gunfire. I realized, without knowing exactly what had happened, that I'd be involved if I were found here. So I left immediately. Of course you know the rest."

"Yah. The elevators didn't work quite fast enough."

Ferguson looked downward, but his voice was firm. "That's the God's truth, Sergeant. It's all I can tell you—or anyone—all I can possibly tell because it's the absolute truth."

The sergeant's head didn't move, but his eyes darted over to Marian suspiciously. Then he turned sharply to the sobbing secretary. "She suggested you go downstairs and leave her here?"

The girl bit in her upper lip tragically and nodded. The pure drama of the situation was at last too much to be ignored. The voice was becoming rich and dulcet again, despite the steady punctuation of sobs. "I told her I felt simply awful; a headache. She said: 'Why don't you go down and get a Bromo? I'll watch things for you.'" The secretary flung a hand to her forehead and massaged it gently.

Danny stepped forward. "Now just a minute, Sarge. If you're trying to say that Marian—"

"Shuddup, Danny." The sergeant's order was offhand, instinctive, like a father speaking to a troublesome child by rote.

Danny started to object heatedly, but Ferguson stopped him with a small shake of his head.

The sergeant took in a deep breath. "Well," he said, "I'm afraid we'll have to talk all this over more fully. Down at the police station. As soon as the coroner gets here we'll be on our way."

Ferguson turned to Marian gently. "Dear, you'll have to tell your mother; tell her everything will be all right, that she's not to worry."

"I can't tell her, Jim. You'll be home later this evening; he'll believe you. He's got to! I'll just tell Mother you were delayed."

Ferguson put a finger under her chin and lifted her head. "I'm afraid I may not be home this evening, Marian."

Danny stepped forward resolutely. "Just one minute here! Listen, Sarge. That shot didn't come from the door that leads to this corridor. It came from that door to the vacant suite on the other side of Danforth's office."

The sergeant's eyes narrowed. "You're real sure of that, Danny?"

"You're darned right I am! I was sitting so I couldn't help seeing the door from the corridor. There was no one there. Not only that, but the gun nearly went off in my ear, and my ear was backed up to that door from the vacant suite, the door you cracked open."

The sergeant turned to Danny succinctly. "You weren't just leading me off on a wild-goose chase, were you? It just happened I had my back turned, so you thought maybe—" The sergeant stopped, surveyed Danny. No, Danny was a little screw-loose, maybe, but he wasn't lying. "Okay, Danny. So that shot came from that other door. Okay."

"But, Sergeant"—this time Marian stepped forward—"Jim had just gone out the door when I heard the shot. He couldn't have got there in time."

The sergeant asked pointedly, "But you didn't see him when you heard the shot, did you? You can't say where he was."

There was a long pause. The sergeant took in Marian appraisingly. A pretty girl. A damned pretty girl. Kind of small, but well rounded in the right places. Innocent-looking . . . No! Damn it all! Everyone was always looking innocent just for him. Danny, he knew and could trust, but this whole Ferguson bunch—they were phony. Naturally, she'd try to protect her stepfather—even if she'd seen him do the shooting.

Ferguson seemed to read these thoughts on the sergeant's face because he said very simply, "No, she can't say where I was at the time."

"But, Jim, you couldn't have!" she wailed.

"It's all right, Marian. We know that, and we'll prove it somehow." He turned to the sergeant. "You will let my daughter go home, Sergeant? I promise you that she'll be available for your questioning at your convenience. Her mother is ill; she'll need Marian."

"Give them a break, Sarge. Be a pal." Danny's voice came up to the sergeant through the dark stickiness of his thoughts.

"Well—okay." He wagged his head self-righteously. After all, it was Christmas. The words ran through his mind raggedly: "God rest ye merry gentlemen, let nothing you dismay . . ."

■ **PETE ALDRICH** gave Danny a wide grin.

■ "Judas, Dan. Light somewhere. My head isn't on a swivel."

Danny stopped dead for just a moment and ran his hand distractedly through his short hair. "I can't light, Pete. This is such a nasty mess."

Pete nodded sagely. "You can say that again, brother."

The old wicker chair creaked as Danny slumped down into it. It creaked as he nerv-

ously rose and again started pacing off the narrow confines of the room.

"Okay," said Pete. "We got as far as you leaving Danforth's office with Marian. So then what happened?"

"I drove her car out to Evanston and we broke the news." Danny shook his head savagely. "What a job that was, telling Mrs. Ferguson!"

"I can imagine!"

"There wasn't any way to soften it. The sergeant's holding Ferguson on suspicion, and he indirectly accuses Marian of trying to trump up an alibi." Danny sighed. "Of course he thinks Marian's just saying Ferguson had just left the room when the shot went off. But he doesn't believe it. If only Danforth's secretary hadn't left for that Bromo!"

"Yah, sure." The solid tone of Pete's solemn voice stopped Danny a second time and he turned.

"You think it was just a trumped-up alibi yourself."

"I don't know, Dan."

"The sergeant caught Ferguson outside Danforth's office, all right. But one thing he *didn't* find."

"Yah?"

"He didn't find the gun that killed Danforth, and he nearly tore the building down looking for it."

"Couldn't he make Ferguson tell what he'd done with it?"

Danny's Irish face flushed with exasperation. "You seem to forget, just like the sergeant, that Ferguson says he didn't *have* a gun; he didn't *do* any shooting."

■ **PETE** flexed his hand thoughtfully.

"There's another thing you don't seem to take into account, Danny. Just suppose Ferguson *didn't* shoot Danforth. Does that necessarily clear him of guilt in the automobile accident, when Vicente was knocked off—and the matter of one Alfred Sutton, who was blackmailing the daylights out of him?"

"I think it does! There are just two ways of looking at Ferguson's call on Danforth this afternoon. First, he went there to kill Danforth in order to keep him quiet. The only reason he'd do that would be because he had some *reason* to keep Danforth quiet. And the only reason he'd have would be to cover up his guilt in the other two deaths: Vicente's and Sutton's."

Pete nodded mutely.

"On the other hand, assume he went there merely to talk to Danforth to find out what Danforth knew—as Ferguson says was the case. That doesn't imply any guilt; it's perfectly reasonable that he's innocent of those

December 24

other deaths. As a matter of fact, if he had been guilty, I can't imagine he'd take a chance of going to see Danforth. He'd be placing himself right in Danforth's hands and giving him the key to the bank vault."

"That's right, Dan."

"And I'm certain Ferguson didn't kill Danforth, because Marian says he didn't have time."

Pete nodded again. "You're right back where you started, Dan: hanging the entire issue of Ferguson's innocence or guilt on Marian's word."

"I talked to her very frankly on the way back to Evanston, Pete. She knows I can't afford to go off on any tangents and that her word—one way or the other—is all I've got to go on. She knows, too, that she can confide in me, that I wouldn't give her away if she came clean. Under those circumstances she has nothing to gain by stringing me along. If she's lying, then she'd know Ferguson was guilty, and she'd know that no matter how hard I worked I'd still end up with Ferguson. I just don't think she'd do that with me."

Pete took a deep breath. "*L'amour, toujours l'amour*," he mused, "and have you got it bad!" Then he smiled wisely. "And don't try to tell me you're interested only because it shouldn't happen to a dog!"

He glanced at Danny's sober face. Danny, he was surprised to see, was peering off into the distance dreamily. Always a grim realist in the matter of anyone else's love affairs, Pete said solidly: "So now what's the program?"

"That's just it. I don't know. For one thing I'm going to talk to Hughes again at the Lake Shore apartment."

"What more can he tell you?"

"Probably nothing. But someone came there to see Sorenson; Danforth started to say so. Even though Hughes says he never saw anyone, maybe one of the other people on the floor did. I'm going to talk to them. I'm going to talk to that woman Mrs. Scotti told me about, the one who said she thought she'd seen Sutton. She lived right downstairs. Maybe she saw or heard someone." Danny nodded. "I get off at the hospital at two. I'll take in the Lake Shore apartment right after that."

"Looks like a nice full day, Dan. And if you happen to knock into one of those places at teatime, bring me home a crumpet."



WHEN Danny swaggered into the Lake Shore apartment it was just three o'clock.

Mrs. Hughes, more blonde and blowzy than ever, was standing at the manager's counter, discussing a telephone bill with two of the building's tenants.

She glanced up. Her fine-penciled eyebrows raised as Danny flashed her a jaunty smile. He snatched off the brown snap-brim felt hat and ran a hand over the thick layer of short sandy hair.

"Hi, Doc." The voice behind him was low, easy, and friendly.

He turned. It was George Casey. Myers' watchdog.

George was lounging in the most comfortable chair in the lobby, thumbing through an old copy of *Reader's Digest*.

Danny glanced longingly at Mrs. Hughes. She and her tenants were discussing the whole life history of the telephone, from Alexander Graham Bell to Don Ameche.

He turned back to George. "How's tricks? Why're you here now? I thought the sergeant considers the Sorenson matter closed."

The big head tilted over to one side. "Just what I said, Dan. But they still think she may come back for her clothes or something."

"Will you know her when you see her?"

Casey's big head wagged. "Mrs. Hughes described her to me. Something pretty gorgeous in the way of a blonde."

Danny laughed "I don't like to discourage you, George, but there's lots of blondes in Chicago."

George was unshaken. "Mrs. Hughes'll point her out to me."

"Sure she will, George," Danny said soothingly. "Sure she will—if she sees her first."

George smiled contentedly. "Oh, we'll see her. And you? What're you up to?"

Danny returned the smile. After all, George got a slug over the head way back when. Way back when, during Prohibition. A slow, friendly mind was his contribution to the noble experiment. Now they sent George out on jobs where they knew nothing would happen. Just to keep him busy and happy. Even a Piltown man would know Mrs. Sorenson wouldn't come traipsing back here, of all places, now that the story had broken in the papers.

"George, there is no objection to my

Follow the Exploits of the World's Greatest Sleuth
in Our Exciting Companion Magazine

**THE PHANTOM
DETECTIVE**

NOW ON SALE—15c AT ALL STANDS!

prowling around the halls, is there?"

George mulled over the question carefully, his lips puckered thoughtfully. "Don't see's there should be," he commented finally. "S'long as you don't disturb nobody."

Danny gave him a wink.

The conversation at the manager's desk was drawing to a close. Mrs. Hughes had, of course, won out. The tenant was thumbing through some bills in a gold bill clip.

He gave George a couple of pats on the thick, solid shoulder. "See you soon, George."

"You betcha, Dan. Always glad to see you at any time. Give my regards to the folks."

George nodded with inner satisfaction. The folks. He'd figured that out all by himself. Anybody young as Danny ought to have folks. Sometimes he couldn't quite remember these things.

As Danny reached the manager's counter Mrs. Hughes surveyed him placidly. Her face looked pinker and whiter today, as though she'd dipped it in a flour barrel and then smeared her cheeks with raspberries.

"Good afternoon, Doctor."

He nodded his greeting. "I'm the proverbial bad penny."

Her smile was sullen. "I suppose you've been reading the news."

He nodded.

"Really! So far they've only used the name Sutton and said 'a prominent Lake Shore apartment.' If they ever give out the name Sorenson, or the address, we'll have an exodus out of here that'll make your head spin."

"Let's hope they don't!"

"We've worked a long time getting a good, steady clientele here, and that's no cinch. If they ever get the idea we're running a hide-out for gangsters—" Mrs. Hughes shuddered. "I tell you, Doctor. Mr. Hughes and I are about at wit's end. The police seem to think we have nothing else to do but run around town for them. Like this afternoon, Mr. Hughes has to go down and look at some pictures of some women; looking for Mrs. Sorenson, no doubt. It'll take him all afternoon, and we've got so much to take care of right now, with the help situation so bad."

Danny leaned forward insinuatingly and let his hand drop meaningfully over Mrs. Hughes's plump arm. The long upper lip was straight. "Mrs. Hughes, you know I've been awfully interested in the Sorensens. You see, some very good friends are involved, just as you are. I'd like to help you both."

SHE shrugged pettishly but didn't remove her arm. "Well, I sure wish someone'd put an end to all this!"

"Perhaps I can help, if you'd just tell me everything you can about the Sorensens."

"I don't know anything about them! I've

told everybody that, and——" The petulance faded suddenly, and she gave Danny a pettish little smile. Evidently the gentle reassuring pressure of Danny's hand on her arm, the memory of the unpaid bill, and the realization of the endless confusion made her more willing to talk. "They kept to themselves all the time. Not friendly to anyone, as far as I know."

"You've read the papers, so you know about that man who was shot yesterday? Danforth? His picture was in the paper."

She nodded him on.

"He was telling the police, just as he was shot, that he'd been here."

"I read that. But I never saw him. If I did, I didn't give it a second thought; people come and go all day. And even if I'd known then he'd come to see the Sorensens I probably wouldn't have thought anything about it. Know what I mean?"

Danny sighed and nodded.

Mrs. Hughes went on unexpectedly: "Of course I always thought Mr. and Mrs. Sorenson, they didn't look like the sort of people who'd get along together. Of course you can't tell about people any more. Only he looked like such a—well, a refined sort of man—and Mrs. Sorenson——"

"Yes?"

"Well, she just didn't look his type. Of course when a man looks dissipated he looks dignified. With a woman, she just looks hard." Mrs. Hughes touched at her straw-blonde hair.

"Did they seem to get along okay?"

"Whenever I saw them together they seemed to. Of course there was that night—it was the first or second. Bertie and I were making out bills, I remember."

"Yes?"

"Mrs. Morgan—she's next door—called and said they was disturbing her with some sort of fight. But then she always complains. We thought it was probably just the radio. Anyway, she's good pay, so Mr. Hughes went up. Mr. Sorenson met him at the door. Bertie didn't see Mrs. Sorenson. He said as far as he could tell, everything looked peaceful enough. Bertie just used the old apartment manager's dodge, told them somebody had complained there was a radio too loud somewhere and would they mind turning it down if it was theirs. Mr. Sorenson said it was their radio, but they'd already turned it off."

"Were there any other complaints?"

"Oh, Mrs. Morgan is always complaining. But she never said anything more about them fighting. Of course she was always complaining about the dog." Mrs. Hughes grimaced mildly. "We just told her the Sorensens had the dog visiting them from time to time. The dog was well behaved; he never made any

noise, so she never found out they kept him up there all the time." Then she added hastily: "You won't tell anybody?"

Danny smiled: "Of course not."

"There were other times she called us. Once she said their shower made too much noise and she thought they must live in it day and night. Another time she complained about them hammering on the walls. That was Mr. Hughes' fault. He was having Tony, the maintenance man, put in more hooks for Mrs. Sorenson's clothes."

"I see." Danny thought carefully. "And they checked out—when was it?"

"They didn't check out! Mrs. Sorenson left about a week after Mrs. Morgan complained about their fight. Just up and left, I guess; I don't know. I make it a practice not to interfere, but I mentioned not seeing Mrs. Sorenson to Mr. Sorenson as he came in a couple of days later. He said she'd gone to visit her mother for a while."

"And Mr. Sorenson?"

"He stayed. Let's see—it was five days after Mrs. Sorenson had left. I happened to mention it to Bertie."

"Mention what?"

"Oh, just the way Mr. Sorenson acted that day. I was standing right here, interviewing a new maid, when he come in. He looked awfully queer; I don't know, sort of green, like he'd seen a ghost. Know what I mean? In a hurry to get up to his room. At first I thought he'd had one too many, and then I decided he was afraid he was going to faint."

"Could it have been fear of something else, something or someone he'd seen?"

Mrs. Hughes ran her tongue over her oily red lips. "Yes, I suppose it could."

"Did you speak to him at all?"

"Yes, I did. I smiled and said good afternoon to him. He just glanced over at me"—a stubby red-nailed finger traced a path past the desk and to the elevator—"and went on upstairs without a word."

Danny's lower lip jutted out thoughtfully. "Mrs. Hughes, do you suppose Mrs. Morgan would mind if I went up and spoke to her?"

Mrs. Hughes took in the handsome, earnest face and smiled vindictively. "I imagine she'd love it! But let me warn you, whatever she says about the apartment and the way it's run, please remember she'd think people were making too much noise if she had the place to herself!"

EVERYTHING about Mrs. Morgan was pretty much as Mrs. Hughes had described her: even the neat, brisk little arc the door took as it opened; the distinct white dots on the black, sacky dress which hung from the sparse, flat body; the sharp, definite features of the narrow, heavy-lined face.

Even the silver-rimmed glasses seemed to flash defiance. Too much acid, Danny observed, with a distinct neurotic complex and vitamin deficiency. It was impossible to visualize there ever having been a Mr. Morgan. Probably a big good-natured guy. Either he got fed up with a timetable life, or his birdlike wife forced him onto her own diet and got rid of him that way.

"Yes?"

Danny gave her his best smile as he introduced himself. It didn't seem to soften her, but at least she didn't slam the door in his face.

"And what do you wish to know?"

He gave her a thick, charming smile. "I thought perhaps you could help me in my investigation of Mr. and Mrs. Alex Sorenson." His voice was already acquiring Mrs. Morgan's thin, pedantic directness.

Her small head, with the fringe of old-fashioned pompadour hair, twitched. "I knew nothing of them. Nothing, except that they were most unsatisfactory neighbors. Apartment-house living requires consideration and thoughtfulness, particularly in a building as shoddily constructed as this one." The head tossed backward defiantly. "I, for instance, never play my radio after nine-thirty. Others may want to sleep. Too, I never speak in a loud tone of voice, slam doors. Even in washing dishes I place a dish towel over the drainboard, so that the clatter of dishes won't—"

Danny shook his head in thoughtful admiration, shaking and nodding and forming interested little "Well, is that so's!" on his lips as the account of precautions lined on, one after another.

When his cue finally came the words poured out: "I understand the Sorensens were quite thoughtless, that they often had quarrels and arguments."

"Indeed they did!" The thin eyebrows twitched heavenward. "I often had to move a chair into my tiny little kitchen to escape the noise; my nerves just can't stand constant jangle, jangle, jangle, jangle! Day in and day out; no consideration for others!"

Danny's voice was doleful. "And even so, I suppose their voices were so harsh and discordant you couldn't escape it."

"It was useless." Mrs. Morgan took a martyred sigh.

"What seemed to be the cause of the argument?"

The thin lips bit together caustically. "Money."

Danny shook his head despondently. "Isn't it always, Mrs. Morgan?" He clucked his tongue several times against his teeth.

Mrs. Morgan reacted to the clucking almost as though she were a horse. "Mrs. Sorenson

accused her husband of retaining money which was rightfully hers. He denied it. She started to cry"—the thin lips twisted in an apology for all women who must resort to tears—"and called him a—well, a spendthrift. He told her, in the most blasphemous of terms, to mind her own business; that she'd been perfectly satisfied with his management of funds when he had plenty to manage. Something to that effect. I'm quite sure then that he struck her. Unfortunately I can't say she didn't deserve it. I had to take to my bed the next day with a sick headache. Of course I called Mr. Hughes at once." The long, heavily pored nose twitched. "In his usual lazy manner he seemed to imply I was too persnickety. I finally had to tell him if the hubbub wasn't quieted immediately I should call the police. That, of course, stirred him to action."

"Did you ever see any of the Sorensons' callers?"

The eyes blazed threateningly. "I did not! I hadn't the slightest interest in that type of person! I live my own life, quietly and inconspicuously, and I expect others to live theirs."

"But, you see, there was one gentleman—tall, dark, ruddy-complexioned—who said he'd called on them, and—"

"I know nothing about the Sorensons other than what I have told you!" The scrawny hand rattled the doorknob nervously.

Danny knew the interview was over. As he bid Mrs. Morgan a doleful adieu he discovered that he sounded exactly like a mortician.

As the door closed crisply Danny shrugged. He'd learned quite a little. The pieces, some of them, were beginning to fit together.

Sutton, going under the name of Sorenson, and his lush blonde companion, whoever she might be, had run out of money. They'd come back to Chicago to raise more. Where? By blackmailing Danforth and the Fergusons. But that would take a little time; neither could be expected to raise such big sums in a day. And meanwhile Mrs. S. flew off the handle and left in a huff. Only where did she go—and why?

Danny sighed. Just how all this helped clear the Fergusons he didn't know.

AND just what had happened to Sutton-Sorenson from the time he left his place so unexpectedly to the time he showed up on the lower level of Wacker Drive as a very dead, drunken bum?

Why did he leave so suddenly? Who or what had he seen?

Maybe Viv, Mrs. Scotti's friend, would have an idea.

A lighted glass panel down the hallway

said: "Stairs."

He'd go down and see Viv now, in the suite which was directly below the Sorenson apartment.

He was in luck again. The door opened in response to his tapping, and a scrawny negro maid with a small lace doily atop her small black head peered out at him.

"Yes?"

"I'm a friend of Mrs. Tony Scotti. I wonder if I may see the lady of the house, please?"

"What's your name, please?"

"Dr. Daniel Michaels."

In a moment he was ushered into an apartment which was basically like the Sorenson apartment. Basically, only. It was jammed with frilly, ruffly personal touches: cheap little figurines on hanging bookshelves, a large and none-too-realistic water color of an orchid hung limpidly over the floral pastel sofa. The room was a welter of lacy pillows and the heavy scent of old perfume. A great rag doll with the embroidered eyes slightly askew leered up at him from a heavy, frilly chaise longue.

He was seating himself as a large well-corseted blonde came into the room. She wore a bright blue house robe with pink satin slippers. Her hair was still curled in tight beauty-shop curls against her forehead.

"Yes?"

"I'm Dr. Michaels. I wondered if you could tell me a little about the gentleman upstairs, the one you thought was Alfred Sutton."

The lips were pale against the yellow, puffy skin which looked hungry for make-up. Right now it shone dully with some sort of preparation cream.

"I don't believe I know your name," Danny added with a pleasant smile.

The head tossed kittenishly. "Vivian. Vivian Larimer."

"Mrs. Scotti told me you called a little over a week ago and said you thought Alfred Sutton was living upstairs."

"That's right." Viv lolled back in the chaise, one large arm draped over the curving seat back. The pale blue eyes searched him up and down brazenly. Evidently she found him to her liking, for the hand holding together the neck of the house robe fell to her lap and exposed an expanse of ample white throat. The pale lips smiled. "You'll really have to excuse my appearance," she said. "I was just preparing to go out."

"Oh, that's quite all right." Danny gave her the old wolf-boy look: the lowered eyelids, the slight twisted smile.

She leaned back a little. The V of her house robe deepened, exposing the soft blue-white skin between her breasts.

"I can't tell very much, really, about seeing

the man upstairs. I only saw him twice. The first time in the lobby; he was going out and I was coming in. I thought it was Sutton, but after all, when Sutton was dead, or supposed to be"—she bit in a lower lip—"I thought I was imagining things and let it go. Well, the second time was a couple of days later. I was sure it was Sutton."

"Did he see you?"

"He wouldn't have known me if he had. I'd only seen him with Tony and Rosie—the Scottis, I mean—but we'd never met. And I'd seen pictures of him in the paper. Anyway, I called Rosie. I told her to come over for a look if she wanted. I guess you know the rest. She got off at the wrong floor."

Danny nodded. He had that damned same feeling of awareness. He looked at Viv carefully. Her eyelids were half lowered; she was surveying a red cracked nail concernedly. And still he felt that she was watching him, appraising him from beneath the heavy eyelids.

He smiled genially. The stiffness of his skin told him that unconsciously he was troubled. "You've known Mrs. Scotti for quite some time, haven't you?" He didn't know why he'd asked the question, but Viv seemed to be troubled by it. She looked up at him and gave him a bland smile.

"For years," she said evenly. "We were in show business together in the old days. Before she met Tony. We never hit it off so good, Tony and me. But I still see Rosie now and then." Her hand adjusted one of the tightly pinned curls about her face.

"You really got to excuse the way I look. I'm a mess."

Danny gave her a lurid little smile.

"We'd go out to theater matinees, shopping together—that sort of thing. We sort of liked the same sort of styles and clothes. We even traded clothes now and then in the old days. Of course Rosie's things wouldn't quite fit me; she's a little thinner. Her hair's a little redder'n mine, and of course her skin's darker, and her eyes too."

She looked up as Danny's eyes blinked involuntarily.

She blinked right back at him. Heavy dimples appeared at the corners of the large mouth. "But then, of course, I don't see her so much. Like I said, Scotti and I—" She shrugged. "Not that there's anything wrong with Tony, of course. Or with me, either. It's just that some people hit it off and some don't." She ended up with a little giggle.

He reined in his voice to make it casual, but it was so casual it creaked. "Have you talked with Mrs. Scotti recently?"

"No, I haven't spoken with her." The pale eyes flashed against him a moment. "We were going to meet for some shopping this

afternoon. She called and left word to call it off. Something about she and Scotti were going to meet at one of his places. He owns interest in a couple of night clubs, you know."

His heart was pounding in his throat as he rose. "Well, I won't take any more of your time. Thanks very much for your help."

He scarcely nodded at George Casey as he hurried out of the big building onto Lake Shore Drive.

CHAPTER XVII

December 24



EVEN when he'd asked Viv so casually, he'd known which clubs were Scotti's. The sergeant had told him.

It took just twelve minutes and almost the full contents of his wallet to ride in a taxi to the Blue Sky Club. A sullen pretty girl handed him a round

blue metal-rimmed check tag in exchange for his hat.

The bartender was conversing with two customers at the end of the bar, meanwhile mopping at his workbench with a limp rag. Someone had slipped; the rag was red-and-white-checked muslin.

Danny peered anxiously around the yet unoccupied tables.

Finally he saw them.

It was Mrs. Scotti, all right, although her back was partially turned. A small trail of blue smoke rose from her cigarette as her hand lowered slowly to the tablecloth. Scotti faced her. He was leaning back in the small gold chair, looking at a blonde at another table. In the blue light his face looked ominous—green.

"Old folks at home," Danny thought. Just sitting, smoking, and drinking. They can have it.

He knew just what he was going to do. The checkroom girl gave him change for his quarter with eyes raised heavenward in ill-concealed irritation.

He dialed for Operator and gave her the number of the Ferguson house in Evanston.

It was only a moment before the call was completed.

"Fergusons' residence." It was the maid.

"This is Dr. Michaels. I'd like to speak to Miss Sutton, please."

"Oh, Dr. Michaels." A slight pause. "Miss Sutton went out. You're to call her at a Miss Mulberry's house." There was a moment's hesitation, and then the maid gave him the number. The prefix indicated it was located

over on the other side of town.

The nickel chimed in the toll box, and in a moment a thin, nervous voice came over the wire to him.

"Yes?"

"Is Miss Sutton there?"

"Just one minute, please."

And then finally he heard Marian's voice. "Danny?"

"Yes, Marian. Look—"

She interrupted excitedly: "Danny, I've been here at Miss Mulberry's this afternoon. She was Father's secretary, you know. She called and said she wanted to speak to me. She's told me the most amazing thing. . . ."

He glanced nervously through the narrow paneled window. The Scottis might be leaving at any moment. The urgency of his plan overcame him.

"Listen, Marian. I'm in an awful rush right now. I'm really on the trail."

"I think I am too, Danny."

"Listen, honey, what I want you to do is this: I want you to wait about two minutes. Then call"—he read the number off the small circular placard in the telephone before him—"and act like you're a long-distance operator. Tell whoever happens to answer that you have a call for Mr. Tony Scotti. Say that it's very urgent. Got it?"

"Yes."

"When Scotti comes to the phone, stall him. Make him wait while you 'complete the call.' Keep him on the line, whatever you do. About three minutes. Can you do it?"

"You know I got straight A in dramatics."

"That was in high school; this is in dead earnest. I can't explain right now. I'll call you, at least by five, there at Miss Mulberry's. Okay?"

"All right, Danny."

Then he hung up.

He sauntered into the lounge idly. Anyone would have thought he was genuinely surprised on finding Mr. and Mrs. Scotti.

"Why, hello!" He drew up a chair engagingly. "Imagine seeing you again!"

Mrs. Scotti's full lower lip rolled forward defiantly. Scotti turned to him. "Hello, Doctor. I don't remember including you in my plans for this evening."

Danny shrugged. "Oh, I just happened by for a drink to take off the chill."

Scotti nodded. His wife started to speak and then thought better. She leaned away with injured carelessness.

"Nice little spot here," Danny said expansively. "Enough satin to make a funeral parlor."

Scotti smiled; the harsh corners of his mouth turned down, so it wasn't exactly a smile, just a change of expression. "Nice of you to be so observant," he said.

ROSALIE leaned forward and touched Scotti's arm. "Shall we go now, Tony?"

"Run out and leave our young friend here alone? Why, of course not." He turned to Danny, his eyes narrowed. "I'm sort of interested to hear what the doctor has to say." His long narrow fingers smashed out a cigarette into the blue glass ash tray. "I hear you're quite a boy with the splints."

Danny shrugged. "No trick at all. You just keep tying and tying until you run out of bandages."

"Oh." Scotti peered at him appraisingly. "How do you like it, being so smart?"

"Oh, I can take it or leave it."

"Just whatever the situation warrants, mmmm?"

Danny clicked his tongue loudly against his teeth twice in rapid succession. It was a little too brashly flippant a gesture; Scotti's lids lowered over his piercing eyes.

A waiter waddled around the table and tapped Scotti on the shoulder. "Long-distance, Mr. Scotti."

Scotti's dark face twisted into a scowl. "Now who the hell—?" Nevertheless, he rose.

Rosalie's eyes followed him until he had disappeared into the oval foyer; then she turned to Danny. "What do you want?" Her breasts were rising and falling beneath the black satin dress with its low V neck. "If you've come here to—to tell Scotti—"

"Now just a minute!"

Her voice was strained and shrill with apprehension. "There's such a thing as being too smart. Also being smart enough to know when you're well off. It happens this place belongs to some of Scotti's friends. I wonder if you'd look so handsome with your face pushed through the back of your head."

"Not so handsome. More unique, maybe. As for Scotti, don't forget the minute you drop the flag he'll be in there asking questions. Maybe we can both have our faces."

The knife that was turning impulsively in her hand clinked against a water goblet, and it stopped him. He had a lot to say besides threats.

"I'm not here to pull any fast ones. I'm here to find out just one thing."

"And what's that?"

Danny shrugged. "It's nothing important, really. I've just been wondering. Have you ever had reddish-blond hair?"

Her glance was a dead giveaway. It was as though someone had given her a rabbit punch in the back of the neck. "What do you mean?"

"I was just wondering, that's all."

"Who said I ever did?"

Danny shrugged and gave her a weak smile as he looked up at her penetratingly. Not

exactly Whistler's Mother, he thought. She looks more like one of the Seven Sisters.

"My hair's always been black. Why should I want to dye it?"

"I really don't know. I was just curious."

"I suppose you went to see Viv?"

He nodded and looked at her intently.

"Well, maybe once I—well, discussed it. I may have told Viv. Every once in a while you want a change." She gulped. "You get to thinking how it'd be to—"

"Have hair another color." Danny finished the sentence patly. "But, you see, Mrs. Scotti, there's been a little other talk about a woman with reddish-blond hair. From Mr. Hughes, for example."

"Hughes." She said the name mechanically. Then, as an afterthought, she looked up at him sharply. "Who's he?"

"Oh, just a fellow I ran into." As if you didn't know, thought Danny.

Mrs. Scotti took in a deep breath. She peered at him inquiringly. All the questions she wanted to ask were on her sharp, pointed face. Only she couldn't ask them. Her interest would be too revealing. She couldn't just sit here, either, and face Tony Scotti right now. She glanced about the room. Then she rose so suddenly that the small frame chair tilted over behind her with a clatter. "Listen, Doctor. I've just remembered an appointment. When Scotti comes back tell him I've—I'll meet him at the hotel in—an hour."

Then she spun around. He watched her as she wove around the tight-packed tables, up the three shallow steps to the oval foyer. He picked up Mr. Scotti's silver cigarette case and lighted a cigarette with unsteady fingers. He'd give her time to get out; he didn't want to tangle with her out on the sidewalk.

He was just rising as he saw the waiter come toward him with a white oblong of cardboard atop a small silver tray. The tray settled on the small table top before him. The waiter's frozen-custard expression didn't alter. "Mr. Scotti went out. He said I was to present the bill to his friend."

"But, you see, I'm not his friend. I mean, I—didn't get to the bank this afternoon, and—well—" He took out his battle-scarred wallet. A vision of a full afternoon at washing dishes shuddered through him. His wallet had never felt so tissue-paper thin. He spread it open, revealing one very forlorn dirty dollar bill. Nothing more.

The waiter glowered down at him. He looked like a cross between Lou Nova, Bronco Nagurski, and the Stanford bowboys all rolled into one.

Before the waiter could speak Danny slapped the bill on the little silver tray. "That's for you," he said hurriedly. "Just

charge the bill to Mr. Scotti. I'll settle with him later."

He ducked around the table; the waiter lunged after him. Thanks to his agility and fast thinking, Danny was out of the place before the old joker could slap a hand onto the collar of his coat.

DANNY leaped up the worn stairs of the police department. It had been quite a trip, especially through the crowd and tussle that attends the final hysteria of Christmas Eve.

As he slashed through the wide swinging doors he heard a loud bellow of laughter. It came from the right. An office door was open. He paused to look in.

It was McWalters, haughtily showing off his Santa Claus costume.

McWalters was sitting in a frame-back chair and was fluffing up his stomach pillows. "So," he said, "this parrot, he says, 'Someone's going to get it tonight!' The owl, she waddles back and forth on her perch, blinking her eyes. 'Whoooo?' she says. The parrot says: 'Not you, you flat-faced so and so.'"

The room trembled with roars of laughter. McWalters was sure a card, all right.

He tried to slip by the doorway unnoticed, but Mike called his name. "Hey, Dan!"

He returned to the door. Mike was grinning adoringly. "Take a look at McWalters. Ain't that something?"

McWalters made a sinister and none too Santa-Claus-like leer. His face was flushed with his success at transforming the jolly, benign old gentleman into a lecherous, foul-mouthed roué.

Danny forced a thin smile and turned to Mike. "Where's the sarge?"

Mike looked about the room. "Well, I'll be damned. He was just in here."

The sergeant hadn't merely gone into his office; he'd retreated into it like a broken thing. McWalters, Santa Claus! He looked up shyly as a soft tap sounded on his door.

He was relieved to see it was only Danny. Anyone else, he couldn't have stood right now.

"Sarge, have you got about fifteen minutes?"

The kid's voice was loaded with earnestness.

"Aw, Danny—"

"No, look, Sarge. I want to tell you a story. From start to finish."

The sergeant slumped down into his chair moodily. Maybe he could stand a good story right now. "Okay, Danny. Shoot the works."

The sergeant nodded patiently.

"It starts three—maybe four—years ago. Alfred Sutton is a friend of Tony Scotti's. He's defending him in a big case. Scotti is

being tried for bank robbery. Well, whether it's the robbery money or not, Scotti has some cold cash. So he hands it over to Sutton for safekeeping.

"Sutton decides to pull a fade-out. He decides to do it in such a way that the papers and police—and even Scotti—will think he's been killed. So he gets a down-and-out Dr. Vicente and frames an accident. He wants to implicate Scotti even deeper in the trial, so he leaves a couple of check stubs in his office—made out to jurors—and he lets a few fifty-buck bills get burned in the automobile so it'll look like he's going somewhere for a payoff. Everything went as planned. At first, anyway.

"But then Danforth's story comes in. In his big rush Sutton has left some of his office affairs unfinished. He snakes into his office that night to clean them up. He runs into Danforth and buys Danforth off; pays for his silence and co-operation in seeing to it everyone'll think Sutton was dead."

"And meanwhile, Ferguson—" The sergeant tried to bring his favorite suspect into the mess.

"No, Sarge; the Fergusons don't enter the story yet. Sutton, with Danforth's co-operative silence, ships off for some place to hide out until the heat is off. Until Scotti, in court, gets nailed to the floor. Then he crawls out from under his rock and starts sniffing around."

"Yeah? What d'you mean, Danny?"

"Just this, and this is the part of the story that'll amaze you, Sarge. It seems Sutton is quite a wolf in one hundred per cent sheep's-wool clothing. He's always been attracted to Scotti's wife, Rosalie, and she hasn't discouraged the attentions of a gentleman of culture and refinement; Scotti has always been pretty rough with her."

"If you're going to try to tell me—"

"I am going to tell you! As soon as it's safe Sutton gets in touch with Mrs. Scotti. Her old man is being iced in the jug on what looks like a long stretch, so she says what can I lose, and meets Sutton. She dyes her hair a different color—reddish blond—and they travel around under the incognito of Mr. and Mrs. Alex Sorenson."

The sergeant shook his head slowly. "Judas, Danny. Where'd you go dig up a brain storm like that?"

"It's no brain storm. Listen—Sutton is pretty carefree with Scotti's money; finally he runs out. So where'd he go for more? To Danforth and the Fergusons, because he has them both over a barrel. By this time, over matters financial, he and Mrs. Scotti have engaged in some pretty hot arguments. And then—"

"Yeah?"

"Scotti is unexpectedly paroled. Mrs. Scotti is terrified. She realizes her old man will expect her to be waiting for him at the prison gate. Only here she is, tied up with a gent who's broke. So she tells him off and leaves. She dyes her hair black again, and when Scotti gets out of the can, there she is, his ever-loving wife."

"Danny, do you realize what you're talking about?"

DANNY nodded. "Sutton has been a smart boy, and now he's stuck with it. He's got a ritzy Lake Shore apartment and no dough, and both Ferguson and Danforth require time to raise some for him.

"Well, in some way Scotti gets a line on Sutton. Maybe Mrs. Scotti gave Sutton away, although I doubt if she'd do that; she'd have to admit her infidelity if she talked." Danny licked his lips. "I get a little vague here, Sarge. But anyway, Sutton gets his, and the body shows up in the morgue."

"And why in the bum's clothing, Dan? How're you going to explain them?" The sergeant's voice was serious but still had an ominously patronizing quality.

"I don't know the answer to that one, Sarge. All I know is that he showed up in the morgue."

"Awww, Danny. That's too thick. Here y'got all this lined up and you didn't even once mention Ferguson. He's the baby we're holding down here, remember?"

"But the Fergusons come into the story, all right. Just the way Ferguson admitted here in your office day before yesterday. Sure. I know he didn't admit he knew it was Sutton."

"Damn right he didn't. And how do you explain that?"

"After all, it's only natural. Everyone else was insisting it *wasn't* Sutton, so who's he to complain? The minute he admitted it *was*, you'd be hanging the kitchen stove on him, and he wanted to save his wife all the strain he could. So he carried on the deception."

The sergeant raised one eyebrow quizzically. "And just where did you get this stuff about Mrs. Scotti being Mrs. Sorenson?"

"It was that dog that did it. You see, Ferguson returned him to me. I set out to find the dog's owner, and that took me to the Lake Shore apartment."

The sergeant nodded.

"While I was there Mrs. Scotti, who'd skipped out fast, came to be sure she'd removed all her traces. But she ran into me there. She said she'd 'got off at the wrong floor.'"

"Go on, Danny." The sergeant leaned over the desk solidly.

"Well, later I found out it was Mrs. Scotti.

I talked to her. She claimed she'd gone there to call on a friend, Viv Larimer, who lived in the apartment just below. Viv, she said, was an old, old friend whom she'd known in the old days, before her marriage to Scotti. Viv, she said, had known about Sutton, and then one day she called and told Mrs. Scotti that she was sure Sutton wasn't really dead at all but was living on the floor upstairs."

"That sounds like it might of happened, all right."

"Only it didn't, Sarge. Because Viv wasn't an old friend. She's one of the few people who Mrs. Scotti got to know while she was posing as Mrs. Sorenson. Viv had never known her as Mrs. Scotti and had never known she even *was* Mrs. Scotti."

"How d'you know that, Danny?"

"Just this. After Mrs. Scotti explained her breaking into the Sorenson apartment by using Viv as an alibi, she had to fix things up with Viv, in case anybody'd ever ask any questions."

"Yah?" The sergeant snapped at the end of a cigar and puffed at it furiously.

"But she didn't go down to see Viv—then or later. She was too scared to show her face around there. And that was her big mistake."

"Why, Danny?"

"Because instead of going personally, she telephoned. Oh, she cooked up a good story. Only she forgot to tell Viv just one thing: that Mrs. Scotti, except for that one brief interlude as Mrs. Sorenson, had always—*always*—been a brunette, with hair as black as the ace of spades. In other words, Mrs. Scotti was a brunette. Mrs. Sorenson was a blond—but, blond or brunette, they're the same woman; yet Viv Larimer described Mrs. Scotti—her '*old friend*'—as being blond; reddish blond."

"Well, I'll be damned!" The sergeant peered at Danny searchingly. "Danny, this is all straight?"

"Every bit of it, Sarge."

The sergeant thumped his fist on the desk; then he looked up at Danny obliquely. "This still doesn't have no bearing on Danforth's death."

"It probably does, Sarge. I don't know."

The chair creaked as the sergeant shifted his ponderous bulk. His eyes narrowed. "That's just fine, Danny, and you're sure knocking yourself out keeping the Fergusons out of all this."

"Because they *were* out of it."

"Okay. Take Danforth's death. While we was in there talking to him somebody was listening in the vacant office next door. There wasn't nobody there when I broke in the door. And I caught Ferguson high-tailing it down the hall." The sergeant measured out

each word with a wave of his thick index finger. "So how does it happen Ferguson didn't run smack into the murderer? If he's so innocent, he and the real murderer should of hit the hallway at exactly the same time!"

"Sure, providing the murderer *hit* the hallway. Only suppose the murderer started for that hall door and heard Ferguson running past outside. Then you started cracking down the door from Danforth's office."

"Yeah?"

"There was no way to escape. So our murderer could easily have hid himself in the washroom—or the closet of the vacant suite. He could have waited until things had quieted down and then walked out, free as air." Danny got up and stood before the sergeant, rubbing his hands together speculatively. "Did anyone search that suite?"

The sergeant gulped. "Sure. Looking for the gun!"

Danny went on firmly: "But not right away. There was at least a half-hour interval; ample time for a getaway. So far, it's all conjecture. If you want to get down to facts you'd better get the Scottis in here and start them talking."

The sergeant nodded. "Well, maybe you're right, Danny." He pressed a finger heavily on the inneroffice buzzer, but no one came in reply.

Iratly the sergeant rose from his desk, clumped across the room, and flung the door open. Half open. Halfway around its ninety-degree angle it smacked against something softly solid. A loud, pained howl filled the room.

Danny caught a glimpse of a red Santa Claus costume. It was McWalters, howling like a hyena and cursing.

The door had caught him right between the eyes.

CHAPTER XVIII

December 24



IT WAS only a matter of minutes before Sergeant Myers had an order to bring in the Scottis broadcast over the police radios and was back in the room again, quietly observing the utter ruin that had been Santa Claus.

Danny had just convinced a whimpering McWalters that he wouldn't be blind for life when the captain appeared in the doorway.

"Well, for the luvva—"

The captain strode across the room, lifted the compresses, and peeked at the damage

in furious silence.

Sergeant Myers was playing his finger tips together engagingly. "I was just thinking, Chief—it just so happens I'm just the same size as McWalters. If, by any chance, you'd like me to"—he gesticulated with careless longing at the gay red costume—"pinch-hit for Mac—"

McWalters sat up suddenly. The compress fell to his lap. "Now wait a minute, Captain."

The captain took one sour look at the narrow puffy eyes. "You seem to forget, Mac. The purpose of our party is to give the orphans a little fun, not scare the daylights out of 'em."

Then the captain turned on his wide flat heel and went to the door. "We can expect you at the orphanage, in costume, at eight o'clock then, Myers?"

Sergeant Myers shifted thoughtfully. "Well, I—" Then he gave his head a sharp nod. "Well, I'll just see to it that I'm there, that's all!" There was a quality of tired, brave determination in his voice.

The captain gave him a nod. "I knew we could count on you." Then he was gone.

Despite himself, the sarge's face was glowing like neon. He couldn't quite keep his lips together as he went over to McWalters and patted him gently on the shoulder. "Too damned bad, Mac," he commented ruefully. "Sure, I'll take over for you. Just don't give it another thought!"

Danny grinned. He had never seen a man so subtly vicious as the sergeant was being right now.

He looked at his wrist watch and the grin faded. Five-fifteen. He should have called Marian fifteen minutes ago.

Danny bolted from the police headquarters with a momentum that carried him half across State Street and into a telephone booth. In a moment the thin, crisp spinster voice of Miss Mulberry came to him.

"Oh yes, Doctor. . . . No, Miss Sutton just left—some ten minutes ago."

"But—where did she go?"

"She didn't say exactly. She said to tell you that she's out on an errand and that she'd call you at the hospital at five-thirty."

"But where was she going?"

The voice was very prim. "She happened to have some photographs of her father and the Scottis taken at the trail." Danny's mind raced ahead. "I merely mentioned that if I were asked, I should have to testify that a great deal more went on between Mr. Sutton and Mrs. Scotti than was commonly known." Danny could just picture a plain head twitching self-righteously. "Of course Mr. Sutton was always such a 'paragon of virtue.' When I read in the paper that even his death in

Hubbard Woods had been—well, misrepresented—even to those who had presumably been in his closest confidence—"

Danny blinked knowingly and recalled the saying: "A woman scorned . . ." You could read it in the tone of her prim voice. All these years she'd held that painful secret of another woman. Now, on finding he'd fooled even her, Miss Mulberry's pent-up emotions had cried out for retribution. So she'd called Marian . . .

Danny thanked her thoughtfully.

It was a cinch, Marian, on hearing Miss Mulberry's story, would . . .

Where would she go? To the Sorenson apartment, of course, on the Lake Shore.

She'd go to see Mr. or Mrs. Hughes, to check the picture of Mrs. Scotti with him. Danny took another look at his watch. He'd never make it back to the hospital by five-thirty. But with luck he could catch her at the Lake Shore apartment.

He dropped another nickel into the slot, dialed the hospital number, and in a minute had Pete Aldrich on the line.

"Pete, this is Danny." He rambled on before Pete had spoken. "I can't explain; I've got to rush. I'm expecting a call from Marian Sutton there at the hospital in about fifteen minutes. Will you fix it so she'll get you if she calls?"

"Damn right I will!" exclaimed Pete.

"Tell her if I haven't caught up with her by six I'll meet her in the bar at Degner's. Six o'clock."

"Couldn't you make it six-thirty? I don't get off until six."

"That's just fine. Only it's still six. Now, good-by."

And he crashed down the receiver briskly.

THE lobby was dim and deserted as he approached the desk. He tapped the bell and waited for the manager's door to open.

In a moment Mrs. Hughes walked briskly into the cleared space behind the counter. "Oh, it's you again!"

Danny grinned. "Just can't seem to resist the place." He rubbed his cold nose with his fingers. "I'm looking for a girl who I'm quite sure came here—"

"Oh. You mean Miss Sutton?"

He nodded eagerly.

"Well, she came in about a half-hour ago. She had a picture of Mrs. Sorenson."

"You're sure it was Mrs. Sorenson?"

Mrs. Hughes nodded; the tight curls sprung like coiled wire. "Of course when we knew Mrs. Sorenson she had red-blonde hair. In the picture it was black." The head shook again. "I always knew it was dyed."

Danny smiled grimly.

(Continued on page 96)



McCorkle bound his arms with an old shirt.

STOP, CROOK, AND LISTEN!

By TOM THURSDAY

It was a simple case of three-in-one robbery when Mike Hood tried to peddle a hot car that was twice stolen!

AS THE customer approached—he hoped it was a customer—Mike Hood rolled his large, flat feet off the rickety desk. Business was rotten. Why the devil he had quit the spindle-wheel racket with mud-show carnivals was a mystery to him.

A guy with a spindle-wheel could always grift a little bit and get away with it. But in this used car biz a guy had to be honest all the time, or at least ninety-five per cent of it. Which situation was very annoying to Mike Hood.

Well, maybe this lanky dope walking toward the shabby lot office would play the part of Santa Claus and buy one of his wrecks.

“Good afternoon, friend,” began Mike, with outstretched hand. “What can I do for you?”

“Good afternoon,” said the prospect. “My name is Raymond Radfield. I’m on the market for a good used car.”

“Friend,” — Mike beamed — “congratulations! You come to the right place. I sell nothing but the best. All bargains. Now—er—how about a slightly used Eaton Eight, with less than four thousand miles on the speedometer?”

He had set the speedometer back ten thousand miles; five thousand less than his usual magic touch.

“Let’s see it.”

“Look right in back of you. Ain’t she a peach?”

“It looks more like an overripe grapefruit than a peach,” said the customer. “What is this—a junk yard?”

The finer feelings of Mike Hood were wounded. In the four months he had gone straight—fairly straight—and opened his used car lot, no one had dared suggest that he operated a junk yard. But he slipped his rising temper back into low gear and smiled cherubically.

“My friend,” he said, “I see you are gonna

be hard to please. You're the kind of customer I like. The more folks know about cars the quicker I can sell 'em."

"Maybe I come to the wrong place," said Radfield. "These cans look like they have been at Okinawa and Stalingrad."

Mike Hood's temper started to rise to carnival days altitude, but again he checked it.

"My friend," he said, "if this ain't the right place, there ain't any in Florida." He hitched his pants and went on, "How would you like to see something special in a practically new Cadomobile Twin Six? It's got a new paint job so fresh you can still smell it."

"Let's see it."

MIKE led his prospect to the rear of his office shack. The car was at least four years old. But it did have a new and flashing paint-job. The brightest of yellows.

"Now, friend," said Mike, "this is the best buy in Florida. I can make you a deal that will be the bargain of bargains."

"Some color. Looks like a giant canary with St. Vitus dance. What is it?"

"Friend, if you really ain't looking for a great bargain, we're both wasting our time. This car has a story. Wanna hear it?"

"Make it short," said Radfield. "I hate serials."

"Well, sir," began Mike, waxing confidential, "a young guy named Winston Oliver McCorkle drives it in and says his home is in Jacksonville. He also says he has been gambling over at the Beach and that he gets trimmed right down to his pants and undershirt. He remarks he would like to leave his car for a quick sale and will give me forty per cent of whatever I can get. But, he says, I should not sell it for less than a thousand, account of he can't afford to give it away."

"Wants a thousand, huh?" asked Radfield.

"Yup. Only one little grand for a grand car. Cost more than four thousand when new, and it's still like new."

Radfield lifted the long hood and inspected the engine. Then he took a glance at the serial number. His eyebrows went up, and he whistled.

"Ummmmmm. Just as I thought. A hot car; a very hot car."

"What d'yer mean, hot car?" snorted Mike Hood. "I tell you a mugg named Winston Oliver McCorkle came in here and asked me to sell it. That's all I know about it!"

Radfield flashed a gold badge. "Fellow, you're under arrest."

Swift panic flooded the mind of Mike Hood. He knew his past record, from Coast to Coast, was not so clean.

"Listen, friend, listen!" he placated. "So help me, I'm innocent!"

"That's the same statement a guy made when they caught him sneaking out of a bank at two A. M. with a bag over his back and wearing a black mask. Who the devil do you think you're fooling?"

"I tell you that this guy drives in and I don't know him from Adam!"

"Or Eve," helped out Radfield.

"Like I tell you, he says his name is Winston Oliver McCorkle, and even shows me his driver's license. Look, here it is in the glove compartment. Take a look!"

Radfield took a look.

"This license is a fake," he said. "A real phony. What a fraud! Sorry, pal, but I've got to take you down to the Auto Theft Bureau and see what this is all about."

"Can't you give a poor, honest guy a break?" begged Mike. "I'm just a poor sucker what got took in by a smart crook. Can't you just take it to Headquarters and say you found it out in the woods some place? This will break my poor wife's heart. And my oldest daughter, Geraldine, is just about to graduate from high school. Just think what the other girls will say when they hear that her poor old father has been accused of being a dirty crook. And what about my other four children, hey?"

"You say you have a large family?" asked Radfield.

"Boy, have I! Two boys and three girls, all fine kids who have always been proud of their old man."

"Ummmmmm." Radfield struck a pose that should pass for heavy thought. "Well," he said finally, "although I believe you *knew* well enough that this car was hot I'm going to give you a break on account of your wife and five kids. You know why, fellow?"

"Why?" echoed Mike, hopefully.

"Because I've also got a wife and five kids, that's why. So as one father to another I have decided to give you a chance. Er—is there plenty of gas and oil in this car?"

"Yes, sir! I just put in ten gallons and even changed the oil. She's all primed to go."

"Okay," said Radfield, stepping into the driver's seat. "I'll be looking in on you now and then. Better keep your snout clean."

Radfield drove away, leaving Mike Hood in a happy daze. Boy, was that a narrow escape! He took a deep, long breath; a breath of freedom.

Radfield turned into Flagler street and headed for the Tamiami Trail, leading to the West Coast. The car hummed easily along the highway, motor purring perfectly.

"A sweet running baby," mused Radfield. "I wonder how I can get rid of it?" He began to laugh out loud. "Can you imagine me with a wife and five kids?"

Back on the used car lot Mike Hood was in a mellow glow. His round face was actually jovial, the lines in his semi-parched skin almost formed a V for Victory.

"Boy," he mused, "I guess I'm still good with the old tongue." Suddenly he changed to a sober mood, as he thought, "Can you imagine me with a wife and five kids?"

AN HOUR later a short, red-haired young man appeared in the door of the office shack. This was Winston Oliver McCorkle, in person, not an apparition. Mike Hood took one swift look and changed into a raging bull. This was the mugg he most wanted to see, but quick!

"Congratulations!" began Winston Oliver McCorkle. "I see you sold my car. Swell!"

"Sold your grandmother!" roared Mike. "You dirty crook, you got me in one sweet mess!"

Winston Oliver McCorkle blinked like an owl with a flashlight in its face.

"What are you talking about, fellow?" he demanded.

"Listen, smart guy," snorted Mike. "A dick just walks in from the Auto Theft Bureau and takes the car away. Why did he take it away? Because it was as hot as Central Hades, that's why!"

"Oh," said Winston Oliver McCorkle, "I get the angle. So that's your game, is it? You frame me with another crook like yourself and try to make me like it. Well, you dirty lowdown thief, I'll fix you!"

That was all Mike Hood could take. He rushed at Winston Oliver McCorkle with his right hand cocked for a quick kayo. He aimed at the chin. But his adversary was two feet away when the blow thrashed the air.

"Take it easy, stupid," advised Winston Oliver McCorkle. "You're too old, fat and dumb to fight."

"Oh, I am, hey?" yelled Mike. "You're

asking for it and I'm gonna give it to you!"

Again he swung his right and again his adversary was two feet away.

"Okay, dope!" snapped Winston Oliver McCorkle. "Now it's my turn!"

He swung a graceful, rather professional right to the chin and a left hook to the stomach. The blue-green eyes of Mike Hood took on the look of a babe about to sail away into slumberland. His legs collapsed and his torso hit the ground with a plop. While Mike was still in a semi-daze, Winston Oliver McCorkle grabbed him by the neck and the seat of the pants and carried him into the shack. Proping him in the red armchair he proceeded to bind his arms and legs with an old shirt.

He calmly went to the wooden cash drawer and appraised the money on hand. He had just counted four hundred and seventy-six dollars and some odd cents—the entire sum—when Mike Hood blinked back into life.

"Hey!" bellowed Mike. "What's the idea?"

"I'm happy to tell you," Winston Oliver McCorkle grinned. "Listen, and listen good. I left my car here for you to sell for at least a thousand dollars. Remember? Well, you sold it and are now trying to give me the old phonus-balonus. My mamma never raised no stupid brats. This money I'm taking don't cover my loss but it will do until I come back later and get the balance."

"That's my mortgage money!" whined Mike Hood. "What about my poor wife and five kids? They will be put out on the street!"

"Now that is very sad, indeed. And the devil with you."

"Listen, you boob," yelled Mike, "you can't get away with this!"

"You calling me a boob?" demanded Winston Oliver McCorkle. "That's a pip. Look, pal, here I am, free and fine. And there you are, tied neat and nice. Who's the boob?"

"Some day I'll kill you for this!" Mike promised hotly.

"And now," went on Winston Oliver McCorkle, "I am about to depart. Don't bother to use the phone. You should never make unnecessary calls. It will prevent some Service man from talking to his folks. Besides, I have cut the wires. No wires, no phone. Get it? No phone, no bills. Swell, huh? Good afternoon, Mr. Dillinger!"

A little less than two hours later a Tamiami Trail bus stopped at the little town of Everglades. It was directly in front of a barbecue

stand. Only one passenger got off—Mr. Winston Oliver McCorkle. He walked briskly to a bright yellow car in back of the stand.

"How we doing?" greeted Raymond Radfield, seated at the wheel.

"Not bad," said Winston Oliver McCorkle. "I nicked the dope for four hundred and seventy-six dollars and a few odd cents. You should have heard the bum squawk!"

"You know," said Radfield, "I been sitting here thinking. This hot car stuff ain't our racket. I'm for ditching this can and beating it out West. We better stick to the bolita and black market game."

"I been thinking the same thing," admitted Winston Oliver McCorkle.

A strong, masculine voice, coming from the rear, interrupted their talk.

"Good afternoon, gentlemen." It was the voice of Motorcycle Patrolman Francis Jollay, of the State Highway Police. "May I ask whose car this is?"

"Mine," said Winston Oliver McCorkle.

"Name, please?" went on the young cop.

"Winston Oliver McCorkle."

"Not really! My, how you have changed, Mr. McCorkle. When I saw you about two weeks ago you weighed more than two hundred pounds and had black hair and eyes."

RADFIELD made a sudden lunge for his hip pocket.

The cop was much quicker on the draw. His .38 Colt aimed at the center of Radfield's forehead.

"Say," said Winston Oliver McCorkle, "what's this all about, hey?"

"It's all about a veteran detective on the Jacksonville force whose name is, oddly, Winston Oliver McCorkle. His black car was stolen four days ago. I don't know what your name is, fellow, but it isn't Winston Oliver McCorkle. And what's more, I must say that you are the dumbest pair of car crooks I've ever heard of. Rank amateurs. You must be new in this racket. Changing the paint of the car from black to bright yellow is just silly—unless you also change the license plates, which you forgot to do."

The two men looked at each other and blinked.

"That's all, gentlemen. Let's go!"

About two hours later the motorcycle of Patrolman Francis Jollay came to a stop in a cloud of sand-dust in Mike Hood's place. Mike had managed to release himself from his bonds and looked very unhappy.

"I'm glad to see you, Officer," began Mike. "A dirty low-down crook—"

"I know—I know," said Jollay. "I got them. Two of them, in fact."

"Two of them?" echoed Mike.

"I should have said three of them," Patrolman Jollay corrected himself.

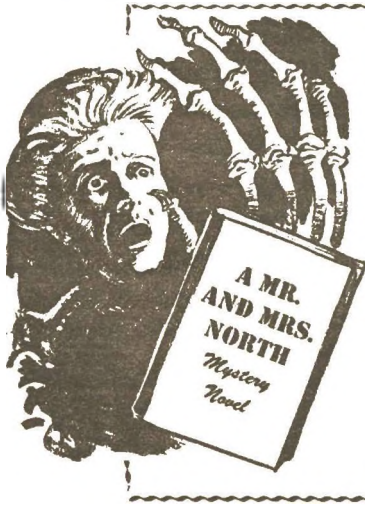
"Three of them?" Mike's eyes began to bug and blink.

"You're the third," said Jollay. "Let's go!" Mike Hood flinched and blanched. His luck was certainly out.

"Who, me?" he stuttered. "Listen, Officer, it's all a mistake. I'm a honest man! What about my wife and five kids?"

Patrolman Jollay gave Mike a quizzical look and uttered three words:

"Come on, bachelor!"



Murder Speaks Volumes in the Cloistered Precincts of a Public Library!

WHEN Jerry North hired Miss Amelia Gipson to do a job of research on some old crimes, and sent her to the library to unearth the data—he had no idea he was sending her to her death! But a killer suddenly came out of the past to deal swift, baffling doom in **MURDER WITHIN MURDER**, by Frances and Richard Lockridge.

This top-flight book-length mystery, originally published at \$2.00 per copy, presents one of the toughest problems in detection ever tackled by Mr. and Mrs. North—and it appears complete in the March issue of our companion publication, **DETECTIVE NOVEL MAGAZINE**. Now on sale, only 15c at all newsstands!



Death suggested the next play!

THE LAST MOVE

By RAY CUMMINGS

When a man dies mysteriously during a chess game, it's up to Detective Melvin Cone to checkmate a dastardly killer!

CONE and I had no idea that the thing would turn out to be a particularly weird, unusual murder case for it began merely by the report of a burglary. We were in the Plainsville Police Station, on some of Cone's routine work with Sergeant McGuire, when the call came in. It was eight-thirty of a summer evening.

"Burglary just been discovered over at

the Arcraft Novelty Company," McGuire told us, as he hung up the receiver.

I thought Cone looked startled, but he didn't say anything. McGuire didn't notice; he suggested we go with him, and Cone agreed. Melvin Cone was prominent with the FBI some years ago but lately he has been taking private cases, working with the police when occasion arises. I'm just a friend

of Cone's, with no official status.

We took James, McGuire's fingerprint man, and went in McGuire's little radio car. On the way out to it, I asked Cone why he had looked startled.

"It happens Anne's brother is the book-keeper at this Artcraft Company," he said. He looked worried. Cone had married a girl named Anne Blair about a year ago. I had vaguely heard of her brother Harold.

"He's been avoiding us," Cone added. "It's hurt Anne a lot."

Anne loved her brother dearly, and Harold, it seemed, was a queer duck. He had never amounted to much; took one job after another.

The small factory of the Artcraft Novelty Company was about a mile outside of Plainsville. It stood alone in a grove of trees, with a railway spur beside it. The place had closed, as usual, at five o'clock this afternoon. A few lights were lighted now. As we drove up, a big dark-haired man in his forties came out to greet us.

He was Peter Gregg, junior partner of the firm of Manners & Gregg, who owned the Artcraft Company. Their business was the manufacture of plastic and wooden novelties—little statues, ashtrays, checkers, chess sets.

Gregg had come here to do some overtime work tonight, had discovered the burglary and immediately phoned us. The circumstances of the burglary were simple enough, but queer. Peter Gregg mopped the sweat off his heavy face as he told us.

"Mr. Manners, my partner, left about eight hundred dollars of our payroll money locked in his desk. Take a look." Gregg led us into a luxurious little office on the ground floor. The desk drawer had been pried open, you could see the marks of it; and a lower window was partly open from the bottom.

"And take a look at this," he added. "Somebody stole the cash, and then got into our bookkeeper's office, and made away with the company's books!"

Harold Blair's office was nearby. His desk was open, the drawers pulled out, the papers scattered around. And the books that Harold kept had disappeared.

"Don't seem to be no prints," our fingerprint man said. "This bird was on his toes, wiped everything clean as he went along."

Gregg himself made no accusations, but Sergeant McGuire cleared his throat, and looked embarrassed. Gregg told us that he had come to the factory to look over the

books; he and Manners had suspected for some time that something might be wrong with them—a shortage in their cash.

"An' now the books are missin'," McGuire said. "Seems pretty obvious, so if you don't mind, Mr. Cone—"

GO right ahead," Cone said. Harold lived in a town about five miles away. The Sergeant 'phoned the police there to pick him up and bring him in.

That was the burglary. And then like a bombshell, came news of the murder. No sooner had McGuire hung up than the phone rang. Gregg answered it. "Artcraft Novelty Company— Yes, I'm Peter Gregg."

Then as he listened, Gregg's heavy jaw dropped. He seemed to go bug-eyed.

"Why—why—" he murmured. "Yes. Yes of course—we'll come at once." He hung up the receiver with his hand shaking and stared at us blankly. "It's from Manners' home—my partner, Mr. Manners—he's dead—murdered!"

It didn't take us more than ten minutes to reach the Manners place. It was a big, ornate, bungalow-style dwelling, set on a knoll in a grove of trees.

We found Mrs. Manners, a sleek well-upholstered woman of forty, in a hysterical collapse, on a couch in the big lower hall. The housekeeper, Vivian Green, trim, sleek and good looking, was trying to comfort her.

The only other occupant of the house was a visitor named Alten J. Franklin. It was he who had 'phoned and he ran out to greet us as we arrived. He was a tall, distinguished looking man of about sixty.

"Mr. Manners and I were playing a game of chess," he explained as he led us inside. "Then he—all of a sudden, he just keeled over and he was dead before we could do anything. I tried to 'phone his doctor, but he isn't home. It must have been poison—"

The shocked Franklin was only half coherent. Peter Gregg, the junior partner, seemed numbed. He rushed over to Mrs. Manners, with shocked words of sympathy, and then he joined the rest of us in a somber, mahogany-paneled library. A small table at one side of the room had a chessboard on it, with the chessmen still standing in the positions of an unfinished game.

In a chair the dead man lay slumped—a flabby man of sixty odd, with sparse white hair. He was wearing a vivid plaid smoking jacket and a bright red bow tie.

For a minute Cone held McGuire back and stood staring. The body had fallen sidewise over one of the chair arms. Its position was contorted, twisted as though Manners had died in some horrible paroxysm. The face was horrible—purplish, puffed, and the eyes, wide open and glazed, were goggling seemingly with the anguish of physical agony.

"He got like that almost at once," Franklin was saying. "He was perfectly well, up until the middle of the game and then he suddenly cried out and went into convulsions. He twitched and was choking. He seemed to gasp something like, 'I'm poisoned—help—a doctor.' Then he couldn't talk at all."

Cone had been examining the body.

"Well, he was certainly poisoned. All the symptoms."

McGuire got very busy, but Cone just stood staring at the chessboard in front of the dead man. McGuire ordered his men to search the house. He questioned Franklin about the dinner and what Mr. Manners might have had to eat or drink since. Then he went out into the hall and flung the same questions at the two women. I met Cone's gaze as the Sergeant's booming voice floated in to us, and Cone smiled with faint irony.

"None of that's very important," Cone murmured. "This chess game—"

A sound behind us interrupted him. We had been momentarily alone in the library. We turned, to see Alten Franklin standing in the doorway.

"Can I speak to you a moment?" he said.

"Of course," Cone said. "Come in."

"I just thought—well, maybe it's something that might interest you."

"What?" Cone said.

"I only arrived here this afternoon," Franklin explained. "But there's one thing I noticed." He lowered his voice. "That housekeeper, Miss Green." He hesitated.

"What about her?" Cone demanded.

"Well, she's certainly a personable young woman," Franklin said. "And Mr. Manners was quite a bit too attentive to her. I noticed it at dinner. I don't think Mrs. Manners was very pleased about it. In fact, she made that rather plain tonight."

"I see," Cone said. Peter Gregg had come to the doorway, and Cone told him what Franklin had said. "Ever notice anything like that, Mr. Gregg?"

"Well, yes, I have," the junior partner agreed. "But Mr. Manners was like that, it didn't seem to mean anything."

"I see," Cone said. "That plaid jacket and red necktie—a flirtatious old fellow, naturally it would annoy his wife."

The sound of an arriving car took us out into the hall, where McGuire was heatedly questioning the women and obviously not getting anywhere. It was Dr. Sims, the County Medical Examiner.

"Devil," McGuire said. "I thought it was my men who had picked up that Blair fellow." Then he saw Cone. "I sure wish we had that brother-in-law of yours here, Mr. Cone. I'm tryin' to figure if that robbery down at the factory connects with this thing."

"So am I," Cone said.

AS we watched Dr. Sims examining the body, McGuire showed that he wasn't quite so dumb as I had thought him.

"I figure it's a pretty powerful poison," McGuire said. "An alkaloid maybe?"

"Yes," Dr. Sims agreed.

"You'll take the body and do the autopsy right away?" Cone suggested.

"An hour or two," Dr. Sims said. "I'll 'phone you."

They carried the corpse out a side entrance.

"Go get that fellow Franklin," Cone told me. "Bring him in here, I want to talk to him."

Out in the hall Peter Gregg was sitting with Mrs. Manners on the couch. Vivian Green, the young housekeeper, had gone upstairs. Franklin was sitting alone in the hall and I took him into the library. The chessmen were still on the board, just as they had been when Manners' death interrupted the game.

"I understand you were here on business," Cone said to Franklin. "I heard Mrs. Manners explaining it to McGuire a while ago."

"Yes," Franklin agreed. "I'm president of the U. S. Toy and Game Company. There's no secret about why I'm here. My company was planning to buy the Artcraft concern. The whole thing, factory, patents, stock, good-will. They've got some nice items that we could market very successfully. This chess set, for instance. It's from their stock. So I came up here to close the deal."

"Would it have gone through?" Cone asked.

"I don't know," Franklin shrugged. "Gregg thinks well of it. So does Mrs. Manners. It's a pretty big sum I'm offering, and she figured she'd clear out of this little town and take

her husband to New York to live. But Manners, he—"

"Was balky on the idea?" Cone said.

"Yes, he was," Franklin agreed. "A stubborn old fellow. Considered us a competitor, and he didn't want to capitulate by selling out. That's silly, but—"

"And Mrs. Manners inherits his interest, no doubt?"

Franklin nodded.

"I suppose so."

"Well, you'll probably be able to put it through now, Mr. Franklin." Cone's eyes were gleaming.

It seemed that Cone had laid open the murder motive! Manners didn't want to sell out his company, and so someone had killed him. I could sense a feeling of triumph in Cone.

"About this chess game," Cone said suddenly. "You were playing the white pieces—describe the game to us, Mr. Franklin."

It was the first game they had played after dinner. Manners had insisted that Franklin take the white pieces. He said he never played with anything but the black ones.

"Wanted to give me that much advantage, since white always plays first," Franklin explained. "Whenever he played with me, or anybody, he took the blacks. A conceit of his, that he was the better player and could afford to give the other fellow an advantage."

"And makes a good alibi when he loses," Cone smiled. Then Cone was studying the chessboard again. I recalled he had made sure that McGuire and his men left everything untouched. "I see that he was playing the *fianchetto* defense," Cone said.

Franklin nodded.

"And I hate it. That nasty little bishop sitting there on knight two in the background and always ready to pounce on you."

Chess is more or less an enigma to me. Franklin and Cone were discussing a lot of technicalities. The game had gone perhaps a dozen moves. And then Manners had seized his queen, moving it for the first time with a triumphant gesture certain that now he had his opponent where he wanted him. The black queen was still on the board.

"His last move," Cone murmured. "I believe it would have been checkmate. He had you, Mr. Franklin."

"I know it," Franklin agreed.

For a minute or two Cone stood pondering.

"Thank you, Mr. Franklin," he said finally. "I guess that's all. You wait in the hall and we'll join you later."

"Well," I said, when we were alone again, "you're figuring something about that chess game, but I can't imagine what."

Cone smiled his faint, grim smile.

"We'll go down to the Artcraft factory," he said. Carefully he lifted the chessboard and slid the chessmen into their box which was on the table. "Come on, Bob. Maybe nobody'll miss us, we won't be gone long."

He drew me out the side door, which was in a corridor just off the library, and we went down a path through the woods, a shortcut to the Artcraft building. A brilliant moon was high overhead, but here under the trees the thickets were shadowy. Suddenly we stopped.

The blobs of two figures showed in the woods further down the slope, a man and girl standing under a tree with the moonlight on them. I recognized the girl. It was the blonde young housekeeper, Vivian Green. The man was a slight, bareheaded fellow of about thirty.

"Harold!" Cone murmured.

I was certainly startled, and so, obviously, was Cone. He stared, blankly. It had seemed, so far at least, that Cone's brother-in-law had no direct connection with the murder. Nothing that McGuire could seize on. But here, apparently, was the connection! We could see the two figures plainly, the girl clinging to Harold, and we could hear the murmur of their agitated voices.

Then Cone recovered himself.

"Easy!" he whispered. "They haven't seen us. Keep behind me and we'll get closer."

WE went silently through the thickets like Indians, following the shadows, and in the deep silence of the woods we didn't go far before the voices of the pair became audible.

"Harold, dear, that robbery at the plant and now this murder—they're after you. The police—" The girl's voice broke.

"Do they know you've come down here?"

"No!" the girl cried. "I said I was going upstairs. I came out a side door."

Their voices fell lower. We missed some of it. Then Vivian's voice again.

"It'll all come out, Harold! Us being married—"

"So what? I'm not afraid of them. I'll—" Harold's voice was truculent.

Again their voices dropped. Cone had been silently edging forward, with me close behind him. And now he stepped out into the path

and they saw us in the moonlight. It was a bombshell. Harold Blair stood staring at Cone with his jaw dropped.

"You?" he gasped. "Why—"

"Well," Cone said, "so we've found out at last."

"Found out," Harold stammered. "Why, I—"

"So you and this girl are married," Cone cut in. "You couldn't bother to tell Anne and me, could you?"

"Melvin, listen. I can explain. I—"

"You'll have plenty of explaining to do," Cone said grimly. "How long have you been married, and why did it have to be secret?"

Then in a flood of words they tried to explain it to us. They had met about a year ago, soon after Harold got the bookkeeper job. When they married, Harold wanted to do it openly, but Vivian had talked him out of it. She knew she would lose her job. Old Mr. Manners seemed infatuated with her and had given her presents and a raise in salary.

"If we had told about being married," the girl protested, "Harold might have lost his job too. We've been saving money and pretty soon we would have told everybody and if we were fired then it would have been okay."

"I didn't like any of it," Harold said.

"I don't blame you," Cone agreed caustically. "Look here, Harold, you've got a sister, you know—"

"I didn't want her to be worried about me," Harold interrupted.

"Well she has been worried," Cone said. "But that isn't a marker to the worry she will have now. You're in a bad jam. And this girl is also."

"Am I? Why, I—" He was obviously more frightened than ever. He flung a strange glance at Vivian.

"I'm not going to question you now," Cone cut in. "For as it happens, I'm working on this case—"

It brought a cry from Vivian.

"Will he be accused?"

"Of course he will," Cone said grimly. "Take them up to the house, Bob. I'm going on down—to where I told you I was going. I'll be back soon. Let them tell their story to Sergeant McGuire."

He turned away from us and went swiftly down the hill. He had flung a final searching glance at Harold. Somehow to me it seemed to be a pleading glance. And I could guess what he was thinking. Harold could bolt and try to get away. I knew Cone was fervently

hoping he wouldn't try it and that he would give that much sign of his innocence by going quietly up with me to face the music with McGuire.

He and Vivian preceded me dazedly up to the house.

"You're in a rotten jam," I told them. "Whatever you've got to say, you better make it good."

"There's nothing else to tell," Harold protested. "I was coming up to meet Vivian in the woods as we had planned. I saw all that commotion up at the house and I don't know anything more about it."

There was plenty of excitement when I arrived with them. McGuire didn't miss any of the nasty implications that linked Harold with the murder. He pounced on Harold and Vivian, and for half an hour or more pounded them with questions. But only one new thing came out. Harold didn't seem to have any alibi for where he had been from the time the Aircraft plant closed until Cone and I found him with Vivian in the woods.

"I'm telling you," he said sullenly, "I didn't eat any supper. Vivian and I had had an argument this afternoon. I wanted to come out in the open about our marriage. But she wouldn't agree to it."

"I'm supposed to believe that?" McGuire demanded sarcastically.

And Cone, I knew, was following some entirely different line. It was a direct challenge between him and McGuire. Tensely I waited to see what Cone would do. What was he doing all this time down there at the plant? Mrs. Manners had gone upstairs. The rest of us were in the big lower hall—McGuire and his men, Harold and Vivian, the grim, silent Peter Gregg, and the very solemn, but still talkative Alten Franklin.

I had told McGuire that Cone was doing something important and would be back soon. We were waiting for him, and McGuire was waiting to hear from Dr. Sims on the results of the autopsy.

AT last the phone rang. But it wasn't Dr. Sims, it was Cone. He told McGuire he wanted to talk to me.

"I'm coming right up, Bob," he told me. "Say nothing, but I think I've got it! Just tell them I phoned Dr. Sims. It was a quick-acting poison, akin to curare or something like that. Tell McGuire there was no poison found in the stomach. It was only in the blood and the brain."

"Only in the blood!" McGuire gasped when I told him. "Quick actin'—why then during that chess game—" He didn't finish. "We'll wait for Mr. Cone," he amended grimly.

Cone arrived in a few minutes. He was tense, silent. He went alone into the library, and then in a moment he called us all in. We crowded into the somber room. Cone was standing quietly beside the little chess table. He had set up the chessmen again, all of them now in position for the start of a game. The black men were in front of the chair in which Mr. Manners had died. Cone sat down in the other chair, with the white men in front of him.

"I want to play a game with one of you," Cone said quietly. "I'll play the white. You evidently play chess very well, Mr. Franklin. You were playing these white men when Mr. Manners died. I'll play them now. You will be interested in watching."

"Yes," Franklin murmured.

"And you, Mr. Gregg, you play chess?"

"Yes," the junior partner agreed.

"I've played with him," Franklin put in. "He's a good player."

"Let's try a game," Cone said.

Gregg sat down facing Cone with the black chessmen before him. It was a strange, tense scene, this reconstruction of a sudden, gruesome death. At Cone's suggestion, Franklin and Harold Blair took chairs at the sides of the board, to watch the game. And at the doorway Mrs. Manners suddenly appeared, staring at us. Vivian Green sat nearby. McGuire and I stood watching. The light from overhead cast down its circle of illumination on the board with its black and white little chess armies.

"I'll begin with Pawn to King four," Cone said quietly. He made the move. "That's the way you began, wasn't it, Mr. Franklin?"

"Yes," Franklin agreed.

I saw that Mrs. Manners had moved silently forward, gazing at the chessboard.

"And he answered by the same thing," Franklin added.

Gregg made the move, placing his King's pawn to confront Cone's.

"And now," Cone said, "I guess I'd better move my Knight's pawn up one, to get ready for the *fianchetto*." He smiled up at us. "You see," he added, "I'll slip the Bishop in there presently."

Silently the game went on.

"It's not quite the way we played it," Franklin observed from the sidelines.

"But it's the same general idea," Cone said. His voice was quiet. "You've got a good attack, coming with your Queen," he added, a moment or so later.

"Have I?" Gregg said. "I hadn't noticed."

They played a few more moves.

"Your Queen," Cone prompted presently. "You ought to attack me now with your Queen. Don't you see it?"

"My Queen? Oh yes, I—" Gregg stuttered.

"You can check me with your Queen," Cone said. "A good attack."

It was probably quite obvious. I saw Peter Gregg reach for his Queen. He seemed to grip it gingerly by the side of its stem. And suddenly he dropped it with a wild cry.

"Why—why—" And then he was on his feet, shaking, pallid, with his hand held before him. "Help me! You fools. That poison, it's in me now! Help me! Quick, I tell you—I'm going to die—get a doctor!"

"So we've got you!" Cone leaped to his feet, sending the chessboard and its men clattering to the floor. His voice was harsh with a ring of triumph in it. "I thought it was you—you or Harold—the only two who had access to the Artcraft workshops where you could put a poisoned needle into that black Queen and substitute it for the Queen in this set which you knew Franklin and Manners would use tonight."

The screaming Gregg drowned out Cone's sarcastic words.

"Get a doctor, I tell you! It's in me now. That needle stuck me just now— All right! I—I killed Manners! You—you can't let me die this way—you fools, can't you see I'm dying—get a doctor—"

Cone's ringing laugh was sardonic.

"You won't die, Gregg! That was another black Queen. I got it from a similar set down at the factory! You put your needle in the top, because you knew Manners always seized the queen with his thumb on top of it as he thumped it down in triumph. Franklin showed me a while ago how Manners always made that move, and you knew he'd do it tonight, and it would kill him! But I put my needle in the side, which you didn't expect, and it pricked you. A harmless needle! Don't worry, Gregg, you're not going to die—not until you get in the electric chair!"

IN that moment, as Cone ripped out his triumphant words, Peter Gregg stood mute and realized he wasn't dying of poison.

"Thought you had everything fixed pretty

neatly, didn't you?" Cone cut in. "Blaming your embezzlement on Harold Blair! Killing Manners so he couldn't investigate the company's financial condition, and with Manners out of the way his wife would gladly join you in selling the business to Franklin!"

Gregg was mumbling. He made a hysterical lunge at Cone, but he didn't get very far because I jumped him.

"That'll be all for you," I said.

Then when the room had quieted, Cone turned to where Harold Blair stood with his arm around the trembling Vivian. And I realized now the real extent of the strain Cone had been under—his relief now as he put his hand on Harold's shoulder.

"No need for me to tell you how glad I am the way things came out," Cone said. "We must call Anne right away."

Later we all went down to the factory, where we had left the radio car.

"Well," McGuire said, "you sure did surprise me, Mr. Cone."

Cone was smiling at us quizzically.

"When I saw the tiny puncture on the right thumb of the corpse, and studied that chess game, with its last move of the black Queen—well, I had the murder weapon then," Cone said. "An interesting game, chess. You and I ought to try it some time, Sergeant. I'll challenge you."

"Not me," McGuire declared emphatically. "I wouldn't touch a chessman with a ten foot pole."

THE LINE-UP

(Concluded from page 10)

manner in which the author masked what should have been obvious.

I should like to thank you for running a story which, in some odd way, was of special interest and comfort to me. . . .

Well, thanks, H.B.S. Your angle as a reader must necessarily be a bit different from that of the average, which is why we have chosen to run your letter. And let's hope you have found some modicum of entertainment in the other stories of the issue—and of those in other issues.

And thanks again for the letters which space does not permit us to print. We read and appreciate them all and welcome constructive criticism and suggestions and act upon those we feel will help the magazine. Please address all such communications to The Editor, **THRILLING MYSTERY NOVEL MAGAZINE**, 10 East 40th Street, New York 16, New York. See you next issue, everybody!

—THE EDITOR.



Earned \$400 the First Year

"Last year I made around \$400, and it was the first year I really started to write. Your course is the best way to get expert instruction in professional writing."—T. Edward Karlsson, 224 East 79th Street, New York, N. Y.

What makes WRITING ability GROW?

For a number of years, the Newspaper Institute of America has been giving free Writing Aptitude Tests to men and women with literary ambitions.

Sometimes it seems half the people in America who are fired with the desire to write have taken advantage of this offer to measure their ability.

What the tests show

Up to date, no one who could be called a "born writer" has filled out our Writing Aptitude Test. We have not yet discovered a single individual miraculously endowed by nature with all the qualities that go to make up a successful author.

One aspirant has interesting ideas—and a dull, uninteresting style. Another has great creative imagination but is woefully weak on structure and technique. A third has a natural writing knack—yet lacks judgment and knowledge of human behavior. In each case, success can come only after the missing links have been forged in.

Here, then, is the principal reason why so many promising writers fail to go ahead. Their talent is one-sided—incomplete. It needs rounding out.

Learn to write by writing

NEWSPAPER Institute training is based on journalism—continuous writing—the sort of training that turns out more successful writers than any other experience. Many of the authors of today's "best sellers" are newspaper-trained men and women.

One advantage of our New York Copy Desk Method is that it starts you writing and keeps you writing in your own home, on your own time. Week by week, you receive actual assignments just as if you were right at work on a great metropolitan daily.

All your writing is individually corrected and criticized by veteran writers with years of experience "breaking in" new authors. They will point out those faults of style, structure or viewpoint that keep you from progressing. At the same time, they will give you constructive suggestions for building up and developing your natural aptitudes.

In fact, so stimulating is this association that student-members often begin to sell their work before they finish the course. We do not mean to insinuate that they skyrocket into the "big money" or become prominent overnight. Most beginners are made with earnings of \$25, \$50, \$100, or more, for material that takes little time to write—stories, articles on business, hobbies, sports, travels, local and club activities, etc.—things that can easily be turned out in leisure hours, and often on the impulse of the moment.

For those who want to know—Free Writing Aptitude Test

If you really want to know the truth about your writing ambitions, send for our interesting Writing Aptitude Test. This searching test of your native abilities is free—entirely without obligation. Fill in and send the coupon. Newspaper Institute of America, One Park Ave., New York 16, N. Y. (Founded 1925)

Free
Newspaper Institute of America
One Park Ave., New York 16, N. Y.

Send me, without cost or obligation, your Writing Aptitude Test and further information about writing for profit.

Mr. }
Mrs. }
Miss }
Address

Check here if you are eligible under the G.I. Bill of Rights (All correspondence confidential. No salesman will call on you.) 94-C-437 Copyright 1947, Newspaper Institute of America.

VETERANS

•
This course approved for Veterans' Training

DEAD TO THE WORLD

(Continued from page 84)

"Anyway, when I told her it was Mrs. Sorenson she was quite excited. She wanted to go up to their apartment a moment, so I gave her the key. She seemed a nice, refined girl. I hope that wasn't wrong?"

"Oh, I don't think it matters. I'll go up and get her." Danny didn't wait for her permission. He spun and made for the elevator.

The "in-use" sign was lighted. It seemed forever before the doors slid open before him. It seemed an equally long time before the elevator had crept at a grinding snail's pace to the Sorenson floor.

He was terribly anxious to see Marian. The possibilities were wound tight and elastic in his mind, like the inside of a golf ball.

The car door slid open and he half ran down the hallway. Just one more turn to the long passage and he'd be there. . . .

His hurried footsteps padded on the soft carpet; he turned the corner, and then he stopped dead.

Mrs. Scotti!

He could recognize the slender, tightly gowned figure, even from the back. He could recognize the high-crowned, wide-brimmed hat and the silver-fox cape. She was facing the door and was fiddling nervously with the lock. He heard the sharp snap of the bolt as the door closed.

Mrs. Scotti! What was she doing here? He'd imagined she'd go to see Viv, all right, to get the signals changed, but he'd hardly expected she'd risk coming up here!

She turned nervously and took one step toward him before she realized whom she was facing. She stopped dead, too, and Danny drew in his breath sharply.

Her face! It looked as though she'd done something awful to it with yellow chalk. The lines at the corner of her mouth were accentuated as though with actors' make-up. It was a coarse clay mask; grotesque, livid. It looked like something you'd scare a kid with to make him eat his spinach.

She took one look at him with eyes that were glazed and steely-black beneath the heavy lashes. Her hands suddenly clenched and then fell limply at her sides. She glanced over her shoulder at the stairs. She'd never make it. She knew it, and so did he. So she stood her ground and stared at him coldly.

"Well, Doctor. I see you're still busy sleuthing." Her voice was sharp and grating, like fingernails drawn across a blackboard. She looked at him brazenly as he stood directly before her, blocking her. Then she shrugged her shoulders as though to pass him.

He caught her arm as she flung around him. "What's the matter? Wrong floor again?"

The muscles in her jaw twitched. "Let me go, please."

"Not until I find out what you're doing here."

She tried to wrench free from him. "Let me go; do you hear me?" The voice was sharp with anger. "I mean business!"

"So do I—Mrs. Sorenson."

She stopped struggling and stared at him stormily, her pale face immobile. Then she shrugged away from him. "Don't be silly!"

"It's not silly; don't waste time saying it is."

Her hands were slowly moving, and as he looked down one of them plunged into the big green bag. Instinctively he knocked it from her hands. It clattered to the floor; a large round silver compact rolled down the narrow strip of hardwood floor that edged the carpet. Then, on the carpet beneath him, he saw what she'd been after: a small revolver. He covered it with an ample foot as she lunged at it. She rose nervously and eyed the hall behind him. He kept watching her as he leaned down for the revolver. He had her covered now; she wouldn't try anything fancy.

The air was pungent with the scent of her perfume, a sort of hothouse, musky scent. Over and above it there was another odor; a flat, familiar odor that seemed to cling to the long black hair and fur jacket. He scowled; the odor was elusive. It smelled a little like the odor of clothing just back from the cleaners, but that wasn't it. . . .

Yet it seemed to envelop him, becoming heavier, heavier and sweeter—and flatter. A little like burning rubber. Only that wasn't it, either.

A little like tar; like the smell of oil; like ether. . . . Only. . . .

He stopped living for an instant. The breath jolted out of him and his heart hung, suspended and quiet, inside him.

"Holy Mother of—!"

He spun around on her; his voice was a shrill command. "Give me your keys!"

Her lips were parted, her eyes wide against a face which was white as death. She was trembling, paralyzed. Her eyes flickered down at the spilled contents of her purse on the bright patterned carpet. He saw the small key chain with an onyx identification tag initialed "R."

He bent down for the key, still covering her with the revolver.

But she didn't move. All the fight and re-

sistance were draining out of her as she leaned limply against the wall. The keys rattled as he found the right one and fit it into the lock.

THE warm, flatly oily odor crushed around him in a heavy, deadening wave as the door crashed open.

He grabbed her wrist. As he pulled her into and across the dark shuttered room he was conscious of Marian's prostrate figure on the floor before the fireplace, but already the strong, pungent smell was eating at his eyes, filling his mouth, and his heart was hammering in his throat.

It was not until he had thrown a window open that he was conscious of the low, sizzling sound from the fireplace. He hurriedly turned the key that fed the raw, evil-smelling gas into the elaborate gas-log fixtures in the hearth.

He turned to the small form on the floor. Marian's eyes were shut and she was breathing unevenly. He lifted her gently and carried her to a love seat near the window. As he supported her head he felt a large welt at the base of her skull. He glanced up at Mrs. Scotti angrily.

"And did you have to do this to her?" It was a rhetorical question, and he didn't expect an answer.

She looked down at her nervously twisting hands and spoke out in angry defense. "She had some pictures of me taken at Tony's trial. She was following me. I realized she knew who I was! I had to!"

Danny shook his head disgustedly. Then, still covering her gingerly, he went to the window to fling it wide and let more fresh air into the stifling room. . . . Behind him he heard stealthy movements and he whirled to stop Rosalie from escaping. Rosalie wasn't moving at all. She was staring at the doorway in panic, where Scotti was standing with a neat, shining revolver in his hand. The old scar jagged across his forehead in a bright red.

The dark eyes seemed deeper sunk and more piercing, the face an ashy blue.

Two big bull-chested men stood authoritatively behind Scotti. They meant business too. "Drop it!" Scotti said, and Danny's hand relaxed, dropping the little revolver to the floor.

Scotti spoke commandingly. "What goes on here?" He turned to Danny. "You start talking."

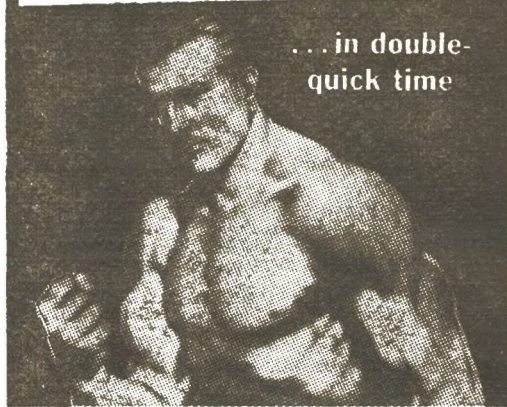
"You're damned right I will. Your wife just tried to kill this girl." He indicated Marian with a nod. "She struck her over the head and then turned on the gas."

"Yeah? Why?"

[Turn page]

"Let me show **YOU** too, HOW TO MAKE YOURSELF **COMMANDO-TOUGH**

... in double-
quick time



...OR IT WON'T COST YOU A CENT!"

says *George F. Jowett*

WORLD'S GREATEST BODY BUILDER

Let me prove to YOU that you can put inches of dynamic muscles on your arms! Add inches to your chest! Broaden your shoulders and power-pack the rest of your body. I can do for you what I've done for thousands the world over, including many officers and men now in the U. S. and British Armed Forces!

GIVE ME 10 MINUTES A DAY!

I'll Show You My Secrets of Body Building

I'll help you learn the "Progressive Power Method" through which I rebuilt myself from a physical wreck to the holder of more strength records than any other living athlete or teacher! No matter how skinny or flabby you are, you can learn my methods right in your own home. Through my proved secrets I show you how to develop your power, inside and out, until YOU are fully satisfied that you are the man you want to be. "The Jowett System," says R. F. Kelly, Physical Director of the YMCA, Atlantic City, "is the greatest in the world!"

If you want a physique that will inspire respect from men and admiration from women . . . ACT LIKE A HE-MAN! Decide at once! The famous book "Nerves of Steel—Muscles Like Iron" will be included FREE! Priceless for the strength fan! Full of photos of marvelous power-bodied men who will show you what Jowett has done for them and how he can do the same for you. Reach out . . . Grasp this Special Offer today!

Jowett Institute, Dept. TP-73
230 Fifth Avenue
New York 1, N. Y.

PROVE TO YOURSELF IN ONE NIGHT!

Send only 25c for test Course, "Molding a Mighty Arm." Read it the evening it arrives—learn from experience the thrill you can give your muscles!

SEND FOR THESE FIVE
FAMOUS COURSES IN
BOOK FORM
ONLY 25c EACH
or ALL 5 for \$1.00

QUICK ACTION BRINGS

THIS
BOOK
FREE!



PHOTO BOOK OF FAMOUS STRONG MEN **FREE**



Jowett Institute of Physical Culture, Dept. TP-73
230 Fifth Avenue, New York 1, N. Y.

George F. Jowett: Your proposition looks good to me. Send by return mail, prepaid, the courses checked below, for which I enclose (). Include FREE book of PHOTOS.

George F. Jowett of Champions All 5 courses for . . . \$1 Molding a Mighty Arm 25c Molding a Mighty Grip 25c Molding a Mighty Back 25c Molding a Mighty Chest 25c Molding a Mighty Legs 25c Send all 5 C.O.D. (\$1 plus postage.) No orders less than \$1 sent C.O.D.

NAME Age.....
(Print name)

ADDRESS

VETS!



HONORABLE DISCHARGE RING

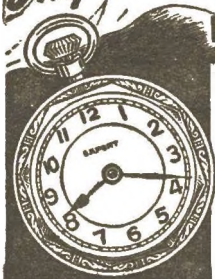
Genuine STERLING SILVER Gold Finish

HERE'S A VALUE! Handsome, hefty Genuine Sterling Silver HONORABLE DISCHARGE RING, yellow gold finish, for only \$1.98 plus tax. Beautiful Discharge Emblem on handsome scrolled mounting. A magnificent ring you'll wear for life.

SEND NO MONEY Mail your name, address, and ring size today. Your Genuine Sterling Gold Finish Discharge Ring will be sent to you AT ONCE. Pay your postman only \$1.98 plus tax and postage. Wear the ring 10 days, and if not delighted, return it and your money will be refunded at once. Yes, your satisfaction guaranteed! **ORDER TODAY.** Send strip of paper for size.

CHARLES STEWART, 616 Walnut St.
Dept. J-205 CINCINNATI 2, OHIO

Imported SWISS POCKET WATCHES



WRITTEN GUARANTEE WITH EACH WATCH

Handsome, dependable. Swiss watches are renowned as excellent timekeepers because they are made by master watch craftsmen. Sturdy. Fine-constructed. Genuine chrome case.

WEAR 10 DAYS AT OUR RISK! If not completely satisfied, return for refund. **SEND NO MONEY.** Simply pay postman \$3.50 plus 10% tax and postage on delivery. Cash

orders sent postpaid. An exceptional bargain. **United Products CO., 7941 S. Halsted, Dept. PW-608, Chicago 20, Ill.**

Backache Whipped By Man and Wife

If you suffer from Backache, Leg or Rheumatic pains, Nervousness, Swollen Ankles, Burning Passages, Bladder Weakness, or Getting Up Nights, due to non-organic and non-systemic Kidney and Bladder troubles, you may easily enjoy the delightful benefits experienced by thousands who have depended on Cystex for such troubles. The following letter from a well-known Massachusetts housewife is typical of those received from Cystex users all over the world: "I was so laid up with pains in my back, legs and arms that I was miserable. Finally I decided to try your Cystex. In a couple of weeks I was like a new person, the pains had left and I could walk anywhere. My husband had pains in his arms, took Cystex and the pains left." To prove what Cystex may do to bring you joyous help from the distress due to above mentioned Kidney and Bladder troubles, get Cystex from your druggist. Give it a fair trial exactly according to the simple directions. Unless completely satisfied and delighted with your rapid improvement, your money back is guaranteed. So don't suffer another day without trying Cystex.

Danny started to tell, then stopped. Certainly he had every justification to toss Mrs. Scotti to the wolves, but he couldn't quite do it. "You'd better ask your wife."

Scotti's head turned sinuously. The tendons in his neck were bulging, pulling the loud striped shirt collar askew. He stepped over to her, grasped her wrist, and twisted it. Then he flung her down into the chair. "Now talk fast—and straight."

When she spoke her voice was a solid droning monotone. "After you'd been sent up I was alone. All your fine friends wouldn't have anything to do with me. I had to get by somehow, Tony. You hadn't left anything for me." The lips twisted with reminiscent hatred. "Everyone was afraid if they even handed me a dollar they'd be implicating themselves. They left me flat, just like you did."

"Go on."

"I went to New York; you know how I tried to get into some shows, but it was tough. It was awful tough." She took a deep slow breath. "Then one day Alfred Sutton called me."

"When was this?" The air rasped through Scotti's smashed nostrils.

"You'd been in jail three months."

"Go on."

"Maybe you didn't know it"—her voice assumed defiance—"but he'd been making passes at me for years. He was your friend! Sure! He just framed you into jail, that's all, and made off with your money, and then he called me. He promised me everything I needed if I'd go down to Miami and meet him. For all I knew, you'd be put away for years; I didn't have enough to eat—"

Scotti's tone was ominous. "Yeah?"

Her voice rose shrilly. "You hadn't taken care of me, God knows. Just went off to jail like a big martyr; left me holding the sack. So I met him; I went away with him."

Scotti's already none-too handsome face was even less so. "You dirty little tramp!"

"Well, at least I lived decent; I had the things I needed; somebody was going to give me a break."

"I always thought you was throwing yourself around at him!"

"All right, I did! He was a gentleman, anyway; he knew how to do things right; he always treated me like a human being with some feelings, not just a—just a—"

"And maybe you and him framed even the accident together?"

"That's a lie, Tony! I thought he'd been killed, just the way you did, until I got that call from him."

Scotti's voice cut like a knife. "Okay."

"It was your money, Scotti. I thought

maybe—”

Scotti laughed “I suppose you’re going to say you were ‘doing it for me!’”

She looked at him pleadingly. “All right, I wasn’t then. I was doing it for myself because I had to live somehow. He had money, and we lived high. We traveled around all we wanted.”

“So why’d you come back to Chicago?”

She looked away. “Alfred started playing the races again and losing all the time. I didn’t know how hard up he was, but he had to come back on—on business.”

“Yes,” interposed Danny. “He came back to blackmail James Ferguson and Walter Danforth. Isn’t that it, Mrs. Scotti?”

“All right, it is. Well, one day Danforth came to the apartment to see Sutton, and I walked in on them.”

Danny gasped, and Scotti’s head turned jerkily to him.

“What’s the matter with you?”

“Nothing, nothing.” Danny didn’t want to talk right now. The thoughts raced through his mind so turbulently that he wanted to reach out and snag just one of them as it whirled by.

Scotti turned back to Rosalie. “Go on.”

“Well, then we heard about your parole. Alfred was wild. He had to wait for the money from Danforth and Ferguson; he’d gone through everything we had.”

“So you decided to come back to me.” Scotti’s mouth was distorted into an awful leer. “So that’s what Alfred was trying to tell me. About you!”

Danny sat up attentively. What was this?

“Tony! I couldn’t help it, Tony!” Mrs. Scotti was sobbing.

“You came back to me. Sure! But then it just happened Turk ran into Sutton before he could collect from Danforth and Ferguson. Turk had to chase him up into that camp in Minnesota before he caught him.”


DANNY took a deep breath. Here was the answer to Sutton’s rough clothes and four days’ beard. Mrs. Hughes had told of Sutton’s sudden departure; that was the day he realized Scotti was on his trail; he’d decided to hide out until the pay-off.

Scotti went on: “What a damn fool I was! Sure, Sutton was acting funny; I noticed it when Turk brought him back. The way he looked at you all the time he was talking.”

“Tony, don’t!”

“Sure.” The words sang out of Scotti. “He thought you’d double-crossed him—to me. He was going to get even and tell what a rose you’d been! So you slipped him a mickey; into his drink before he had the

[Turn page]



AUTO

BOOKS ON APPROVAL



SEND NO MONEY. Just mail the coupon for a complete set of Six Big Auto Books. 20th Edition. Whether you are a mechanic or helper, expert or apprentice, auto owner or driver, take immediate advantage of this FREE EXAMINATION OFFER.

**MAKE GOOD MONEY NOW
HOLD A PERMANENT JOB**

America wants its automobiles kept in good repair. Men with “know how” are in demand, at big pay. These books will help you get and hold an important job, or give you a chance to go into business for yourself now or later. Any man who half tries to improve himself can learn auto servicing and repairing by this quick reference method. Use the **JEFFY INDEX** to find easily understood answer to any auto problem. These wonder books prepared by eleven of America’s great automobile engineers. Many hundreds of valuable illustrations. Send the coupon TODAY.

CAN YOU FIX IT?

These wonder books tell step by step HOW to make difficult repairs and adjustments, how to keep a car at maximum efficiency, including latest improvements in engine design and operation. Engine troubles and how to correct them well covered.

SIX VOLUMES

3800 pages, 2000 illustrations, wiring diagrams, etc., including Diesel engines. Beautiful modernistic, washable cloth binding.

[A year’s consulting privileges with our engineers now given with these books without extra charge.]
Vocational Publishers Since 1898

AMERICAN TECHNICAL SOCIETY, Dept. A-349
Drexel Ave. at 88th St., Chicago 37, Ill.

I would like to examine your Six-Volume Set of Auto Books. I will pay the delivery charges only, but if I choose I may return them express collect. If after 10 days’ use I prefer to keep them, I will send you \$2 and pay the balance at the rate of only \$2 a month until \$24.50 has been paid. Please include consulting service as offered above.

Name

Address

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

Please attach letter stating age, occupation, employer’s name and address, and name and address of at least one business man as reference. Men in service, also please give home address.

INVENTORS

Learn how to protect your invention. A specially prepared booklet containing detailed information concerning patent protection and procedure with “Record of Invention” form will be forwarded to you upon request—without obligation.

CLARENCE A. O’BRIEN & HARVEY JACOBSON


Registered Patent Attorneys

78-A District National Bldg. Washington 5, D. C.

ARREST THAT RUPTURE!

Don’t let it get away from you! Carelessness, indifference, neglect usually cause trouble. Learn about our Air Cushion Support. Ready for you NOW! Light, cool, sanitary. Durable, cheap. Clip and mail for Free Booklet and Proof of Results. No-Risk Trial Offer.

BROOKS CO., Box 382-f, Marshall, Mich.



BE A Nurse

MAKE \$30-\$40 A WEEK

You can learn practical nursing at home in spare time. Course endorsed by physicians. Thousands of graduates. 48th yr. One graduate has charge of 10-bed hospital. Another saved \$400 while learning. Equipment included. Men, women 18 to 60. High School not required. Easy tuition payments. Trial plan. Write today.

CHICAGO SCHOOL OF NURSING
Dept. 422, 100 East Ohio Street, Chicago 11, Ill.

Please send free booklet and 18 sample lesson pages.

Name.....

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

NEW MIDGET ELECTRIC
ARC WELDER
RETAILS ONLY \$3.95
FULLY GUARANTEED



Plugs into Light Socket—AC or DC

It's new! It's handy! It's efficient! Use the Midget Electric Arc Welder for hundreds of light-metal jobs. Does comparable welding work with a 1/16 inch welding rod on thin metals as that of larger and higher priced welders. Operates on 15 ampere fuse, 110 volt 60 cycle A.C. or D.C. current, by use of our special standard coated 1/16-inch welding rods. Generous supply of rods supplied with machine. Recommended for all light welding like automobile fenders, etc. Take the Midget Arc anywhere to the job. Sturdily built and fully guaranteed. Comes complete—ready to use. Nothing else to buy. No previous welding experience needed to strike an arc. In a short time, anyone mechanically inclined can learn to weld with this machine. You'll find hundreds of money-saving, time-saving uses for the Midget Arc around your home, garage, or workshop. Also in garages, factories, repair shops, tin shops, mechanics, farmers, inventors, etc. Order a Midget Electric Arc Welder now! **SEND NO MONEY.** We'll rush one to you, complete with rods and helmet (equipped with APPROVED welding glasses). Pay postman only \$3.95 plus postage charges. If not satisfied, return Midget Arc in 5 days from receipt and we'll refund your money immediately. **RUSH YOUR ORDER NOW.**

MIDGET ARC WELDER CO., Strader Ave., Dept. S-233, Cincinnati 26, Ohio

BE A DETECTIVE
 WORK HOME or TRAVEL. Experience unnecessary.
DETECTIVE PARTICULARS FREE. Write to
GEO. R. H. WAGNER, 125 W. 86th St., N. Y.

GET THIS FINE SUIT NO MONEY TO PAY!


BIG CASH EARNINGS, TOO!

Big news! This fine tailored suit yours without paying one cent—and big cash earnings, too! It's easy! Just take a few orders. Earn up to \$10 in a day and get your own suit as extra bonus. Dozens of rich new fabrics, superbly tailored in latest styles, at low prices produce orders on sight. Money-back guarantee. **FREE SAMPLES!** Write today giving name, address, age, etc. for big complete outfit of actual samples and details of amazing new **BONUS SUIT** and money-making plan. All sent FREE. No experience chart. **SEND NO MONEY!** **W. Z. GIBSON, Inc. 300 S. Throop, Dept. R-577, Chicago 7, Ill.**



ASTHMA Symptoms Relieved. Write today for free information and special money back offer.
W. K. STERLINE, 830 Ohio Ave., Sidney, Ohio

LATEST TRY BY MAIL NOW SEND NO MONEY TEST YOUR OWN SIGHT at Home with our New Patented Sight Testers. 16 DAYS' TRIAL OFFER. FREE



GLASSES As Low As MONEY-BACK GUARANTEE! NEW LOW PRICES

If you're not 100% satisfied with glasses we make we will refund every cent you pay us. Repairs: 48 HRS. **CATALOG and scientific test chart.** **U. S. EYE-GLASSES CO. 1557 MILWAUKEE AVE., DEPT. 3-82, CHICAGO, ILL.**

chance. I wondered why he caved in all of a sudden. You were making sure he wouldn't talk!"

"And he isn't the only one she made sure of," Danny said firmly. "There was also the matter of Walter Danforth." This, he knew, was a little irrelevant, but with everything going so crazily he wanted the whole story while he could get it.

"What d'you mean?"

"Yesterday, after I called your hotel, your wife slipped me a note to meet her. I met her on top of the 51 bus. I happened to mention that Danforth was about due to spill a lot he hadn't discussed yet in the Sutton case. Well, that was a tip-off I didn't know I was giving." Danny snapped his fingers suddenly. "Of course! She'd been on good terms with Sutton; she was the one who had a key to his office—conveniently next to Danforth's! She'd also know all the places to hide in case the going got rough. So when Danforth started talking to the police—"

Suddenly Rosalie Scotti sprang from her chair and lunged down at the small revolver at Danny's feet. Scotti, with the sinuous agility of a snake, kicked at her and sent her crashing against the large walnut secretary. She lay sprawled against it, quivering, sobbing convulsively.

"Scotti! No, Scotti! No, Scotti!" She cried it over and over and then stopped suddenly as her eyes found the revolver in his hand, which was slowly lowering toward her.

"I get it all pretty clear now. You were sure as hell going to take care of yourself, all right. Me, I could go straight to the devil. Sure, if anyone ever got suspected of poisoning Sutton it'd be me! I had every reason to want to kill the rat after he'd framed me into jail and gone through all my money. And the minute they snagged me for that they could easy find some way to hang Danforth's death on me too. You, you'd be safe. You knew plenty well what I do to double-crossers. Well, you dirty little tramp, this is it!"

Danny had never seen such a distorted, ugly face. It had all the cruel ruthlessness of a killer animal. The malign strength seemed to be flowing from the evil face down the taut arm to the finger which covered the trigger.

Then the chaos of quiet in the room was interrupted by the loud, splaying hiss of the silencer on the revolver. Mrs. Scotti's head rolled back and cracked against the secretary-desk, and then she slumped down onto the floor. It was as though her lipstick had turned to liquid and dripped down the narrow crevice at the corner of her mouth and

WHICH OF THESE *Opportunities* INTERESTS *You* MOST?

● *Today*, choose the job you want—and prepare for it. Or if you are already engaged in the work you like best, start training *now* for quicker promotion. Acquire the knowledge that will help you to get ahead faster, make more money and have greater security.

American School, founded in 1897 as an educational institution *not for profit*, can help you to reach your goal just as it has helped others during the past fifty years. Check the coupon at right, add your name and address and mail it at once. The school will send you details on its training plan and outline of study prepared by specialists. There is no charge, no obligation, so send the coupon immediately.

CHECK, CLIP AND MAIL COUPON NOW

AMERICAN SCHOOL, Dept. G358, Drexel at 58th, Chicago 37, Ill.
Without obligation, Please send FREE and postpaid, bulletin and details of the Subject checked.

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> PLASTICS ENGR | <input type="checkbox"/> Accounting | <input type="checkbox"/> Drafting and Design for Men and Women |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Refrigeration | <input type="checkbox"/> Electrical Engr. | <input type="checkbox"/> Radio |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture and Building | <input type="checkbox"/> Electricity—Pract. | <input type="checkbox"/> High School |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Contracting | <input type="checkbox"/> Electronics, Industrial | <input type="checkbox"/> Air Conditioning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Practical Plumbing | <input type="checkbox"/> Bookkeeping | <input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical Eng. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Automotive Engr. | <input type="checkbox"/> Private Secretary | <input type="checkbox"/> Shop Management |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aviation Drafting | <input type="checkbox"/> Diesel Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Tool Making |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aviation | <input type="checkbox"/> Sheet Metal Patterns | <input type="checkbox"/> Better Foremanship |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business Mngmt. | <input type="checkbox"/> Drafting | <input type="checkbox"/> Machine Shop Operations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Railway Training | | |

AMERICAN SCHOOL

Dept. G358, Drexel at 58th Street, Chicago 37

NAME.....OCCUPATION.....
ADDRESS.....AGE.....
CITY.....STATE.....

into a small, blotted stain on the light blue rug.

Instinctively Danny leaped to help her, but Scotti pointed the revolver at him and motioned him back. The two "boys" stood behind him like wax statues, motionless and grim.

Danny swallowed hard to open the stoppage in his throat. Judas! It couldn't be! And yet the gun was leveled straight at him. He knew too much, and so did Marian! Too damn much for Scotti's comfort and convenience.

Marian stirred and groaned, and Scotti's eyes flicked at her. "How much does she know?"

"Nothing. Nothing at all."

"Like hell she doesn't!" Scotti sneered. "She had enough on Rosalie—" Scotti looked down at his wife's sprawling body. "Cover her up, Al." His voice was almost gentle, and then he turned back to Danny. "She had enough on Rosalie to make Rosalie want to knock her off."

Scotti stopped talking as Al came from the bedroom with a blanket and draped it carelessly over Mrs. Scotti. Tony Scotti watched the process somberly, but the gun was still played steadily on Danny; Scotty was making up his mind. Danny grimaced at the thought; a man like Scotti knew only

one way to deal with such situations. He had to do something quick; something to get them out of this. Facing Scotti's gun wasn't conducive to thought or introspection, but he had to act fast.

"Mr. Scotti, I think there's something you ought to know." He was surprised at his voice, but only because it sounded like a voice at all.

"What's that?"

"You think now that when Alfred Sutton left you in the lurch during your trial he did it solely to make off with your money? But maybe he had another reason, a stronger reason to clear out and kill someone else to make the accident alibi seem complete."

"And just what would that be?" Scotti's snarl didn't quite disguise his interest.

"You see, it happens that Sutton had one of the most terrible diseases known to man."

"What d'you mean?"

"He had—leprosy."

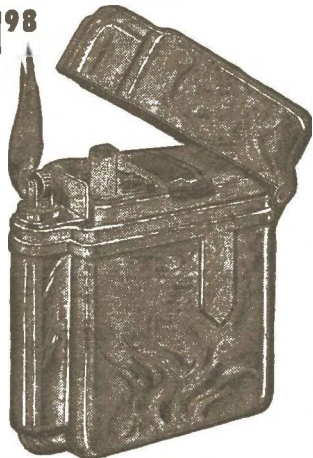
NOT the slightest shadow of change affected the thin, swarthy face.

"He had to get out and he had to kill Vicente. He had to get out because he was going to pieces; he couldn't live as he'd been living. He had to kill Vicente, because Vicente had found the germ in him, and as

[Turn page]

INTRODUCTORY OFFER!

\$1.98



All-In-One Cigarette Lighter and Full-Pack Case gives you cigarettes and lights together as you want them. Streamlined, smart, modern... a wonderful convenience, the ideal gift. For men or women. Built for lifetime service of beautiful plastic. Deep-well lighter holds month's supply fluid. **SEND NO MONEY... 7 DAY TRIAL.** Order on trial, inspection and approval. On arrival deposit \$1.98 plus C.O.D. Use 7 days. If not delighted return for full refund. (Send \$1.98 with order and we pay postage.) (Dealers... write for prices, discounts.)

HENRY SENNE & CO., Dept. 15-C
590 N. State St. Chicago 10, Ill.

High School Course at Home Many Finish in 2 Years

Go as rapidly as your time and abilities permit. Course equivalent to resident school work—prepares for college entrance exams. Standard H.S. texts supplied. Diploma. Credit for H. S. subjects already completed. Single subjects if desired. High school education is very important for advancement in business and industry and socially. Don't be handicapped all your life. Be a High School graduate. Start your training now. Free Bulletin on request. No obligation.

American School, Dept. H-358, Bixel at 58th, Chicago 37

MAKE MONEY AT HOME

RUBBER MOLDS

Low as
6¢ EA.



Amazing rubber mold-making outfit makes perfect flexible molds of plaques, ash trays, bookends, etc. Molds cost 8c to 25c each. Each mold makes hundreds of novelties and gifts to sell for \$1.00 apiece and more! No experience necessary. Everything furnished. Quick and easy. Start profitable business in your home—sell to stores, gift shops, friends, resorts, road stands, by mail. Full or spare time. Write for complete FREE details and easy instructions. **SO-LO WORKS, INC., Dept. P-528, Loveland, O.**

Morning Coughs Often Due to Bronchial Asthma

Do you cough and choke, especially mornings and at night? At times do you feel like you were tearing yourself to pieces trying to get rid of strangling mucus and still you choke, gasp for breath, wheeze and often can't sleep? The cause of these devastating symptoms may be recurring attacks of Bronchial Asthma. In such cases, the very first dose of **Mendaco**, a physician's prescription, usually goes right to work thru the blood helping relax that clogged up stuffy feeling in the bronchial tubes, then helps Nature loosen and remove thick, strangling phlegm. This helps you get good fresh air into your lungs and promotes restful sleep, a natural aid to greater energy. **Mendaco** is not a smoke, injection or spray, but is in tasteless tablets which you take exactly according to simple directions at meals. **Mendaco** must satisfy in every way or your money back is guaranteed. Don't cough and choke, don't lose sleep another night, because of recurring attacks of Bronchial Asthma, without trying **Mendaco**. Ask your druggist for **Mendaco** today.

long as Vicente lived Sutton was under obligation to Vicente—or else.”

“And just what's this got to do with me?”

“It could have plenty. If Sutton had leprosy, then maybe—” Danny nodded at the lumpy, uneven pink blanket against the secretary and tried to restrain the shudder that tingled through him. “Chances are, being with Sutton as she was, she'd contract it too.”

“Go on.” The voice was stiff.

“Well, she came back to you, didn't she?”

The muscles in Scotti's throat tightened, and the jaw set hard at a crooked angle.

“People of Latin or Mediterranean extraction are most susceptible to leprosy.”

The air hissed through Scotti's clenched teeth. “You're not very smart, are you, Doctor? Sometimes it isn't too smart to know too much.”

“That's right. Just like it wasn't too smart for Dr. Vicente to know about Alfred Sutton. As far as Vicente was concerned, Sutton had either to pay him off—or knock him off.”

“That's right.”

“I realized that.” Danny looked up at Scotti solidly. “And you'll have to find a doctor who can give you the tests—and not squawk about it. Any good doctor will report leprosy to the Federal Public Health Bureau. If he decides to take the risk of not reporting it, he'd figure he's doing a service which is worth some tall money.”

“What're you trying to get at?”

“Just that you're going to have a little trouble finding whether you have—or haven't—got leprosy.”

Danny surveyed Scotti nervously, trying to anticipate his answer, praying that he'd bite.

“I'm not so sure about that. You're a doctor, aren't you?”

“Sure. But what have I got to gain?”

“We're not talking about what you've got to gain. We're talking about what you've got to lose.”

Scotti twitched the revolver; the butt tickled against a button on the double-breasted coat. Danny shrugged. “I guess you've got me,” he said simply.

Scotti was anxious to get down to business. “What kind of test does it take?”

“It's simple,” said Danny. “Providing, of course, you've got the proper supplies.”

“And where d'you get the supplies?”

Danny hunched his shoulders. “Any drug-store'd have them.”

Scotti inclined his head toward his men, whose thick, solid faces were lined with concern. Although they didn't move, they seemed to back away from him. They glanced from the back of Scotti's sleek head

to one another.

"How long does it take?"

"Just a few minutes, that's all."

"Make out a list. What you need."

Danny gulped; it was a long shot; just a chance. As he moved stiffly to the secretary-desk he stepped gingerly over the body of Mrs. Scotti and lowered the flat desk front. He took a small pencil from his coat pocket and a tablet of scratch paper from one of the desk cubbyholes and scribbled carelessly:

4 oz. Benzidine
4 oz. Hydrogen Peroxide
20 oz. Glonoin CONCENTRATE
SHAKE WELL

Thoughtfully he underlined the last three words, then quickly signed his name and under it wrote: "Cook County Hospital."

Scotti watched him from under threatening brows. Danny squared his shoulders as he rose from the desk. The paper rustled as Scotti reached out and snatched it from him. The dark eyes scarcely left Danny, even though they glanced quickly at the small sheet of paper.

"What's this 'glonoin'?"

DANNY smiled. "I suppose you could call it a catalyst."

"A what?"

"Catalyst. It hurries the reaction." Danny swallowed hard, then turned to Al Humphreys. His voice sounded like a mother sending Junior for a can of baking powder. "If the druggist doesn't have it, just bring back the benzidine and peroxide. We can work out the test with them." Then Danny added quickly: "Although it'll take longer."

"And what's this?" Scotti pointed to the bottom of the paper with his gun barrel.

"It's my name and registry address. The druggist wouldn't fill the prescription without it." Danny started to reach nervously into a pocket for a cigarette. A quick gesture from the two boys stopped him. "Especially," Danny went on, "since the prescription is written on a blank sheet."

Scotti considered this for a minute. Then he motioned impatiently to Humphreys. "Go

[Turn page]

For the Best in New Crime Fiction
by Top-Flight Authors, Read

**MYSTERY BOOK
MAGAZINE**

NOW ON SALE—25c PER COPY!

Now
for EVERY WORK SHOP!

NEW
Invention

Electroplates
by BRUSH



Easy to Plate CHROMIUM
GOLD, SILVER, NICKEL, COPPER

For Pleasure and Profit!

If you have a workshop—at home or in business—you need this new Warner Electroplater. At the stroke of an electrified brush, you can electroplate models and projects—you can replate worn articles, faucets, tools, fixtures, silverware, etc. with a durable, sparkling coat of metal... Gold, Silver, Chromium, Nickel, Copper or Cadmium. Method is easy, simple, quick. Everything furnished—equipment complete, ready for use. By doing a bit of work for others, your machine can pay for itself within a week. So make your shop complete by getting a Warner Electroplater right away. Send today for FREE SAMPLE and illustrated literature. ACT AT ONCE! Mail Coupon.

WARNER ELECTRIC CO., DEPT. L-42
1512 Jarvis Avenue, Chicago 26, Ill.

FREE Details & Sample!

WARNER ELECTRIC CO., 1512 Jarvis Avenue, Chicago 26, Dept. L-42

Gentlemen: Send Free Sample and Details to:

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____

Fit-Rite makes False Teeth TIGHT
Makes loose dental plates fit snugly and comfortably.
LASTS for MONTHS!

Simply squeeze on dental plate and put it in your mouth. Hardens and becomes part of plate. Money-back guarantee.

FREE Generous package of Dental Plate Cleanser with each order. Send \$1.00 or mailed parcel post collect.

Fit-Rite Co., 1573 Milwaukee Ave.
Dept. 3-82, Chicago, Ill.

OLD LEG TROUBLE

Easy to use Viscose Home Method. Heals many old leg sores caused by leg congestion, varicose veins, swollen legs and injuries or no cost for trial if it fails to show results in 10 days. Describe your trouble and get a FREE BOOK.

T. G. VISCOSE COMPANY
140 N. Dearborn Street, Chicago 2, Illinois

WANT A

GOVERNMENT JOB
START \$1,756 TO \$3,021 YEAR

Veterans Get Preference. Many 1947 examinations expected. Prepare NOW! Mail coupon today. SURE.

COUPON

FRANKLIN INSTITUTE,
Dept. D94, ROCHESTER 4, N. Y.
Sirs: Rush without charge, (1) 32-page book with list of U. S. Government jobs. (2) Tell me how to prepare for one of these jobs.

Name _____
Address _____ Vet. _____

Study ACCOUNTING NOW—For Top-Pay Career

Fewer have trained for Accounting in recent years. Yet government regulations and taxes demand more bookkeepers and accountants. Good opportunity now to enter this growing, well-paying field. After short period of spare-time training, you can take accounting position and continue study on the job. Interesting, free 48-page booklet describes opportunities and requirements in Accounting and tells how you can prepare quickly and at moderate cost. Write for "Accountancy, The Profession That Pays."

LASALLE EXTENSION UNIVERSITY
A Correspondence Institution
417 S. Dearborn St., Dept. 3329-H Chicago 5, Ill.



LEARN MEAT CUTTING
At Home — In Spare Time

Get into the vital meat industry. Concise, practical Home Training based on 25 years proven instruction method used at National's famous resident school. Prepares you for bigger pay as Meat Cutter, supervisor, market manager or more money in your own store. Go as rapidly as your spare time permits. Diploma. Start NOW to turn your spare hours into money. Send for FREE bulletin today. No obligation. National School of Meat Cutting, Inc., Dept. TG-24, Toledo 4, Ohio



WHY WEAR DIAMONDS

When diamond-dazzling Zircons from the mines of far-away mystic Siam are an effective and inexpensive! Thrilling beauty stand acid, true backs full of FREE Exquisite mountings. See before you buy. Write for FREE catalog.

National Zircon Co., Dept. 4
Wheeling, W. Va. **Catalog FREE!**

LAW STUDY AT HOME FOR PERSONAL SUCCESS and LARGER EARNINGS. 33 years expert instruction—over 108,000 students enrolled. LL.B. Degree awarded. All texts furnished. Easy payments. Send for FREE BOOK. AMERICAN EXTENSION SCHOOL OF LAW Dept. 74-T, 646 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago 11, Ill.

STAMMER?

This new 128-page book, "Stammering, Its Cause and Correction," describes the Bogue Unit Method for scientific correction of stammering and stuttering — successful for 46 years. Free — no obligation.

Benjamin N. Bogue, Dept. 4276, Circle Tower, Indianapolis 4, Ind.

GET THIS
FREE
BOOK!



She Got \$400.00 for a Half Dollar
I will pay CASH for OLD COINS, BILLS and STAMPS

POST YOURSELF! It pays! I paid \$400.00 to Mrs. Dowty of Texas, for one Half Dollar; J.D. Martin of Virginia \$200.00 for a single Copper Cent; Mr. Manning of New York, \$2,500.00 for one Silver Dollar; Mrs. C. F. Adams, Ohio, received \$740.00 for a few old coins. I will pay big prices for all kinds of old coins, medals, bills and stamps.

I WILL PAY \$100.00 FOR A DIME! 1804 S. Mint; \$50.00 for 1818 Liberty Head Nickel (not Buff) and hundreds of other amazing prices for coins. Send for Large Illustrated Coin Folder and further particulars. It may mean much profit to you. Write today to

B. MAX MEHL, 133 Mehl Bldg., FT. WORTH, TEX.
(Largest Rare Coin Establishment in U.S.)

on," he said, inclining his head toward the door.

Humphreys was gone in a moment.

Danny glanced concernedly at Marian. The color was back in her face now; her breathing was more even and normal, punctuated by occasional deep breaths. The soft gold hair looped in folds about her shoulders. "She ought to have attention," he said.

"She'll be all right." Scotti's words had finality in them. "You stand right where you are."

Danny fidgeted, switching his weight from one foot to the other. He looked at his wrist watch and then glanced up at Scotti with eyes that were quickly calculating.

The silence in the room weighed on his ears. Scotti's breathing rasped nervously through the nostrils of the aquiline nose. That meant his nerves were tightening. Cords stood out on the thick, smooth neck; grim, taut, nervous cords. The hand which held the gun was the only steady, intent part of the tall sallow figure. And in a while that gun might smoke again. Twice. Danny's heart was a clenched fist pounding at his ribs.

He stood his ground, trying to survey Scotti as solidly as Scotti was surveying him. The ponderous bulk of Scotti's man was motionless and silent. Time had stopped moving here in this room. The hell of it was, it might never start up again, for Marian or for himself. He found himself wondering if he'd feel the impact of the projectile before he'd hear the shrill hiss as it tore out of the small, even barrel.

It seemed an hour before the door opened quietly and Humphreys came in. He was panting; he'd hurried. He handed the small package sealed in blue paper to Scotti.

"Druggist didn't have the glon—the third thing on that list. Took him a hell of a time to find it out, but no soap. So I brought back the other two, like the doctor said."

Danny stepped forward. "That's okay. We can still make the test with these. It'll take a few minutes longer." He hesitated. The snub barrel of that wicked revolver still aimed itself at his chest. A .44 has a way about it. It makes you want to stop and ask permission.

Scotti transferred the gun to Humphreys expertly. "Okay, Doctor. Now what?"

Danny took a deep, casual breath. "Maybe we'd better go out into the kitchen. I've got to heat a solution."

Scotti glowered threateningly. "How do I know this isn't just a run-around?"

"You don't." Danny shrugged. "Only I have nothing to gain by lying to you. That thing in Humphreys' hand is loaded, isn't it? If you don't like the diagnosis I suppose it

would go off accidentally."

He paused for a moment. Scotti watched him closely, and then Danny went on: "No doctor is going to fool around guessing on a patient who is *that* anxious to settle his account."

Danny reached out for Scotti's hand. He felt the well-manicured fingers expertly; then he turned and walked quickly into the kitchen. The bright light snapped on, throwing a glare on the bright green tiled walls. Scotti followed behind him darkly. Al Humphreys stood in the doorway, where he could watch both the living room and this small cubicle of kitchen and breakfast room.

Scotti faced him solidly. "I got an idea, Doctor."

"Yes?"

"Just to make sure there's no funny business, I think you're going to take this test right along with me."

"But—"

"No 'buts' about it. I'd feel a little more confident about this test if we got results from you to compare with."

Danny looked at the swarthy face a moment; then he shrugged and turned away. "Fair enough," he said. His voice was severely clinical as he opened a cupboard and took out two small glass tumblers. "First we take some blood from our fingers." He tried to force the concerned frown off his face as he turned back to Scotti.

CHAPTER XIX



HE FOUND a sharp-pointed paring knife in a drawer under the sink. Carefully he plunged the point into the gas flame at the range, and with a quick, bold stroke he punctured the skin on the tip of his own index finger. Rich dark blood welled up from the tiny

hole. By careful manipulation he squeezed several drops into one of the small glasses. He ripped a paper towel from the roll which hung against the wall and blotted it against his finger. Then he wiped the knife blade and again held it in the flame a second time. "Want me to do it for you?"

[Turn page]

True Picture-Stories of the World's
Greatest Heroes in

REAL LIFE COMICS

NOW ON SALE—10c AT ALL STANDS

Learn this Profitable Profession



IN 90 DAYS
AT HOME

**MONEY-MAKING CAREER OPEN
to MEN and WOMEN, 18 to 50**

Hundreds of men and women between 18 and 50 make \$10 to \$20 in a single day giving Scientific Swedish Massage and Hydro-Therapy treatments. There is big demand from doctors, hospitals, sanatoriums and clubs. Graduates earn large full time incomes from those or in private practices in their own offices. Others make good money from home treatments given in spare time. Learn this interesting, money-making profession in your own home, through our home study course. Same instructors as in our nationally known resident school. You can win independence and prepare for future security by qualifying for our Diploma. Course can be completed in 3 to 4 months. Many earn while they learn. Begin your training at once.



Anatomy Charts & Booklet FREE

Enroll now and we will include, at no extra cost, many needed supplies. Fit yourself to help meet growing demand for Scientific Swedish Massage. Send the coupon at once for complete details. Anatomy Charts and 32-page Illustrated Booklet. FREE, postpaid.

THE COLLEGE OF SWEDISH MASSAGE

Dept. 763-C, 160 East Ohio St., Chicago 11, Illinois

Please send me FREE and postpaid, Anatomy Charts, 32-page Booklet and complete details on Home Training.

Name.....

Address.....

City.....

State.....

**USED
Correspondence
Courses**

Complete HOME-STUDY COURSES and self-instruction textbooks, slightly used. Rented, sold, exchanged. All subjects. 100% satisfaction. Cash paid for used courses. Full details & 100-page Illustrated bargain catalog Free.

Write Nelson Co., 1338 S. Wabash Av., Dept. 06, Chicago 5, Ill.

Learn BAKING at home

Baking is one of America's high industries in wages. Not seasonal, but year round good field for trained and experienced men. Thorough basic spare time home study course lays solid foundation. If you have the aptitude for this type of work, send for FREE Booklet, "Opportunities in Commercial Baking."

NATIONAL BAKING SCHOOL

2315 S. Michigan Ave., Dept. 1803, Chicago 5, Ill.



FREE BOOK— On Chronic Ailments



40-page FREE BOOK explains the causes and effects of these ailments. Write today—Thornton & Minor Clinic, Suite 356, 926 McGehee St., Kansas City, Mo.

DRAW for MONEY!

Be An ARTIST!

Trained Artists are Capable of Earning \$50, \$60, \$75 a Week

It's pleasant and interesting to study Art the W.S.A. way. **COMMERCIAL ART, DESIGNING, CARTOONING** all in ONE complete home study course. No previous Art experience necessary—hundreds have profited by our practical methods since 1914. **TWO ART OUTFITTERS** furnished. Full information in **FREE BOOK**. "Art for Pleasure and Profit." Write today.

Course available under "G.I." Bill.

FREE BOOK gives details

WASHINGTON SCHOOL OF ART,
Studio 663M, 1115 15th St., N. W.
Washington 5, D. C.

Name AGE.....

Street

City..... Zone () State.....



ITCH CHECKED IN A JIFFY

Sufferers from the torturing itch caused by eczema, pimples, scales, scabies, athlete's foot, "factory" itch, and other itch troubles are praising cooling, liquid **D. D. D. Prescription**. This time-proved medication—developed by Dr. D. D. Dennis—positively relieves that cruel, burning itch. Greaseless and stainless. Soothes and comforts even the most intense itching in a jiffy. A 35c trial bottle proves its merits or your money back. Ask your druggist today for **D. D. D. Prescription**.

STATEMENT OF THE OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, CIRCULATION, ETC. REQUIRED BY THE ACTS OF CONGRESS OF AUGUST 24, 1912, AND MARCH 3, 1933, of Thrilling Mystery Novel Magazine, published bi-monthly at New York, N. Y., for October 1, 1946. State of New York, County of New York, ss. Before me, a Notary Public in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared H. L. Herbert, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the Business Manager of Thrilling Mystery Novel Magazine, and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, as amended by the Act of March 3, 1933, embodied in section 537, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to wit:

1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business manager are: Publisher, Standard Magazines, Inc., 10 East 40th Street, New York, N. Y.; Editor, Harvey Burns, 10 East 40th Street, New York, N. Y.; Managing Editor, None; Business Manager, H. L. Herbert, 10 East 40th Street, New York, N. Y. 2. That the owner is: Standard Magazines, Inc., 10 East 40th Street, New York, N. Y.; N. L. Pines, 10 East 40th Street, New York, N. Y. 3. That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 per cent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: None. 4. That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, stockholders, and security holders, if any, contain not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company but also, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting, is given; also that the said two paragraphs contain statements embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner; and this affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, association, or corporation has any interest direct or indirect in the said stock, bonds, or other securities than as so stated by him. H. L. HERBERT, Business Manager. Sworn to and subscribed before me this 1st day of October, 1946. Eugene Wechsler, Notary Public. My commission expires March 30, 1948.

Scotti drew quickly back from the knife and nodded. That was a grim joke, Danny observed. Scotti was afraid to draw his own blood!

He repeated the process on the narrow dark finger tip which Scotti presented, and the blood dripped into the second glass. Scotti blotted the finger on a linen white handkerchief.

Danny went on: "Now we'll drop a half ounce of this into each of the glasses." He selected the peroxide bottle and poured the fluid carefully, breaking off each time with practiced accuracy when just half an ounce by the markings on the side of the bottle had been poured. Then he took up a glass in each hand and swished the mixture around.

He took the glasses to the small refrigerator. As the metal door swung open the light inside the box glowed. Danny held both glasses in front of his eyes and turned them carefully.

"You see that pink cast to the solution?" Danny expected no answer, and Scotti merely grunted. "Well, after they're chilled we add a little of the benzidine."

"Yeah? And what does that prove?"

"It's simple." Danny placed the glasses on the meshed shelf of the refrigerator, closed the door, and turned back to Scotti. "We heat the benzidine; then we pour it into the cold solution in the box. If you've got leprosy that pink shade turns definitely blue. It's definite; anyone can see the color change." Danny took two small pans and filled them with water. As he lighted two of the stove's burners and placed the pans over them he commented: "Be kind of a rotten joke on me if you turned out to be color blind."

"Shut up and get going." Scotti was in no mood for whimsy. "What's the water for?"

"I'm going to boil out the pan. We've got to be sure it's clean." Danny turned back to the stove.

"Boss—" Al Humphreys' voice was heavy.

"Shut up!" Tony Scotti barked at him.

"But, boss, we'd better make tracks out of here. How d'you know the doctor isn't just stalling us, waiting for something to turn up?"

"I'll take care of that," Scotti said sharply. Then he turned on Danny. "You got just ten minutes. Make it snappy."

Danny shrugged and turned to the sink evasively. From the corner of his eye he saw Humphreys slowly raising the revolver. He went on with a nonchalance that amazed him: "Maybe ten minutes will be enough. And say, while we're waiting, why don't I go in and see about that girl?" He took a

casual step toward the door, but Scotti stopped him.

"No, you don't! You stay here, get this test going. The girl's going to be all right. She's only got a little bump on the head. You got plenty of time to take care of her—later."

Danny turned back to the stove. Minute bubbles were forming around the edges of the enameled pan. Whoever coined the one about the watched pot had never had his death hinging on the boiling. It seemed only an instant before the water was bubbling briskly.

He couldn't stall. Humphreys was already shifting around impatiently; he'd lighted a cigarette and was smoking at it nervously. Cellophane rustled as Tony Scotti unwrapped a package of chewing gum and folded a stick against his tongue. His chewing was fast, eager, and rhythmical. The dark pupils of his eyes flickered beneath the lowered eyelids.

Danny gave it every second of time he could, every second possible without revealing his deliberate hesitancy. Then he poured the water into the sink and carefully emptied the bottle of benzidine, in equal portions, into each of the two small pans. The enamel was still so hot that the small quantity of benzidine almost boiled.

"This is ready," Danny said as he stepped to the refrigerator, "but this stuff in here has got to be good and cold or you won't get a clear, definite test." He could hear Scotti's deep voice rasp up from the wide, sunken chest, so he turned firmly. "Look here, Mr. Scotti. You want to be sure. A minute or two isn't going to mean much to you. But leprosy isn't a thing to fool around with."

Al Humphreys' voice was more imperious. "Now listen, Tony—"

Scotti silenced him with a quick jerk of his head but said not a word.

Danny began to speak to Scotti, but somehow over Scotti, beyond him to where the increasingly nervous Humphreys stood in the doorway.

"Dangerous stuff, leprosy! It isn't that it kills you when you have it, because most lepers don't die from their disease. It's the treatment that gets them, being confined in a leper colony. The disease is slow; it takes five or ten years—maybe a lifetime—to develop, and it isn't one of those things you can cure with a couple of vitamin capsules. Most lepers get discouraged by the thought of ten or twenty years in a—regular prison. It tears them down physically. They end up fighting off lots of other diseases, but there's not much fight left."


"Shut up and get started."

[Turn page]

AUTHENTIC WESTERN

SADDLE RING

FOR MEN! & WOMEN! PURE STERLING SILVER



Only \$4.95

Postpaid We Pay Tax

First time at anywhere near this low price! Authentic replica of romantic western saddle. Hand-somely formed from solid Sterling Silver by Navajo Indian craftsmen. Massive style for men, dainty style for women. A gift of distinction. A pleasure to wear. Sent on approval.

SEND NO MONEY! Just clip this ad and mail with your name and address. Pay postman only \$4.95 plus few cents postage on arrival; or send cash and we pay postage. Wear this sensational ring for 10 days. If not delighted, return for full refund. Order Now! Use COUPON Below!

10 DAY TRIAL ORDER COUPON

ARIZONA CRAFTSMEN ROOM 606C
1904 FARNAM ST. OMAHA 2, NEBRASKA

SEND Sterling Saddle Ring as I have indicated below.

C.O.D. Cash Enclosed, Send Postpaid

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____

Men's Women's Ring Size _____

ANY PHOTO ENLARGED

Size 8 x 10 inches on DOUBLE-WEIGHT PAPER

57¢

3 for \$1.25



Original returned with your enlargement.

SEND NO MONEY Just mail photo, negative or snapshot (any size) and receive your enlargement, guaranteed fadeless, on beautiful double-weight portrait quality paper. Pay postman 57c plus postage—or send 56c with order and we pay postage. Take advantage of this amazing offer now. Send your photos today.

PROFESSIONAL ART STUDIOS
100 East Ohio Street Dept. 407-C Chicago (11), Ill.

When PRAYER FAILS

The prayers of the most worthy people often fail. Why? The unworthy often have the greatest health, success, riches and happiness. The best, smartest, and most industrious people often have only pain, poverty and sorrow. Why? Thirty years ago, in Forbidden Tibet, behind the highest mountains in the world, a young Englishman found the answers to these questions. His eyes were opened by the strangest mystic he met during his twenty-one years of travels in the Far East. Sick then, he regained health. Poor then, he acquired wealth and world-wide professional honors. He wants to tell the whole world what he learned, and offers to send a 9,000-word treatise, FREE, to everyone who asks promptly. It is a first step to the POWER that KNOWLEDGE gives. There is no obligation. Write for YOUR FREE COPY today.

INSTITUTE OF MENTALPHYSICS, Dept. 301-B
213 South Hobart Blvd., Los Angeles 4, Calif.

HOME-STUDY BRINGS BIGGER PAY


Don't be caught napping when Opportunity knocks. Prepare for advancement and more money by training *now* for the job ahead. *Free 48-Page Books Tell How.* Write for the book on the business field you like—or mail us this ad with your name and address in the margin. *Now, please.*

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Higher Accountancy | <input type="checkbox"/> Business Management |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Traffic Management | <input type="checkbox"/> Salesmanship |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Law—Degree of LL.B. | <input type="checkbox"/> Expert Bookkeeping |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial Law | <input type="checkbox"/> C. P. A. Coaching |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stenotypy (Machine Shorthand) | |

G. I. APPROVED

LASALLE EXTENSION UNIVERSITY
A Correspondence Institution

Dept. 3329-R 417 So. Dearborn St. Chicago 5



DO YOU WANT TO STOP TOBACCO?

Banish the craving for tobacco as thousands have with Tobacco Redeemer. Write for free booklet telling of injurious effect of tobacco and of a treatment which has relieved many men. Caution: Use only as directed.

30 Years in Business

FREE BOOK

THE NEWELL COMPANY
153 Clayton, Sta., St. Louis 5, Mo.

NOW YOU CAN GET A... HEAVY DUTY INDUSTRIAL WELDER.

For Home Appliance, Auto and General Farm Equipment Repairs
Immediate Deliveries

for Only **\$2350** Complete

Works on Iron, Steel, & other metals—does work you'd expect from a larger, costlier machine; portable, easily carried; operates from any properly wired 110 volt line also available for 220 volt operation at slight additional cost; has 8 metallic and carbon arc welding heat stages.

EASY TO OPERATE—if inexperienced you can learn to do professional work by following the simplified welding and operating instructions furnished—comes complete ready to operate with helmet, rods, cable, instructions, etc.

SAVE TIME AND MONEY—Do your own welding—just a few repairs. Jobs will pay for this machine. A **PRACTICAL AND PROFITABLE** machine tool for any workshop. **Make a money doing repair work for others.** Write today for full particulars and 10-day **FREE Trial Offer.**

DYNAMIC WELDER CO. 13 E. 23rd St.—GA Chicago 16, Illinois

ASTHMADOR


Bitter winds... snow, slush... stuffy, overheated houses... no wonder winter usually spells a-g-o-n-y for the asthmatic who has not yet tried Dr. R. Schiffmann's **ASTHMADOR!** Take pity on the poor sufferer... tell him how **ASTHMADOR's** rich, aromatic fumes cut right through congestion, let in life-giving air, help reduce the severity of the attack. Tell him to ignite **ASTHMADOR** powder when he's too stuffed up to sleep, or smoke an **ASTHMADOR** cigarette anytime, anywhere. No costly sprays to buy—nothing to take internally—just welcome relief the time-tested **ASTHMADOR** way. The leading inhalant—sold under a money-back guarantee.

THE DEPENDABLE TREATMENT

THAT OUTSELLS ALL OTHER INHALANTS

POWDER, CIGARETTE OR PIPE MIX

AT ALL DRUG STORES



DANNY looked in the icebox caculatingly; then he closed the door. "Not quite yet." His voice dropped; it was conversational but pointed. "Being a leper isn't nearly so dangerous as knowing about a leper. Suttor killed a doctor because he made a test like this one. I suppose Sutton would have had to kill anyone else who knew about it—or take the inevitable rap himself." There was a grim smile on Danny's face. "And I suppose, no matter what this test shows, I'm going to give my all to science." He glanced at the menacing gun in Humphreys' hand. Humphreys looked down at the gun too. His brows met over his nose as his eyes met Danny's meaningfully. "Anybody who knows too much is putting himself on the spot."

Humphreys cleared his throat.

Danny turned back to Scotti. "Look, Mr. Scotti. I'll make a deal with you. That girl in there"—his head indicated the room behind Humphreys—"Miss Sutton, she doesn't know anything about your disease—if you've got it. I'll give you an honest, straight test, if you'll give her a break. I know I know too much, and I'm expecting it. But Miss Sutton can't squeal on you."

"I'm not making any deals, Doctor. You got just two minutes and then I want that test."

Danny placed his voice over near the door again and talked fast. "You need somebody to help you hang the murder of Alfred Sutton and Walter Danforth on Rosalie. Sure, one of your boys can take care of that. But remember one thing. If we get a blue test, Humphreys and that other one out there are going to know about it too. You can't kill everybody in the apartment. You can't bump Humphreys, at least until he's done an alibiing job for you. You need him around at least long enough to hang the murders of Sutton and Danforth on Rosalie and then swear he saw her commit suicide."

Al Humphreys was puffing and panting now. He was looking at Scotti with a new light in his deep-set brutal eyes. Danny went on hurriedly: "And that's going to be tough for the police to believe if this place is littered up with three, maybe five bodies, if you count your two men."

"Shut up," Scotti barked. "Get going, and I mean right now!"

"You don't dare trust them out of this apartment, Scotti. Any of them! Leprosy isn't like murder. You can turn state's evidence on leprosy and make a deal with the D.A. without signing yourself up as an accomplice. Oh no, the guy with the leprosy takes the rap alone."

Danny went stiffly to the refrigerator and

snapped open the door. The liquid in the two glasses was pink, like rose petals. He walked carefully to the sink and took one of the saucepans from the stove. His time was running out—fast. He'd missed, somehow. It had been too big a chance. Too much had had to be just right.

"You'd better come over here," he said over his shoulder. "I want you to see this clearly and unmistakably. I'm going to make my last job a good one."

Scotti was leaning against the linoleumed drainboard; his dark face had an olive cast. "Wait a minute, Doctor."

Danny felt Humphreys stiffen beside him. "This test is a lot of bull; it don't mean a thing. Just pour that stuff out," Scotti commanded harshly. "I don't want any test!" Scotti's voice was actually wavering. And he was talking past Danny to Humphreys. "How do I know this isn't just something you framed up here? You can say I got the stuff just to get even with me."

"You've got my own test to compare with yours!" Danny argued.

"I wouldn't believe a word you said," Scotti shouted, but before Scotti could go on Al Humphreys' deep, rumbling voice shook across the tile walls at him. "Better let him go ahead, boss. You wanted to know, didn't you?" Humphreys moved the revolver idly in his hand. "And I'm kinda anxious now to see how the test shows you up!"

"Don't get any big ideas, Al. I'm still running this," Scotti said furiously.

"Sure you are, boss." Al's voice had lost that note of servility which had marked it. It had firmness and it came from behind the only .44 in the room, which gave it a certain authority. "But you'd better let the doc finish the job." Humphreys chuckled a little at the novelty of his own defiance. Obviously he was finding it a new and gratifying experience. But there was no humor in the chuckle and no mirth in his question. "You got buck fever, boss?"

"Watch your step, Al." Scotti's voice was authority speaking, darkly angry and imperious, but Al's flattened ears seemed deaf to the implied threat.

"I still say"—Al moved the gun gently to and fro again, as if to call attention to it—"I still say you've gone this far and you ought to let the doc finish."

SCOTTI'S face twisted into an even grimmer scowl. Al motioned to Danny. "Okay, Doctor. Shoot the works."

"But it's still too soon," Danny protested. "Wasted too much time here now. Get going!"

Scotti was livid as he spoke; his lower

[Turn page]

GET INTO RADIO TELEVISION ELECTRONICS NOW!



INTERESTING JOBS — GOOD PAY — EARN WHILE YOU LEARN — A BUSINESS OF YOUR OWN. are just a few of the opportunities awaiting you as a Trained National Radio, Television and Electronic Expert. Broadcasting, Radio Service, and other specialized phases are constantly demanding more and more trained men. Get all the facts about this GREAT FIELD. ACT AT ONCE!

SHOP METHOD HOME TRAINING
By a Real Established Resident Trade School With Classrooms, FM Studios, Shops and Laboratories gives you the knowledge, skill, and experience that assure definite progress — step-by-step for a brighter, more prosperous future. You Learn by Doing. Build a standard LONG DISTANCE SUPERHETERODYNE RECEIVER as shown above, an audio oscillator, a signal generator (low powered Radio transmitter) and many other units and experiments with equipment furnished you in your home. National Graduates everywhere have qualified, through spare time study for well-paying jobs, success and security in Radio. It is a field with a proved future. Find out what this industry offers National Trained Service Engineers, Operators and Technicians. Take the first step to greater success NOW by sending coupon below — TODAY!

NATIONAL SCHOOLS
LOS ANGELES 37, CALIFORNIA

MAIL COUPON

National Schools, Dept. 3-TQ
4000 S. Figueroa Los Angeles 37, Calif.
Mail me sample lesson and book FREE.

Paste on postcard

NAME..... AGE.....
ADDRESS.....
CITY..... ZONE..... STATE.....
 Check here if Veteran of World War II

INVENTORS

Detailed information on how to secure patent protection for your invention will be mailed promptly upon request.
Victor J. Evans & Co., Merlin M. Evans, Registered Patent Attorney,
207-C Merlino Bldg., Washington 6, D. C.

FREE ENLARGEMENT of your Favorite Photo



FROM FAMOUS HOLLYWOOD FILM STUDIOS
Just to get acquainted we will make a beautiful 5x7 enlargement of any picture or negative. Be sure to include color of hair, eyes and clothing and get our bargain offer for having your enlargements beautifully hand colored in oil and mounted in your choice of handsome frames. Limit 2 to a customer. Please enclose 10c to cover cost of handling and mailing each enlargement. Your original picture or negative will be returned with the FREE 5x7 enlargement postpaid. An actual offer limited to U.S.A.

HOLLYWOOD FILM STUDIOS
7021 Santa Monica Blvd., Dept. 227, Hollywood, Calif.

RUPTURED?

Get Relief This Proven Way

Why try to worry along with trusses that gouge your flesh—press heavily on hips and spine—enlarge opening—fail to hold rupture? You need the Cluthe. No leg-straps or cutting belts. Automatic adjustable pad holds at real opening—follows every body movement with instant increased support in case of strain. Cannot slip whether at work or play. Light. Waterproof. Can be worn in bath. Send for amazing FREE book, "Advice To Ruptured," and details of liberal TRUEH 60-day trial offer. Also endorsements from grateful users in your neighborhood. Write:

Cluthe Sons, Dept. 33, Bloomfield, New Jersey

GUM GRIPPER

Tightens FALSE TEETH or NO COST



Lasts from 3 to 6 Months!
New discovery makes loose dental plates fit snug and comfortable for months—almost like having your own teeth again. For uppers and lowers.

Easy to Apply at Home... Simply squeeze some "GUM GRIPPER" evenly on your denture, put plate in your mouth where it sets and hardens in few minutes. No heat—no fuse—no mass. Will not harm any denture.

SEND NO MONEY...
Order a tube today, for only \$1.00 (deposit with your own postman). Each application of "GUM GRIPPER" guaranteed to last from 3 to 6 months and delight you completely or your money will be cheerfully refunded.

GUM GRIPPER, INC.
127 N. Dearborn St., Dept. 50T, Chicago 12, Ill.

"How to Make Money With Simple Cartoons"

A book everyone who likes to draw should have. It is free; no obligations. Simply address

CARTOONISTS' EXCHANGE
Dept. 73 Pleasant Hill, Ohio

THOUGHTS HAVE WINGS

YOU CAN influence others with your thinking! Learn to impress others favorably—*get across your ideas*. Let the Rosicrucians show you how to use the power of mind. For free book write Scribe W. W. S. The ROSICRUCIANS (AMORC) San Jose, California



TOOTHACHE?

DU TO CAVITY

GET QUICK AMAZING RELIEF by placing Dent's Tooth Gum—or Drops—in cavity of aching tooth. Cavity toothache frequently strikes when you can't see dentist. Be prepared! Ask your druggist for either complete aid package. Follow directions.

DENT'S TOOTH GUM **25¢**
TOOTH DROPS

LEG SUFFERERS

Why continue to suffer without attempting to do something? Write today for New Booklet—"THE LIEPE METHODS FOR HOME USE." It tells about Varicose Ucers and Open Leg Sores. Liepe Methods used *while you walk*. More than 40 years of success. Praised and endorsed by multitudes.

FREE BOOKLET

LIEPE METHODS, 3284 N. Green Bay Ave., Dept. C-40, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

GOOD MONEY FOR YOUR SPARE TIME

Be our Dealer in your locality for **STRONG UNION MADE WORK AND SPORT GARMENTS**. No experience necessary. Easy work. Millions of workers buy work uniforms. We supply everything needed. Write immediately for FREE Outfit.

ROBT. STRONG GARMENT CO., 319-337 W. Van Buren St., Dept. K-3, Chicago, Ill.

jaw jutted far forward. "Look here, Al—you're getting too big for your britches. I've changed my mind. I don't want a test."

Humphreys cocked his head to one side and wagged the revolver. "Well—I do!" His eyes hit against Scotti's steelily with an impact you could almost hear. "And I want it right now!"

Scotti took a step toward Humphreys. He stopped dead as the revolver turned in a slow arc and was trained at his chest. Danny took a deep breath. He'd never heard a room so silent. The moments crept by like snails. He couldn't stall like this forever. He lifted the chilled pink glass and the still-scalding hot pan. He held them up toward the light and slowly tipped the pan. The clear steaming liquid got closer to the pouring lip. Don't hurry, Danny, he counseled himself. Eternity is a long time, and it's coming closer every second. Your one chance to get us out of here has failed.

A shot crashed from the living room. Humphreys whirled, and his revolver spat smoke with the same motion. Scotti's movement was as quick as Al's, but even though he spun toward the door with catlike quickness, Danny moved more rapidly. Danny swung around and with a single short motion dashed the hot liquid into Scotti's face.

Before Scotti's hand could get up to protect his eyes, before Danny could leap at Scotti and crush him to the floor, another sharp shot from the living room slowly crumpled Al Humphreys in the doorway. A wide blue coat, a visored cap appeared in the opening instantly. Danny hadn't time to struggle with Scotti before large Irish hands were pulling at them both.

Danny looked up at Mike's big red face and beyond it to the huge bulk of Sergeant Myers. He panted: "Glad to see you, boys."

He stepped over Humphreys' body and entered the living room. A figure in a white duck coat knelt before Marian.

"Nice going, Petey."

Pete looked up and grinned. "You're a little on the sharp side yourself, Dr. Dan." Peter turned solicitously back to Marian. As Danny knelt beside Pete, Pete's wide shoulders seemed to bar him from any active place in the scene. Pete's voice was casual. "She'll be okay. Maybe a little concussion, but hell, Love cures anything." He nodded confidently. "I'll bring her along all right. . . ."

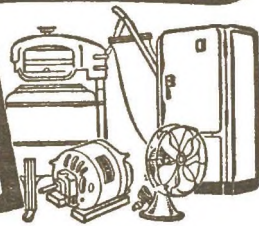
Danny gave Pete a shove that sent him sprawling. "I'm the doctor around here," he said. "Hey, Mike! Get me a glass of water, will you?"

The sergeant was standing behind Danny now. Three other officers were busy with Scotti's second man and in controlling Scotti,



HERE'S A NEW AND VITAL BUSINESS!

LEARN ELECTRICAL APPLIANCE REPAIRING



Offers Big Money — Independence

If you are mechanically inclined—can hold and use tools it will pay you to learn electrical appliance repairing. Operate from your garage, basement, etc. Work as many hours as you wish—the appliance repairman is his own boss. On many types of repairs it is usual for a repairman to charge on the basis of \$5.00 to \$6.00 an hour!

No Previous Experience Needed

Profusely illustrated our new course shows you in simple, easy to understand language plus drawings and photographs, how to make each repair on refrigerators, vacuum cleaners, washing machines, motors, fans, irons, etc., etc. Explains and gives you a working knowledge of electricity, welding, nickel plating, etc. Shows you how to build the power tools you need and how to solicit and keep business coming to you. Not a theory course but an honest to goodness practical course written by and used by repairmen the country over. Price of course is so low that the savings on your own household appliances will pay for it. Act now! Send today for FREE literature. Christy Supply Co., 2835 N. Central Ave., Dept. D-2304, Chicago 34, Illinois.

Amazing New KLIK-RITE

BALL PEN

GUARANTEED to Write for Years Without Refilling Name in 23K Gold FREE

A real BALL PEN! Works and performs exactly like highest-priced pens—PLUS amazing new "click-it-to-write" . . . "click-it-to-park-it" feature—PLUS your name in 23K gold—all for only \$2.98! Writes dry with water-proof ink—no blotter needed. Cannot leak. Writes anywhere . . . even under water. One piece—no cap to fuss with or lose. Touch the button on top & ball point "clicks" out to write. Another touch and the point "clicks" back into the barrel. A slim streamlined beauty—lightweight . . . **COMPACT!** Factory guaranteed. Comes in attractive GIFT BOX.



Only \$2.98

Send No Money!

Place order today. PRINT NAME to be stamped in 23K Gold. Pay postman only \$2.98 plus few cents postage on delivery. Or send \$2.98 with order and save postage. If you are not delighted, return pen within 10 days for your money back. Order today!

KLIK-RITE PEN CO., Dept. C-71
215 W. Ontario Street, Chicago 10, Ill.

CONFIDENTIAL LOAN SERVICE

Borrow \$50 to \$300

Need money? No matter where you live you can borrow **BY MAIL** \$50.00 to \$300.00 this easy quick confidential way.

BY MAIL

IT IS EASY TO BORROW BY MAIL!
Completely confidential and private **CONVENIENT MONTHLY PAYMENTS**

NO ENDORSERS NEEDED
EMPLOYED MEN and women of good character can solve their money problems quickly and in privacy with loans **MADE BY MAIL.** No endorsers or co-signers. We do not contact employers, friends or relatives. Convenient monthly payments. Send us your name and address and we will mail application blank and complete details **FREE** in plain envelope. There is no obligation.

STATE FINANCE CO.
303 Marine Bldg. • Dept. G-82 • New Orleans 12, La.

ti. Then, as an afterthought, I ordered a walloping big lot of nitroglycerin."

PETE laughed. "That druggist over on Division Street thinks you're an anarchist."

"The guy's right," grumbled the sergeant. He spun darkly on Pete. "Maybe you'll tell me what this is all about?"

"Sure," said Pete. "Y'see, earlier this afternoon. Danny got in a rash over Miss Sutton here. She was going to call him at the hospital and he couldn't be there, so he called and asked me to take any calls for him."

"Yah?"
"Well, I put through the request to Miss Larkin. So when Danny got trapped up here he wrote a prescription that'd blow up the city hall. The druggist called the County Hospital to get a report on this crazy Dr. Michaels, and I got the call. I realized it was an S.O.S. Dan'd told me enough about this apartment here so that when I found out the drugstore was on Division Street I figured this was where he'd be."

"Great deduction," said Danny. "And then what happened?"

Pete went on happily: "I told the druggist to deliver the benzidine and peroxide and tell the customer they were out of glonoin at the moment. Then I busted out of O.B. in such a hurry that I scared the babies outa a couple of Italian dames who weren't due for two days. I got the sergeant just when he had the pillow tucked into his front and his Santa Claus whiskers nicely adjusted. Anyway, Dr. Elliot is no doubt awaiting me back at the hospital with an ax; that'll take explaining, Danny, and you're my man."

The sergeant broke in again: "Come out of the clouds, you two. You mean you tested Tony Scotti? Does he have leprosy?"

"I really don't know, Sergeant." Danny glanced over his shoulder. Across the room, Scotti, securely held by four strong arms, was glowering. "I wasn't testing for leprosy."

"I ought to have known—you—" Scotti's voice strangled as he struggled to free himself.

"Take it easy there, Scotti." Sergeant Myers' voice was offhand, and then he turned back to Danny. "Go on."

Pete laughed admiringly. "You were testing with benzidine and peroxide!"

"Sure."
"And what does that mean?" The sergeant's bewildered impatience was wearing thin.

"It means that it was a pretty doubtful test too. Y'see, I was testing for human blood."

Pete glanced at Scotti's wildly glowing face. "And even so it was fifty-fifty whether there'd be a positive result."

who was struggling to free himself. "Okay, Danny. Suppose you start talking."

Danny propped a pillow gently under Marian's head. Her eyes fluttered open and her lips moved with a faint smile. Danny placed his fingers gently over her lips. "You'll be okay, Marian. Just lie quietly and try to rest." Then he took her hand and looked up at the sergeant.

"Not much to it, Sarge. Miss Sutton discovered that Mrs. Scotti was the mysterious Mrs. Sorenson you were looking for. She came here to get proof. I'd just gleaned the same information from Mrs. Scotti myself. Well, Mrs. Scotti showed up too. She came in the back entrance, I suppose, and up the service elevator, and she had a key to the room, the same key she'd had when she lived here with Sorenson. She knocked Miss Sutton out with a brass standard lamp as she came in the door. Then I stumbled in and so did Scotti and his two men, who'd been following Mrs. Scotti."

The sergeant seemed, for the first time to notice the pink quilted blanket. He lifted it and peered beneath. The air rushed out of his lungs in an inaudible profanity. As the blanket settled back about the heavily curved body the familiar scent of perfume wafted out around Danny.

"Scotti shot her because she hadn't been a good girl. He was pretty burned that she'd lived with Sutton and then killed him. And that she'd also killed Danforth to keep him quiet. And Scotti would have killed her again if he could when I told him she might have brought leprosy home to him."

"And that," mused Pete. "is how you delayed the final curtain for the big blowup?"

"Yes. I sold Scotti on a de-luxe treatment." He glanced up at Pete and gave him a wink. "You know, Dr. Sleach, it's a rather good thing you were on the job this evening. Not that I wouldn't have been okay without your help. But it did hurry things."

"Damn it!" the sergeant bellowed. "You can't get the whole damned department in an uproar on Christmas Eve, with the orphans' party just an hour away, and not come to the point! How the hell did you get that message out of here?"

"It was simple. I ordered the drugs for a test."

"A test? What test?"

"A test for leprosy. I laughingly told Scot-

[Turn page]

America's Most Entertaining Picture Magazine

SEE

NOW ON SALE—ONLY 10c AT ALL STANDS!

NEW HOSPITAL AND SURGICAL POLICY

Protects Whole Family

Costs Only 3¢ a Day for Adults
Only 1½¢ a Day for Children

IT'S HERE! The new Family Hospital and Surgical Expense Policy that insures the whole family—mother, father, children, anyone now in good health, age 3 months to 65 years. Provides Cash to help pay hospital room and board for as many as 90 days in any one year for EACH and EVERY person insured; EXTRA benefits for medicines, laboratory fees, other hospital charges; ALSO doctor's operating fee; CASH to help pay hospital and surgical bills for sicknesses, accidents, operations and many other disabilities not covered by other policies—and even special hospital benefits for childbirth. You select your own doctor and hospital. This low-cost Family Hospital and Surgical Policy issued at a special family rates by strong company with over \$3,000,000.00 surplus for policyholders' protection. Investigate! Send no money, but mail coupon below quick for 10-Day Trial Offer. No obligation. Act now!

STERLING INSURANCE CO.

N4651 STERLING BLDG., CHICAGO 11, ILL.

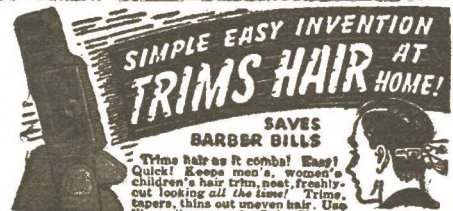
Send me 10-Day Trial Offer of LOW-COST Hospital and Surgical Family Plan.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____



No experience required. Fine for legs, underarms! **SAMPLES FOR AGENTS** Sample offer best in- mediately to all who send name at once. A penny postal will do. **SEND NO MONEY. Just your name.** CHRYSE CO., 1476 Bar St., ANSON, OHIO

If Ruptured Try This Out

Modern Protection Provides Great Comfort and Holding Security Without Torturous Truss Wearing

An "eye-opening" revelation in sensible and comfortable readable rupture protection may be yours for the asking, without cost or obligation. Simply send name and address to William S. Rice, Inc., Dept. 1-B, Adams, N. Y., and full details of the new and different Rice Method will be sent you Free. Without hard flesh-gouging pads or tormenting pressure, here's a Support that has brought joy and comfort to thousands—by releasing them from Trusses with springs and straps that bind and cut. Designed to securely hold a rupture up and in where it belongs and yet give freedom of body and genuine comfort. For full information

111—write today!

DANNY and Pete rode back in the ambulance with Marian. The sergeant twisted around from the front seat to pepper questions at Danny.

As they crossed the Dearborn Street bridge the sergeant scratched his head thoughtfully. "Yeah, I guess that all ties in. The guy who was killed instead of Sutton up in Hubbard Woods was the doc who knew Sutton had leprosy."

Danny nodded and looked down to Marian fondly. As he ran his hand gently across her forehead her lips moved faintly.

"Danny." He nodded her on, leaning closer. Deep concern was clouding the clear blue of her eyes. "Danny, if Father had that—awful disease, then Mother—"

For the first time he realized how thoughtlessly he'd been babbling. "Look, Marian. Leprosy, for all its terrible features, is still one of the less communicable diseases. It's dangerous enough that I thought your mother should have the test; she did. The reaction was negative. There isn't a chance you could have it." He wagged his head with self-reproach. "I was just laying it on for Scotti's benefit. It was the best way of stalling I could dream up, and for a while it appeared that the best might be none too good." Her eyes still searched his soberly, so he nodded at Pete. "If you don't believe me, ask Dr. Sleach here."

Pete grunted amiably. "He's an awful quack, Marian, but this time I've got to admit he's one hundred per cent on the button."

She gave Pete a faint, grateful smile, and then she closed her eyes with relief. Pete grunted his disapproval.

The sergeant let out a sudden bellow. A stubby finger pointed at a jewelry-store clock as it whished by. "Jeez! Seven-thirty! Holy—!" He turned to the driver frantically. "Step on it, Johnny! I got to be at that orphan party in just— Oh, my God!"

Johnny nodded and took a corner on two wheels. The Sergeant peered over his shoulder. "Going to be Santa Claus," he said proudly. "Over two hundred homeless orphans." He adjusted the big loose knot in his tie. "Never do to have the kids thinking there's no Santa Claus. . . ."

Marian's hand crept out from beneath the heavy Army blanket and closed over Danny's. The little wrinkles appeared over her nose as she smiled across at the sergeant. "It'd never do at all, Sergeant," she said, "because, there certainly is!"

**Next Issue: DEATH'S OLD SWEET SONG,
Novel by JONATHAN STAGGE**

NEW SECURITY PLAN PAYS HOSPITAL

& DOCTOR BILLS . . .

Costs only 3¢ a day!



**PROTECTS YOU
IN CASE OF
SICKNESS
OR ACCIDENT**

INDIVIDUAL or FAMILY

Insure NOW, before it's too late! Protect your savings against Hospital expense. Here's an amazing offer of safe, dependable coverage under America's most popular Hospitalization Plan. Family or Individual eligible. No Medical Examination. When sickness or accident strikes, you may go to any Hospital in U. S. or Canada under any Doctor's care. **YOUR EXPENSES WILL BE PAID** exactly as Policy specifies. Many exceptional coverages included. The Company is under supervision of the Insurance Dept. No agents will call.

CASH BENEFITS INCLUDE

- Hospital Room & Board Sickness or Accident Per Day Up to **\$6.00**
- Doctor Visits In Case of Accident Per Visit **\$3.00**
- Surgical Operations Up to **\$150.00**
- Time Lost from Work in Case of Accident Per Week **\$25.00**
- Accidental Death Up to **\$2000.00**
- Physical Disbursement. Up to **\$2000.00**

MAIL COUPON AT ONCE!

NORTH AMERICAN MUTUAL INSURANCE CO.
Dept. TG7-3, Wilmington, Del.

Please send me, without obligation, details about your "3c A Day Hospitalization Insurance Plan"

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

THANK GOD FOR THE ATOM-BOMB

IT IS THE FIRST SCIENTIFIC
PROOF OF THE EXISTENCE OF
THE RADIO-ACTIVE, ATOMIC POWER
OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD IN US.
WE TOO ARE COMPOSED OF ATOMS.

• •
"I TALKED WITH GOD"

AND

POWER · POWER · POWER

DIRECT FROM THE SPIRIT OF GOD
CAME INTO MY LIFE

• • •
IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO KNOW HOW THE POWER OF GOD CAN
COME INTO YOUR LIFE, SEND US YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS AND WE

WILL MAIL YOU **FREE** PARTICULARS

"PSYCHIANA" Dept. 10

MOSCOW IDAHO

Copyright 1946 F. B. Robinson