

Mystery of the NUDE NYMPH

UNCENSORED

DECEMBER
15 CENTS

DETECTIVE



Unholy Crime of the **CHEATING LOVERS**



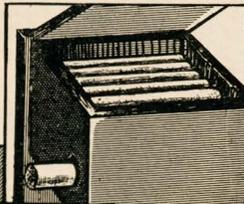
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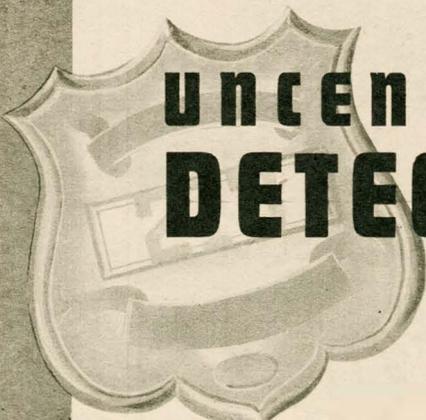
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UNCENSORED DETECTIVE

VOL. 2, NO. 6
DECEMBER, 1946

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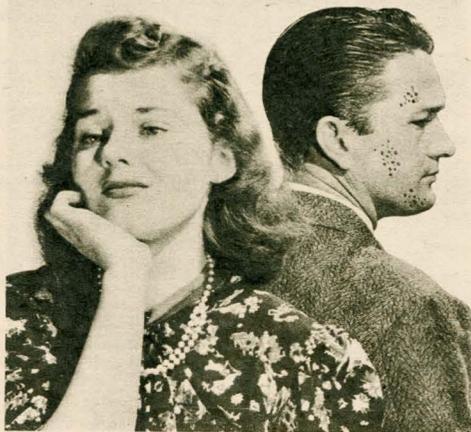
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IT HAS HAPPENED HERE



LOSERS

Deputy Sheriffs shown in a cell of the McMinn County jail after surrendering the battle and the election to the vets.

RECENTLY a group of angered ex-servicemen banded together under the leadership of a politically ambitious ex-Navy officer, and used armed force to overpower the local officials of Athens, Tenn., and make them political prisoners.

The purpose of the revolt was to insure a fair tabulation of the votes cast in an election in which ex-G.I. candidates ran for offices.

When world-travelled Athens boys returned home from service they became increasingly aware of the inadequacies of their local administration. They found it sadly lacking in comparison to others they had observed around the country. So, full of ambition, and the will to right the wrongs in their own backyard as they had just done all over the world, they formed a G. I. Independent Party. They selected their candidates from the town's veterans, and entered the state elections. They decided to offer some competition to the well-entrenched political machine headed by State Senator Paul Cantrell.

The Independents carried on a serious campaign and won over many of the machine's followers with their platform for clean, progressive government. The political machine soon found the veterans a real threat to their continuance in power and felt the very foundations of their organization beginning to waver.

Election day arrived and the desperate officials realized that unless drastic action was taken, their long coveted political spoils were lost. The sheriff and his loyal deputies seized the ballot boxes and secreted them in the McMinn County jail for "safekeeping and impartial counting." The G. I. Independents felt the integrity of the custodians of the ballot boxes was not all it should be, and decided in an equally drastic counter measure was necessary.

A call to arms was raised over the countryside. It was not long

before the town's vets and their local supporters roared into the village in every conceivable conveyance. Armed with shot guns, rifles and war souvenirs they were hastily formed into platoons under ex-officers and noncoms.

"War Plans" were conceived and executed, and the Battle of the Ballot Boxes had begun. The local officials barricaded themselves in the jail house to withstand the siege. The attackers used all the tactics of street fighting and jungle warfare that until recently had been part of their occupation. A steady stream of lead was poured into the jail house while demolition experts using pill box breaking techniques exploded several charges of dynamite in an effort to flush their enemy out into the open. This proved to be more than the sheriff and his men had anticipated, after twenty persons had been wounded, they waved the traditional white flag and ended the six hour battle. They marched out of the jail with hands in the air and conceded the election.

Despite the noble purpose for which these veterans rioted and threw the corrupt politicians out of office, legally they are guilty of leading an insurrection. The formation of an armed mob, and inciting it to rebel against legally constituted authority, is a threat to our democratic principles and the security of our government, regardless of whether the group is composed of veterans, farmers, laborites, etc.

There are too many un-American groups at work in our midst today breeding confusion and unrest among our citizens. They hope to provoke open revolution against our government, and the success of the Tennessee riot gives added impetus to their cause.

The failure to prosecute and punish the perpetrators of this riot gives



WINNERS

Ex G.I.s and supporters waiting for orders during the six hour siege caused by opposing party stealing ballot boxes.

confidence to the leaders of these un-American groups. They feel a precedent for immunity has already been established, and should their coup fail, they would not be punished either.

It is easy to incite a certain dissatisfied fringe of our population to revolt, under the guise of "cleaning out the grafters," or some other seemingly worthy crusade. However once the first shot has been fired, the first martyr hanged, or even the first store window broken, a fearful toll of innocent victims are doomed before law and order can be restored.

MOB psychology is an intricate frightening phenomenon. A mob is unthinking, it is easily intoxicated with its own power, and lacks reason. The individuals that constitute its strength may each be peaceful law abiding citizens, but once banded together and aroused to action, they are capable of the most hideous crimes. None of which, any one member would have committed on his own. There is a feeling of security, and "we're all in this together," which is akin to the adage "misery loves company," that permeates the group.

We have seen recently in Europe and the Far East how well-planned mob psychology can throw whole nations into a senseless suicidal war because unscrupulous jingoists play cleverly on the prejudices and desires of their fellow countrymen.

It is easy to sit back and say, "it can't happen here in the U. S.," but it can happen here, and has happened on a small scale in Athens, Tenn. The American people cannot be apathetic to this danger and must take a firm stand now.

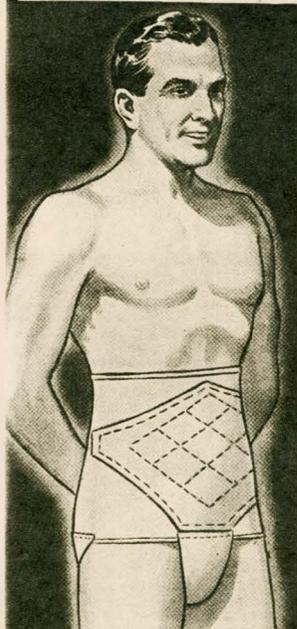
Let every would-be Fuehrer and Commissar know, that this country, and we its citizens, will not tolerate any form of revolution on our land. Too much blood has been already shed to keep the Bill of Rights from becoming just another scrap of paper.

By JEROME JAMES

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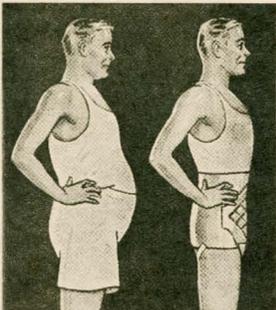
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 P. N.
 Fort Knox, Ky.

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 SIZES 28 to 47
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FAITHLESS WIFE

Grace Smith, plotted her spouse's death and misled the investigating officials.

DRESSED in a low-cut nightgown the slim body of the brown-haired young woman stood silhouetted in the doorway of her home. She was wringing her hands and crying desperately. She seemed unconscious of the cold February night. Patrolmen Walter Norvelle and Guy Rogers hurried up the steps of the eight-room frame cottage located on the out-skirts of Harrisonburg, Virginia.

Swinging the screen door open, she cried, "Oh please, hurry! Something awful has happened."

Inside the house, the two city patrolmen looked around.

"What's wrong, lady?" Rogers asked. "We got the call over the radio to get here as fast as we could."

The woman didn't wait to answer them. She hurried on ahead of the two officers down the hallway to the room on her left. She stopped suddenly, then backed away from the doorway, horrified. She was pointing to the bathroom floor.

"In there," she said. "There is blood all over the room."

A moment later, Rogers and Norvelle were by her side. In the center of the bathroom floor was a large pool of blood. The walls were also splattered with blood.

After surveying the scene for a moment, Rogers looked in the room next door. It was a bedroom, and it was empty. The covers of the bed were turned back as if someone had been preparing to retire for the night. Rogers noticed the two pillows. He turned back to the woman, huddling in one corner of the hallway.

"Where is your husband?" he asked. "He went down to watch the fire at the United Brethren Parsonage and he hasn't come home yet."

Rogers frowned. "Are you sure?" "No, but I think so. I have been out walking with my girl friend. When I came back I was so tired that I fell on the bed and rested for a few minutes before getting ready for bed. I had an idea Frank had met

VETERAN

Frank Smith's returning home from the army proved to be embarrassing for his wife and her lover. So they killed him.

AN UNWELCOME HUSBAND

Unholy Crime of the CHEATING LOVERS

By HARLAN MENDENHALL



AMERICAN LEGION
buddy made funeral arrangements for
victim; police learned he was killer.

some of his old friends and would be home later. I put on my nightgown, then went to the bathroom to wash my face. The light was off in the bathroom. When I turned it on, I saw the blood and called the police.

Rogers glanced at his watch. It was 10:30 P.M. He said to the woman, "About what time did you get home?"

"About 15 or 20 minutes ago."

"And when did you leave here?"

"About 7:30 or a few minutes later."

"No one was around when you came back home?" Rogers asked.

"No, sir."

"We better have a look around," Rogers said.

The young woman, realizing suddenly that she had on only her nightgown, rushed into the bedroom and slipped into a robe. Then she followed the officers.

Rogers and Norvelle went from room to room until they came to the kitchen. On top of the kitchen table were two half-empty pint bottles of gin.

Rogers said, "Did you have a party here tonight?"

The young woman shook her head. "Not a party. One of my girl friends came over to dinner tonight. We had a few drinks, that's all."

Rogers pointed to a door at one side of the kitchen. "Where does that lead?" he asked.

"To the basement."

"Have you looked down there yet?"

The young woman shook her head vigorously. "No, sir. I was afraid to."

Rogers nodded to Norvelle, and the two officers started down the stairs.

The basement was small. The first things the officers saw as they reached the bottom of the stairs were two large tubs and a washing machine. Just ahead of them were a couple of chairs. On the bottom step, Patrolman Rogers stopped suddenly. He was staring at something in the dim light just at the right of the stairs. Without turning around to face Patrolman Norvelle, he stepped up close

and said, "My God look over there!"

Barely visible in the dim light coming through the kitchen door above was the bloody body of an underwearing-clad man. Around his neck was a rope. The rope was tied to a large beam across the top of the basement.

"Maybe he's not dead yet," Norvelle said quickly.

Rogers nodded. He hurried to the man's side, felt for the pulse.

"Dead all right," Rogers said, "but his body's still warm. We'd better get the Chief down here fast."

Rogers and Norvelle started back up the basement steps. Standing, silhouetted against the kitchen light was the young woman.

"What . . . what did you find?" she asked.

"Better prepare yourself for a shock, lady," Rogers was making it as easy as he knew how. "There's a dead man downstairs, hanging from a rope. You better come down and have a look at him, maybe you can tell us who he is. Looks to us like murder."

The woman screamed. She flung her hands across her face and slumped to the floor, sobbing bitterly. Rogers hurried up the stairs and half carried the woman to a chair. Norvelle got a glass of water.

While Rogers was trying to revive her, Norvelle telephoned Chief of Police William J. Kean, asked him to come immediately to the home at 60 North Willow Street.

BY THE time Norvelle had completed his call, the woman said she would go to the basement to try to identify the body. Rogers and Norvelle supported her as she walked down stairs. Rogers turned his flashlight on the face of the dead man.

The woman grabbed Rogers' arm and squeezed tightly. Her screams shook the walls of the house. "No . . . No . . . Oh! My God . . . it's Frank!" The woman collapsed.

Rogers and Norvelle carried her back upstairs and placed her on the bed. In the medicine cabinet in the bathroom, Rogers found a small bottle of ammonia. A few moments later they had revived the woman. Rogers started asking her the routine questions.

She said her name was Mrs. Grace Smith. Her husband had been discharged from the Armed Forces on December 31, 1944, because of his age. 39. On January 15, 1945, he had gone back to work on his old job at the Rockingham Motor Company in Harrisonburg. Mrs. Smith, about 35 years old, said she was a secretary in an insurance firm, in Harrisonburg.

But Rogers was far more interested in what had gone on in the Smith home that night of February 20, 1945.

"I got off work at 4 o'clock," she said. Her words were slow, measured. "My friend, Mrs. Dorothy Bell, came home with me for dinner. On the road home we stopped at the ABC Liquor

IS "REMOVED" SO THAT HIS WIFE'S ILLICIT ROMANCE CAN CONTINUE UNINTERRUPTED



POLICE CHIEF

William Kean, examining hammer found in basement where body was found.

Store and got two pints of gin. As soon as we got home we started preparing dinner. Frank arrived about 6:15 or 6:30. Dinner was all ready, so he cleaned up and we started eating."

Mrs. Smith twisted nervously at the small handkerchief in her hands. "About 7:30, just after we had dinner, we heard the fire sirens not far from our home. Frank telephoned and found out the fire was at the United Brethren Parsonage. Frank said he was going down there and watch it for a while.

"A few minutes after Frank had gone I saw the ambulance pull up across the street at our neighbor's home. I went over to see what was wrong. I found out that there was a death in the neighbor's home." Grace Smith cleared her throat.

"There was so much confusion around there for a while that I don't remember what did happen, but some-

time later Dorothy's boy friend came by the house. We talked for a while, then all of us started to Dorothy's home. Down by the park we stopped and talked for a while. I don't remember just how long. Then I came back home. I was very tired and went immediately to my bedroom. I laid down for a while to rest. Frank didn't seem to be around and I had an idea that he had probably met some of his old buddies and was probably drinking beer and talking.

"It was about 10:30 when I went into the bathroom to wash and get ready for bed. When I turned the light on, I found that pool of blood on the floor and blood splattered all over the walls. I was so scared I didn't know what to do. I called you just as fast as I could."

"You didn't see Frank at all after you came back from your walk?"

Mrs. Smith nodded. "That's right." Patrolman Rogers got up from the chair on which he had been sitting. He walked back and forth across the floor. "Mrs. Smith," he said suddenly, "Do you have any idea who killed your husband?"

"No," she said slowly. The front door bell started ringing. It was Police Chief Kean and Officer G. W. Joseph. Rogers quickly told them what had happened. He took them to the bathroom, then to the basement. The officers were still examining the body when County Coroner F. L. Byers arrived.

Joseph made pictures of the body. Byers said Smith had been dead about an hour, then he removed the body to a funeral home to complete his examination.

Kean looked the basement over carefully. Underneath a wash tub there, he found a small claw hammer. It was covered with blood.

"I have a hunch," Kean said, "that this little hammer knows a lot of things. Too bad it can't talk. Who knows—maybe it can."

The Chief handed it to Officer Joseph and told him to make sure that no fingerprints were destroyed.

On the way back upstairs, Kean examined the bloodstains on the steps. There was more blood at the top of the stairs in the doorway that led into the kitchen, and another pool in the kitchen near the sink.

Kean said, "Some fight, huh?" "But why hang him?" Joseph asked. "Probably tried to make it look like a suicide."

"With blood all over the house?" "The killer probably intended to clean it up before he left. But someone surprised him and he didn't get to finish the job."

Kean telephoned Dorothy Bell, Mrs. Smith's girl friend, told her what had happened and asked her to come to the Smith home as soon as possible to remain with Mrs. Smith.

After that, Kean sent Rogers, Norville and Joseph on a bell-ringing job through the neighborhood to ask if there had been any strangers near the Smith home that cold, February night.

Kean had another talk with Mrs. Smith. She thought it was about 7:45 or perhaps 8 o'clock when she left her home with Dorothy and about 9:45 or 10 when she returned.

That meant that that sometime between 7:45 and 9:45, Frank Smith had entered his house and started getting ready for bed. During that same lapse of time the killer, or killers, had entered the Smith home, killed the veteran and left before Grace Smith returned.

LOCATING this man or men would not be easy. The confusion just across the street from the Smith home, where the neighbor had died, would not help the situation.

As soon as Dorothy Bell arrived a few minutes later, Kean questioned her in the living room. She confirmed what Mrs. Smith had already told him about the dinner and the time when they had left the Smith home. Mrs. Bell was so shocked by the tragedy that she could not think of a possible suspect in the case.

Chief Kean left the two women alone and went outside. Across the street there was still a large crowd. So far no one there had any idea that a murder had been committed at 60 North Willow.

The driveway leading from the street to the Smith home was graveled. No chance to find any tire tracks there. Kean walked on around the cottage checking with his flashlight for footprints but found none.

Apparently the killer had walked into the home through the front or rear entrance, and waited until he saw Smith and the others leave the house. Or maybe he had waited until Smith came home, followed him inside, then killed him.

Kean was standing at the front of the Smith home when Policeman Joseph came hurrying up the sidewalk from the house next door. The woman who lived there, Mrs. M. A. Green, had told Joseph some very interesting things.

Mrs. Green said that she had heard the ambulance drive up across the street and had come out on her front porch to see what was wrong. That

BARDENBURG, VIRGINIA	SHERMAN EQUIPMENT CO.
287-1	SHERMAN VALLEY LIVESTOCK
287-2	SALES INC.
623-W	Smith & O'Neil
623-X	Smith & O'Neil
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BARDENBURG, VIRGINIA

64 Virginia Valley Poultry Co.

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Trusler, Z. T.	623-4	1058-Z
Tullahoma Association	623-5	1059-W
Tullahoma City	623-6	1059-X
Tullahoma Electric	623-7	1059-Y
Tullahoma News	623-8	1059-Z
Tullahoma Post	623-9	1060-W
Tullahoma Star	623-10	1060-X
Tullahoma Times	623-11	1060-Y
Tullahoma Union	623-12	1060-Z
Tullahoma Weekly	623-13	1061-W
Tullahoma Daily	623-14	1061-X
Tullahoma Evening	623-15	1061-Y
Tullahoma Morning	623-16	1061-Z
Tullahoma Night	623-17	1062-W
Tullahoma Noon	623-18	1062-X
Tullahoma Afternoon	623-19	1062-Y
Tullahoma Evening	623-20	1062-Z
Tullahoma Morning	623-21	1063-W
Tullahoma Noon	623-22	1063-X
Tullahoma Afternoon	623-23	1063-Y
Tullahoma Evening	623-24	1063-Z
Tullahoma Morning	623-25	1064-W
Tullahoma Noon	623-26	1064-X
Tullahoma Afternoon	623-27	1064-Y
Tullahoma Evening	623-28	1064-Z
Tullahoma Morning	623-29	1065-W
Tullahoma Noon	623-30	1065-X
Tullahoma Afternoon	623-31	1065-Y
Tullahoma Evening	623-32	1065-Z
Tullahoma Morning	623-33	1066-W
Tullahoma Noon	623-34	1066-X
Tullahoma Afternoon	623-35	1066-Y
Tullahoma Evening	623-36	1066-Z
Tullahoma Morning	623-37	1067-W
Tullahoma Noon	623-38	1067-X
Tullahoma Afternoon	623-39	1067-Y
Tullahoma Evening	623-40	1067-Z
Tullahoma Morning	623-41	1068-W
Tullahoma Noon	623-42	1068-X
Tullahoma Afternoon	623-43	1068-Y
Tullahoma Evening	623-44	1068-Z
Tullahoma Morning	623-45	1069-W
Tullahoma Noon	623-46	1069-X
Tullahoma Afternoon	623-47	1069-Y
Tullahoma Evening	623-48	1069-Z
Tullahoma Morning	623-49	1070-W
Tullahoma Noon	623-50	1070-X
Tullahoma Afternoon	623-51	1070-Y
Tullahoma Evening	623-52	1070-Z
Tullahoma Morning	623-53	1071-W
Tullahoma Noon	623-54	1071-X
Tullahoma Afternoon	623-55	1071-Y
Tullahoma Evening	623-56	1071-Z
Tullahoma Morning	623-57	1072-W
Tullahoma Noon	623-58	1072-X
Tullahoma Afternoon	623-59	1072-Y
Tullahoma Evening	623-60	1072-Z
Tullahoma Morning	623-61	1073-W
Tullahoma Noon	623-62	1073-X
Tullahoma Afternoon	623-63	1073-Y
Tullahoma Evening	623-64	1073-Z
Tullahoma Morning	623-65	1074-W
Tullahoma Noon	623-66	1074-X
Tullahoma Afternoon	623-67	1074-Y
Tullahoma Evening	623-68	1074-Z
Tullahoma Morning	623-69	1075-W
Tullahoma Noon	623-70	1075-X
Tullahoma Afternoon	623-71	1075-Y
Tullahoma Evening	623-72	1075-Z
Tullahoma Morning	623-73	1076-W
Tullahoma Noon	623-74	1076-X
Tullahoma Afternoon	623-75	1076-Y
Tullahoma Evening	623-76	1076-Z
Tullahoma Morning	623-77	1077-W
Tullahoma Noon	623-78	1077-X
Tullahoma Afternoon	623-79	1077-Y
Tullahoma Evening	623-80	1077-Z
Tullahoma Morning	623-81	1078-W
Tullahoma Noon	623-82	1078-X
Tullahoma Afternoon	623-83	1078-Y
Tullahoma Evening	623-84	1078-Z
Tullahoma Morning	623-85	1079-W
Tullahoma Noon	623-86	1079-X
Tullahoma Afternoon	623-87	1079-Y
Tullahoma Evening	623-88	1079-Z
Tullahoma Morning	623-89	1080-W
Tullahoma Noon	623-90	1080-X
Tullahoma Afternoon	623-91	1080-Y
Tullahoma Evening	623-92	1080-Z
Tullahoma Morning	623-93	1081-W
Tullahoma Noon	623-94	1081-X
Tullahoma Afternoon	623-95	1081-Y
Tullahoma Evening	623-96	1081-Z
Tullahoma Morning	623-97	1082-W
Tullahoma Noon	623-98	1082-X
Tullahoma Afternoon	623-99	1082-Y
Tullahoma Evening	623-100	1082-Z

TELEPHONE DIRECTORY
with torn out page found in suitor's home provided FBI men with vital evidence.

SMITH HOME

became a bloody slaughter house when the cheating lovers committed murder.

was about 8 o'clock. While she was standing there, she saw two men drive up in front of the Smith home. Both men got out and went to the front door. One of the men knocked on the door and a moment later they both went inside.

Kean nodded. "Good. Could she give you a description?"

"Just fair. She didn't think she had ever seen them before. They were both about medium size and she guessed their ages to be around 35 or 40. Both men were dressed in dark suits."

"What time did they leave?"

"She didn't see their car drive away, but she said she went back out on her porch again about 10:15 or 10:30 and it was gone then."

"Not much help," Kean said, frowning.

It began to look as if there had been a regular parade to the Smith home the night of the murder when Rogers and Norvelle returned a few minutes later. They had been talking with another neighbor, Mrs. R. B. King, who told the two policemen that she had seen a large black Buick sedan drive to the Smith home about 9 or 9:30. One man got out of the car and went inside the home.

"That's not half the story," Rogers said. "This Mrs. King told me she had seen this same black sedan come to the Smith home many times during the past year, before Frank Smith got back from the Army."

Kean frowned. "Did she have any idea who the man is?"

"No. but she said this was the first time the man had been back to the Smith home since Frank Smith got out of the Army."

"Hmm - interesting!" Kean said, rubbing his chin slowly.

"We'd better have a little talk with this man, if we can locate him!"

Kean handed Officer Joseph the assignment of checking the personnel at the Rockingham Motor Company, where Smith had been employed, and to look for leads there.

Rogers and Norvelle were to find out who Grace Smith's close friends were, chiefly by checking at the insurance company where the woman was employed.

Kean started to return to headquarters with the bloody hammer, but suddenly changed his mind. He went back inside the Smith home, asked Mrs. Smith about the big black sedan.

Mrs. Smith smiled faintly. "Oh, they must have been talking about my brother, O. F. Maxwell. He has a black sedan and he came to see me quite often during the last year. He lives at Fisherville, if you want to talk with him. These gossip neighbors around here probably got the wrong idea."

"Thanks," Kean said. "We were just curious." Then he left, filing the "black sedan" information in the back of his mind.

At headquarters, Kean immediately took the small hammer to his laboratory man to have it tested for fingerprints. But he drew a blank. The killer had evidently used gloves.

Because of the late hour, the officers made little progress checking on the background of Frank Smith and his wife that night. The following morning, however, they were back on the job.



AFTER sleeping on the case, Kean was convinced he was dealing with some pretty smooth operators. And he called in State Trooper E. E. Kiser to assist him.

Kiser suggested they contact all the cleaning establishments in Harrisonburg and the surrounding cities, and ask them to keep an eye out for any bloody clothing brought in for cleaning. Kiser took over this job.

To assist County Coroner Byers on the examination of the dead man's body, Chief Kean called in Dr. J. R. Cash, expert on such matters, from the University of Virginia.

The two doctors, working together on the body, found that the wound over the victim's right eye was in the form of a crescent. The hammer which had been picked up in the basement of the home fitted the shape of the wound exactly. There was another wound above the victim's left eye. It had been made with a smaller instrument, probably the set on a large ring. Smith's skull had not been fractured by the blow from the hammer. The blow had been strong enough only to knock him unconscious.

Smith's death had been caused by strangulation. He had lost between one-half and three-quarters of a pint of blood.

Doctor Cash explained that it would take about ten minutes for Smith to bleed that much from the wound above his right eye.

Kean was sitting at his desk thinking, when Officer Joseph came in from the Rockingham Motor Company with three men about Smith's age. He introduced them to Kean as T. D. Howell, Bob Stillwell and Marvin Taylor. Taylor was a regular employee of the Rockingham Motor Company. The other two men hung around the garage a great deal and were good friends of Taylor's and Frank Smith's. Joseph motioned to Howell and Stillwell. "These two fellows are the ones who visited the Smith home about 7:30 the night of the murder.

They say that they went there to get Frank to join them in a poker game, but found no one at home so left a few minutes later."

Kean eyed the two men. "You walked right into the home when no one answered your knock?"

"That's right," Howell said, taking out a cigarette and lighting it. "You see, Chief, we are very good friends of Frank's and we always walk in after knocking first. Sometimes Frank is down in the basement and doesn't hear us."

"Where did you go after you left the Smith home?"

"To this poker game we were telling you about. We looked around downtown for Frank for a few minutes, and couldn't find him, so we got someone else."

"Would you tell me where this game was held? (Continued on page 56)"

OFFICER

G. Joseph learned from neighbors of wife's frequent male visitors after dark.



A ROUTINE INVESTIGATION OF A PROWLER TURNS INTO A THREE STATE



PLUNGE

Swift flowing Delaware River is shown from point where culprit leaped from bridge after gun battle.

THE week-long rains that had flooded western New Jersey at last subsided and the flat, green countryside resumed its usual serene atmosphere. Sergeant Cornelius A. O'Donnell, affable commander of the Washington Barracks, New Jersey State Police, felt at peace with the world on this quiet Sunday afternoon of July 15th, 1945.

It was shortly after four o'clock when a call came in. To Sergeant O'Donnell it sounded like a fairly routine report. A suspicious character was seen prowling around some chicken houses at Brainards, a small town eight miles west of the police barracks. O'Donnell knew that with the acute meat shortage, poultry and livestock had been disappearing from neighboring farms with alarming regularity. He therefore decided to give the report his personal attention.

Summoning Trooper Frank C. Perry, the sergeant led the way out to their patrol car and in a few moments the two officers were speeding toward Brainards. By skimming along the shorter back roads, they arrived in the town in a matter of minutes and quickly sought out the woman who had complained about the prowler.

"You just missed him," the excited woman told the policemen. "He left a few minutes ago."

"Which way did he go?" Sergeant O'Donnell asked.

The woman pointed to a narrow cinder road. "He headed down that path toward the river," she said. "You may be able to head him off."

Without further delay, the officers nosed their car around and sped down the narrow road to where the winding Delaware River separates Pennsylvania and New Jersey. The cinder road ended abruptly at a railroad trestle which connected the two thickly wooded river banks.

COLD-BLOODED

thug fired at State Troopers when they attempted to arrest him as a prowler.

WIDE MURDER MANHUNT FOR A MAD KILLER



SERGEANT O'Donnell, veteran M. J. State Trooper, who was shot with his own revolver.

Case of the

GUN-CRAZED WIFE KILLER

The patrol car rolled to a stop and the officers alighted in time to see a swarthy-faced, hatless man hurrying across the trestle.

Sergeant O'Donnell called to the man to halt, but instead of complying, the man broke into a run.

"That must be our prowler," the sergeant surmised. "Let's go after him."

The two troopers dashed after their quarry, but by the time they had reached the opposite shore, he had disappeared.

"He must be in the woods," O'Donnell told Perry. "You stay here in the clearing while I try to flush him out."

With that, he cautiously picked his way into the dense brush that flanked the railroad tracks.

O'Donnell had advanced several yards when suddenly the hatless man stepped from behind a tree, brandishing a crude wooden club. The sergeant did not see the blow that crashed down on his head with enough force to send him reeling. As O'Donnell fell to the ground, the as-

salant swooped over, snatched the officer's revolver from its holster, and darted off into the brush.

Stunned from the blow but otherwise uninjured, the sergeant regained his feet and caught a glimpse of the fugitive circling back toward the railroad trestle. O'Donnell quickly rejoined Perry and the two troopers promptly gave chase.

Sprinting up the wooden catwalk of the bridge, the officers were gaining steadily on their quarry, and were almost close enough to nab him with a flying leap.

Then it happened. Without warning the armed prowler whirled around and fired at point-blank range. Two shots rang out in quick succession. Simultaneously, Sergeant O'Donnell clutched his abdomen and slumped down, mortally wounded.

Trooper Perry dropped on one knee to present a smaller target, whipped his own .38 Colt Special into action and returned the fire. The third shot

from the gun-crazed fugitive tore into Perry's chest. Undaunted, the trooper continued blazing away.

The felon staggered once, then dashed abruptly to the edge of the trestle, vaulted the guard-rail and plunged thirty feet into the swirling, rain-swollen river.

Unmindful of the searing pain in his chest, Trooper Perry emptied his gun at the head bobbing along in the swift current, but the churning waters offered little chance for a good shot.

Perry turned then, and with the loss of blood rapidly draining his energy, dropped at the side of the wounded sergeant.

O'Donnell, by this time had slipped into semi-consciousness, and a widening crimson stain had spread across the front of his tunic.

"I . . . I'm done, Frank," he muttered as Perry leaned close. "Make . . . sure . . . they get that man." With that, the courageous sergeant closed his eyes.

At the sound of running feet, Trooper Perry looked up gratefully. Several townsmen, attracted by the shoot-

By WAYNE ROBERTS

ing, were hurrying across the bridge. The first to arrive at the scene of the crime was Frank Dornish, a local innkeeper.

"Go back to the police car," Perry managed to gasp between breaths. "The two-way radio, contact the station for help." That was all the wounded trooper was able to say before he, too, lost consciousness. But it was enough to send Dornish scurrying back to the patrol car.

Detective Fred Bodenstein was on duty at the station when Dornish finally succeeded in establishing contact on the short wave. After hearing the story, Bodenstein immediately swung into action. He dispatched a squad of troopers to the scene, called the Warren hospital for an ambulance, then notified Lieutenant H. A. Cibulla at section headquarters.

"Flash an alarm for all cars to be on the lookout," the lieutenant told Bodenstein. "The thug is probably still armed. I'll notify the Pennsylvania Police and meet you in Brainards in fifteen minutes."

LESS than a quarter of an hour later, squads of officers, heralded by screaming sirens, converged on both sides of the railroad trestle. The Pennsylvania State Police sent most of its force from Easton, while on the New Jersey side, every available man was assigned to the case. Reserves poured in from each station in the section.

Lieutenant Cibulla took charge and

promptly set up field headquarters with the aid of the two-way radio in his patrol car.

Before ambulance attendants removed the two wounded officers, Trooper Perry regained consciousness long enough to talk to Cibulla. He could not explain why a prowler, guilty perhaps of a misdemeanor, should start a gun battle to escape apprehension, but he gave what description he could on the fugitive. He said the man was about thirty years old, of medium build, had dark hair, a swarthy complexion, and unusually long, dangling arms.

The lieutenant briefed his men on these details, and formed search parties of four men each. With drawn guns, the troopers plunged into the dense thicket on both banks of the river. They were determined to avenge the wanton shooting of their two brother officers.

From his two-way radio, Cibulla established contact with the highway patrols and ordered that all highways be cut off from Belvidere, ten miles north of Brainards, to Easton and Phillipsburg, seven miles to the south. Roads east and west of the river were also blocked forming a rough square in which the fugitive, if he had not yet secured transportation, must still be lurking.

This done, Cibulla assigned a task to Detective Bodenstein and Trooper John Gimon. "Examine every foot of the bridge," the lieutenant directed. "In his haste, the thug may have

dropped some bit of evidence that will help the investigation."

When Bodenstein and Gimon reached the center of the 600-foot span, they had something to report. Several dark red stains were splattered on the wooden catwalk.

"I'm sure they're bloodstains," Bodenstein told the lieutenant. "And they haven't been there long, either."

"That clinches what we already suspected," Cibulla replied. "The thug, whoever he is, caught at least one of Perry's bullets. And those stains probably mark the spot where he vaulted the iron railing. Get your portable fingerprint kit to work on that railing, there may be some impressions on it."

While waiting for a report on this angle, Lieutenant Cibulla sent out a request for bloodhounds to aid in the search. If, as Cibulla hoped, the fugitive was still hiding somewhere in the woods, the well-trained dogs might track him down.

He was informed that the nearest station with bloodhounds was the Hawthorne Barracks of the New York State Police. It would take some time to transport the dogs from there.

Impatiently, he again buzzed the highway patrols. Every automobile and truck in the vicinity was being stopped and searched, he was told, but there was no sign of the fugitive. Reports from the men in the woods were equally discouraging.

FRUITLESS hours slipped by, and due to the heavy overcast, darkness settled early, hampering the searching parties. Undeterred, the troopers brought out flashlights and the cone-shaped beams probed the thick under-

MANHUNT

Trooper Carrol, N. J., Cpl. Horton, N. Y., and Pvt. Wentzel, Pa. are shown here with Pinky, famed bloodhound. Officers of three states and dogs took part in search.



brush that lined the banks of the river. All through the moonless night the manhunt continued in an effort to discover, if nothing else, the point where the fugitive had clambered out of the river.

It was Detective Bodenstein who discovered the first significant clue. Dusting the guard rail for fingerprints, he had brought out a latent palm print at the point where the fugitive had jumped off the bridge. Bodenstein reported his find to Cibulla.

"Have it photographed," the lieutenant directed. "When we catch up with this guy, the palm print will help make a positive identification."

Further comment was interrupted by the clear, matter-of-fact voice of the radio dispatcher on the short wave. The news caused Bodenstein and Cibulla to bow their heads in respectful silence.

Despite all efforts to save him, Sergeant O'Donnell had died from his wounds during the night. In addition, Trooper Perry was placed on the critical list but was given a fifty-fifty chance to pull through.

"We're looking for a killer, now," Lieutenant Cibulla said grimly, "a desperate killer." And both he and

in tracking down killers and criminals. The dog's trainer, Corporal William Horton, hopped out of the driver's seat and reported to Cibulla.

While the two men were deciding on a plan of action, another police car rolled up and Captain D. J. Dunn, commander of Troop B alighted.

Cibulla brought the captain up to date on the details of the case and outlined the blockade that had been thrown around the area to trap the fugitive.

Dunn waited for the lieutenant to finish, then said, "The fact that the killer hasn't been nabbed leaves us with three possibilities. First, he may have caught one of Perry's slugs in a vital spot and is now at the bottom of the river. In which case, there'd be no great loss and the state would save a bundle of dough. The second possibility is that he made a quick get-away after the shooting and eluded the patrols. But, since we have no evidence to point otherwise, we'll go along on the belief that he's still in the woods."

Captain Dunn had no sooner finished his observations than Trooper Edward Carroll came hurrying over the crest. He and township police-

slogged out of the river at this point. "There's something else here," Vedo said, pointing to an object imbedded in the black ooze. "Whoever came out of the water here left one of his shoes."

Lieutenant Cibulla bent over and extracted the shoe from the mud. It was an ordinary man's black oxford and had apparently been pulled off its wearer's left foot while the laces were still tied.

"This is better than having a cast of the footprints," the lieutenant observed. "Now, let's see what the bloodhounds can do with it."

Corporal Horton called the dogs to heel and gave them the shoe. The dogs nosed around the shoe, sniffed over to the footprints, then set off into the thicket with the officers trailing them.

PRESENTLY, the footprints were lost in the underbrush, but the dogs continued on. Finally, they came out of the woods beside highway 611.

"That's bad," Corporal Horton said. Then, in answer to Cibulla's quizzical look, "These hounds can follow any scent as long as it's clear and uncontaminated. If anything like exhaust



HUNTING SHACK

where double murderer cowered in fear while policemen angrily battered down the door and took him in custody.

Bodenstein knew then that there would be no let-up until the murderer had been captured and brought to justice.

Sergeant O'Donnell had been a popular officer during his eighteen years in the department. He had made many friends and was respected by policemen and civilians alike.

It was a tragic end for a useful citizen, and as word of the sergeant's death was relayed to his fellow officers, the manhunt took on renewed vigor. The sergeant's last words were echoed as a pledge—"Get that man."

It was shortly after dawn when a station wagon of the New York State Police pulled up alongside Lieutenant Cibulla's car. In the back of the station wagon were the two famous bloodhounds, Queenie and Pinky, who had gained something of a record

man Frank Vedo had been searching along the Pennsylvania shoreline.

"We found footprints in the mud," Carroll announced. "They lead out of the river about a mile downstream."

"That would be a good place for the dogs to start," Corporal Horton put in. "I'll get them out."

"Right," Cibulla agreed. "Let's get going."

"I'll stand by at the radio car," Dunn told the lieutenant. "You go ahead with the bloodhounds."

With Trooper Carroll in the lead, the officers lost no time in getting the dogs to the spot where the footprints had been found.

Patrolman Vedo was standing at the muddy riverbank when the others came up.

The churned mud gave the unmistakable evidence that someone had



RECOVERY

of O'Donnell's service revolver, which assassin threw into the river was possible by using an electromagnet.

fumes or oil are mixed in, the dogs are licked. So, if the killer took off along this highway, we've got trouble."

"This highway has been patrolled constantly since yesterday afternoon," the lieutenant said. "I don't see how he could have gotten through." Even as Cibulla spoke, a police cruiser howled into view and sped past.

The lieutenant's attention was drawn abruptly back to the antics of the dogs. Queenie and Pinky, sniffing the gravel shoulder of the highway had circled once, then set off again, back into the woods!

Panting and sniffing, the dogs plunged through the underbrush along an uncertain, winding trail. They came to a halt at the brink of the river less than two hundred yards from where they had started.

"That's the (Continued on page 37)

"COME'RE YOU
little tramp," cried Forrester as Alice struggled to
break his grasp and escape with his wallet as planned.



JUNE
tired of car-hopping wanted
a cut of the real big dough.



AL
had a good racket but wasn't
smart enough to stick to it.

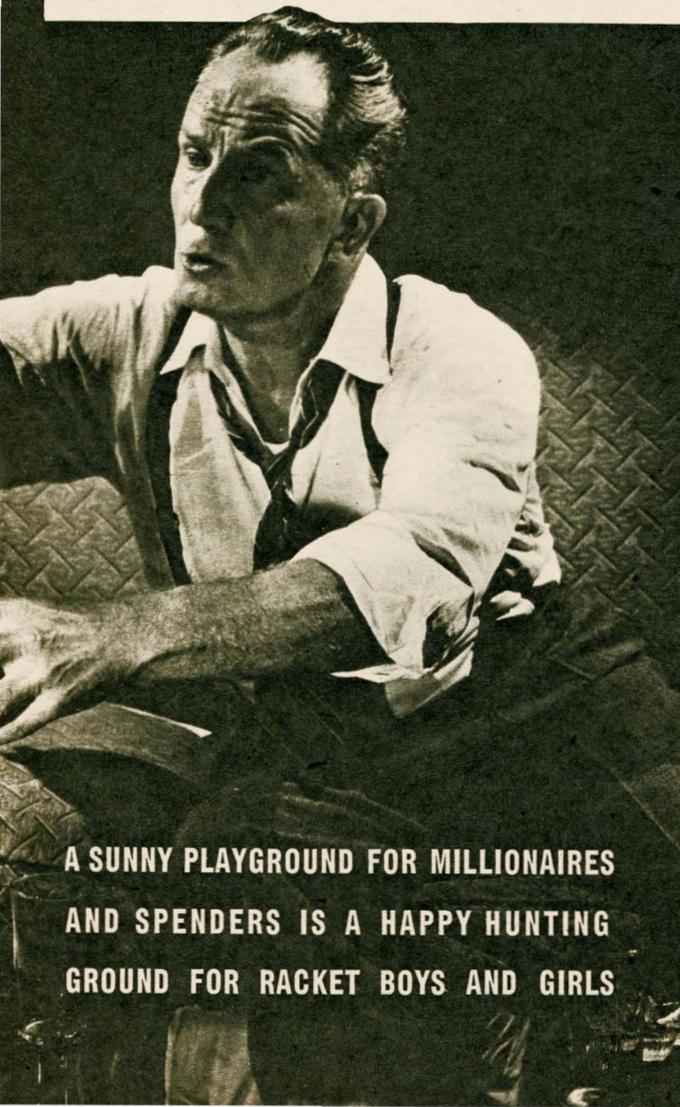


ALICE
was an old man's darling gal
but wanted more than gifts.



DAN
played his part well and I
like a dope fell for him.

I Helped Fleece THE SUCKERS



A SUNNY PLAYGROUND FOR MILLIONAIRES
AND SPENDERS IS A HAPPY HUNTING
GROUND FOR RACKET BOYS AND GIRLS

By JUNE REXTON

ONLY a gambler with his last cent riding the back of a horse or on the turn of a card could conceivably understand how I felt that day as the sober faced judge cleared his throat and prepared to pronounce my sentence.

The day was warm outside the courtroom. Its rays pierced the high windows and motes of dust danced in the beams. On my left twelve men who had just found me guilty of conspiracy to defraud sat silently in the jury box.

The prosecutor stood on my right. His expression was smug and self-satisfied. He looked rather like a cat who had swallowed a particularly succulent canary.

Waldron, my own lawyer, sat at my side, his hand reassuringly on my arm. The court clerk intoned hollowly, "The defendant will rise while sentence is pronounced upon her."

I stood up. My knees shook like an electric vibrator and I hoped that my skirts concealed that fact from the spectators. My face was pale beneath its rouge and there was a horrible empty apprehension in the pit of my stomach.

In another moment I would know whether I was free or whether I would spend the next few years of my life, surrounded by iron walls and prison discipline.

The judge fixed me with an expressionless eye. He said, "June Ellen Rexton, have you anything to say before sentence is pronounced upon you?"

I didn't dare to trust my voice. I shook my head.

"Very well. It is my duty to sentence you to a term of five years in the State Penitentiary at Raiford. However in view of the fact—"

But I didn't hear any more. A dizziness enveloped me. A black fog swirled into my eyes. My knees buckled and I fainted dead away into Waldron's arms.

During the boom years it seemed as if all the easy money in the country, and there was a lot of it, hitched up its serial number, brushed off the Great Seal and headed for Miami. War profiteer cash, black market gold, gambler's winnings, every dime that wasn't made by the sweat of the brow found its way into that mad playground.

The fact that the horse and dog

tracks collected seventeen per cent of every dollar bet bothered no one. An indifferent cup of coffee that sold for twenty-five cents caused no complaint. And if hotel rooms barely large enough to scratch your back in rented for thirty bucks per diem, what of it?

There was a shortage of almost every commodity except money. Under these circumstances the racket boys naturally thrived. A sucker can hold on to an easy bank roll just about as long as a ducks back can hold water.

For the past five years every racket in the book and a score that weren't, flourished in the Southern resort. Mine was a racket involving hotels. I thought it was a brand new angle. But new or old, there was a lot of money in it. In less than five months I picked up more cash than I had ever made in all my life.

I will not pretend that I was any naive virgin when Al Wallace put his proposition up to me. I was twenty-four years old. I had a pretty face. I was possessed of a figure which evoked more than its fair share of whistles. And I had been around a bit. I knew the score, all right. And now that the whole affair has blown up like Bikini Island I have no one to squawk at but myself.

It was in late November, just before the big winter season was scheduled to start. I was carhopping at the time. If that phrase baffles you Easterners, let me explain it means simply that I was a waitress who served parked automobiles instead of tables,

and wore abbreviated slacks to stimulate business instead of a prim apron.

During the mid morning lull on a Monday, a car horn honked for my services. I assumed my most winning smile, as tips are the backbone of carhopping, and walked out to a parked sedan. A smile which showed a lot of even white teeth flashed through the open window.

"Hi, Junie. Give me a hamburger and a coke, will you?"

"Hello, Al," I said. "How's things?"

"Never better. There's so damned much money in the country that I'm even getting my share."

He grinned again. As I went to fill his order I reflected that he certainly looked as if he were telling the truth. I'd known Al Wallace a long time. He spent his winters engaging in dog track touting. It wasn't a business where the suckers spend too much cash, and a dog track player is a small operator. I had known Al for several years and a hundred dollar bill to him was a lot of dough.

Now, however, he had a brand new car. His suit was tailor made. And he wore an air of general prosperity I had never associated with him before.

I took the coke and hamburger back to the car. He paid the check and handed me a half dollar tip. I looked at the coin with some incredulity. Al intercepted my gaze.

"Buy some champagne, baby," he said. "There's plenty more where that came from."

I thanked him and as I dropped the money in my pocket my expression, I



I TURNED
and found Dan beside me. He said,
"That's Forrester's wallet in your hand."

dare say, was one of envy. I lifted my face again to find Al regarding me approvingly.

"Say," he said. "I could use you. You'd fit into this racket beautifully. How'd you like to make yourself a few grand?"

"Well," I said brightly, "the business men are making it, the unions are making it, and even the congressmen aren't doing too badly according to the papers I read, why not little Junie?"

NATURALLY

Forrester was furious, he insisted the cops arrest Alice and he would press charges. Al made it clear that the hotel would not be a party to the arrest.





I WATCHED

Wixen hand over the dough and Al promise to get rid of the detectives so he could enjoy his illicit vacation.

I POINTED

out Forrester to Alice and she took over from there. The old lech was soon calling for drinks in his room

What are you doing, Al?" I inquired.

"I'm in the hotel racket." That rather surprised me. The hotel business is considered legitimate and Al Wallace was not. Al's keen black eyes caught mine and he read my thoughts accurately.

"No," he said, "I haven't hit the sawdust trail. I'm in the hotel racket and I mean racket. Come on in with me. I can use a pretty girl."

I knew quite well what pretty girls are used for in resort hotels and I said so. I also added that I wasn't having any.

"You got me wrong," said Al. "Our guests get taken and that's all. Pack your bags and come over tonight to the Crosston Hotel and I'll show you the ropes."

I knew the Crosston Hotel. It was situated in a bad neighborhood. It was run down and had been a white elephant for the past ten years.

I said, "How can you get people to stay in that dump when the town is lousy with first class hotels?"

Al's grin grew broader. "We've got a gimmick worked out on that, too. I'll let you see it in action. We got half the hack drivers in town on our payroll. Look, I'll have one of our hackies call for you tonight at seven o'clock. You tell him that you want to go to the Regal." (This was the best hotel in town.) "Then watch him go to work on you to make you change your mind."

I thought it over quickly. There certainly was no fortune in hopping cars. Moreover, a lot of customers expected a flirtation along with their hamburger. Whatever Al's proposition was, it would be a step up.

"Seven o'clock?" I said.
"Seven it is," said Al. He stepped on the starter and backed out of the lot.

The taxi driver was a southern boy with an accent that sounded like Jeff Davis. He was a pillar of helpful courtesy as he carried my suitcases down to the car. Following Al's instructions I told him I was moving to the Regal Hotel.

As I said this an expression of anxious concern came over his face. He said, somewhat incredulously, "The Regal, madam? Not the Regal surely?"

"What's the matter with the Regal?"

The boy was a consummate actor. He shuffled embarrassedly and said, "Well, it's hard to tell a lady like you."

I said, "You can tell me the worst. I understand all about that business which was started by the flowers and the bees."

"Well," he said, "it's no place for a nice girl like you. There's a fast crowd hangs out there. And besides it's dirty."

"You mean morally?"

"And actually." It's full of roaches. The food's terrible. Last week three people came down with ptomaine poisoning. Naturally, they hushed it up. You don't want to go there. Now, I know a nice respectable place where you'll fit right in."

I grinned at him. "It wouldn't be any chance be the Crosston Hotel, would it?"

His face fell and he regarded me with suspicion. "Why how do you know? How—"

"Okay, bad," I said getting into the cab. "Step on it. The Crosston."

I later learned that this particular method of hijacking potential customers from one hotel to another was not original with Al. Half the so-called respectable hotels used exactly the same device during the winter season.

It was worked most effectively on fares picked up at railroad or bus stations, fares who had never been in town before and didn't know one hotel from another. When they gave the driver the name of the hotel where they had reservations, he would go to work on them.

Some of these hackies were not only superb actors but possessed amazing talents for sizing up the customers. An old lady would be told of the rampant immorality in the hotel where she was headed. Business men, apparently out for a good time, would be warned of the dull knitting circles which were prevalent. A harrowing tale of insanitary conditions would be tossed in for good measure.

When the driver succeeded in diverting the fare from his original destination to the hotel for whom he was working, he would collect ten to twenty bucks from the cashier upon

delivery. This was the regular rate.

In 1944, the Miami Hotel Association endeavored to stamp out this racket. Failing to crush it themselves they prevailed upon the City Council to pass an ordinance branding it as illegal. However, it was so difficult to prove to the satisfaction of a court exactly what had happened that to this day there is no record of a conviction of violation of this ordinance.

During the next few days at the hotel I learned a great deal about Al's hotel racket. Anyone who has tried to obtain a hotel reservation during the past five or six years does not need to be told that the hotel business is booming.

Even the lowliest rooming houses are crowded. An investment in a lodging house will pay off a hundred per cent. The way Al worked it paid off closer to a thousand. And he was but one of the many racket boys who put their dough in run-down hotels.

The idea was to acquire the property for as little cash as possible, assuming a high mortgage. The building was then furnished with whatever crummy broken down furniture could be procured, and opened for business.

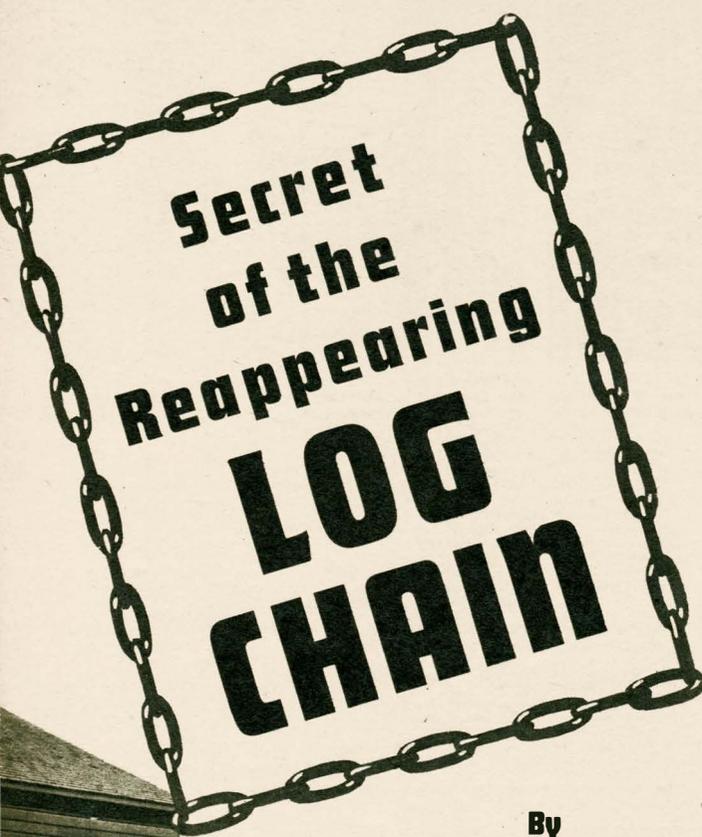
Even on the more legitimate part of the business, the customer was robbed. First, he was charged an exorbitant daily rate which included meals. Al sold accommodation on the American Plan only. The food was ruelful, the worst that a little money could buy.

After being stuck for the first few meals the customers would invariably eat elsewhere, nevertheless they were still paying for the uneaten food at the Crosston.

Complaints were met with a laugh. Since the sucker had already sacrificed his previous reservations at another hotel, he was stuck. At the height of the season there wasn't a room to be had for love or money, though hotel clerks were offered ample amounts of each, every day.

At the end of the season, usually at a time when the first substantial payment on the mortgage was due, the racket boys simply skipped. They'd milked a dubious property dry and that was all they were interested in.

But don't get the idea that the way Al robbed his (Continued on page 41)



Secret of the Reappearing **LOG CHAIN**

By
E. C. MACKEY

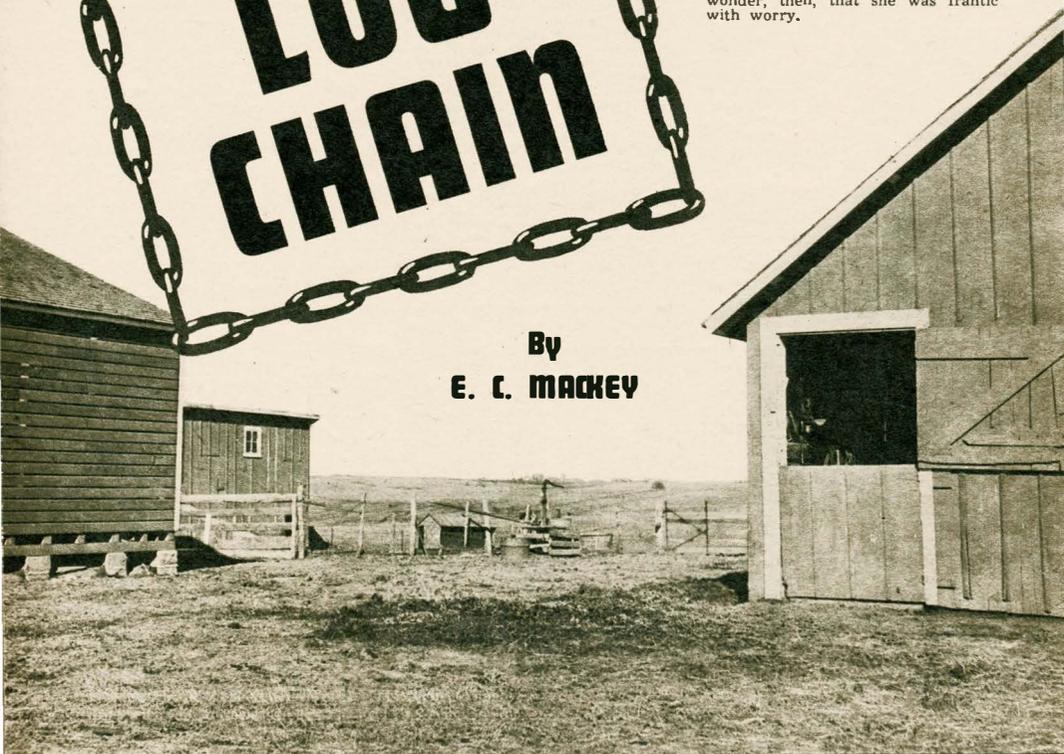
AS Deputy Les Round heard what the familiar voice had to say over the phone, he bit down hard on his cigar and gripped the telephone receiver until his knuckles showed white. "Are you sure about this, Dorothy?" he queried tensely. "Are you certain Tommy isn't away on a trip or something?"

"You've got to believe me, Les," the voice of Mrs. Dorothy Worm, wife of a prominent Taylor County, Iowa, farmer, implored. "Never in our entire married life has Tommy gone away without telling me where he was going and when he would return."

A mental image of his friend, Tommy Worm, flashed into Les Round's mind. His rich acres, well stocked and carefully tended, in the Conway community, and his attractive, well groomed wife were the envy of his less fortunate neighbors.

The deputy and his wife had often been visitors in the well managed Worm home and had never noticed the least sign of discord. The couple's devotion to each other and to their son, Carroll, now serving in the armed forces, was well known by all.

Tommy Worm had left his home at eight o'clock the night before and had not returned. He had not notified his wife of his whereabouts. Small wonder, then, that she was frantic with worry.



WHAT HIDDEN KNOWLEDGE OF HER HUSBAND'S DISAPPEARANCE WAS SHE

"Tell you what, Dorothy," Round said presently, "As soon as the sheriff comes in, I'll bring him out to the farm."

"Please do that," the woman answered. Then in a tearful tone, she added, "And hurry!"

When Sheriff J. T. Caskey stepped into the office an hour later, Deputy Round told him about Mrs. Worm's call.

"But the guy hasn't been gone twenty-four hours yet," Caskey objected. "He'll probably show up before the day's over with a hang-over or some tale about being stuck in the mud. There are a thousand reasons why a rich farmer like Worm might want to spend the night away from home."

Round shook his head. There was a dark look on his face. "You don't know Tommy Worm. And you haven't seen his wife. No man in his right senses would step out on a woman like her, and Worm is as keen as they come."

Caskey looked thoughtful. "You sound like you really believe that," he said.

"I promised Dorothy we'd come out and talk with her," Round went on.

The sheriff nodded. "And for good measure, let's get Jones to go with us. We may need a lawyer's help in getting to the bottom of this."

Shadows were lengthening that afternoon of November 5 when Sheriff Caskey, Deputy Round and County Attorney Ralph Jones stopped at the spacious farm several miles out of Bedford. Mrs. Worm, anxiety written all over her comely features, met them at the door.

"I'm glad you've come, Les," she greeted the deputy. "I'm worried sick."

The deputy introduced the sheriff and the county attorney and the three men trailed the woman into a neatly furnished living room. When they were all comfortably seated, the sheriff shifted in his chair and faced Mrs. Worm.

"Now," he began, "let's have the whole story. Les tells me your husband left home last night at eight o'clock. Do you know where he was going?"

Mrs. Worm twisted her handkerchief nervously. "What I'm going to tell sounds a little silly," she began. "Somebody knocked on the door around eight o'clock. Tommy went to see who it was. A moment later, he

ACTING

the part of the grief-stricken wife Mrs. Worm diverted suspicion from herself.

COUP DE GRACE

Killer used victim's rifle to finish the job after wounding him with a revolver.

came back into the room and said he had to help pull somebody out of a mud-hole. He got his coat and things, went out back and threw a big log chain in the back of is truck and left."

"And you don't know who came here, or who he was supposed to go help?" Caskey questioned.

The woman shook her head. "He didn't take time to tell me anything. Tommy was like that, always anxious to help someone in trouble."

"But didn't you hear the person at the door?" the sheriff persisted. "Couldn't you give me some idea as to what the voice sounded like?"

Mrs. Worm was silent as she thought about these questions. She glanced around hesitantly, as if she were undecided about something. The sheriff prompted her sharply. "Well?"

The woman straightened up in her chair. "To tell you the truth, Sheriff, I got the idea that it was Aaron Ryan at the door."

"Who is Aaron Ryan? A friend of your husband's?"

"He's more of an acquaintance,"

the woman replied. "He lives near Bedford. Tommy has known him a long time."

Sheriff Caskey filed Ryan's name away in his mind as he mulled over the facts. Presently, he asked, "How can you be so sure your husband took the log chain with him? Maybe he just told you this tale about pulling someone out of the mud to get away from the house."

"I heard the log chain rattling in the back of the truck as he drove away," Mrs. Worm replied. "Besides, Tommy never lied to me in all the time we've been married."

"You think," the sheriff interrupted her, "that someone invented this excuse to call your husband away from the house." And when the woman nodded, he went on, "But why? Does he have any enemies? Does he carry much money on him? Or do you think it was someone who could have wanted to steal his truck?"

As the woman listened to Caskey's questions, her face became a study in mingled emotions. It was obvious that

she was confused. Presently, she burst out, "I can't imagine what has happened, Sheriff. I didn't think Tommy had any enemies, but after all, even a wife can't know for certain. He always had twenty or thirty dollars in his billfold. And about the truck, your guess is as good as mine. It's gone, you know."

Caskey nodded. The robbery theory wasn't far fetched. As for personal enemies, that would require a lot of digging, since Worm's wife could give him no leads in that direction.

Attorney Jones spoke up. "If you'll give us the license number and description of your husband's truck, we can put it on the police broadcast at once," he suggested.

Mrs. Worm nodded and rose. "I'll have to get the details from his desk." She left the room, returned a moment later and handed Jones a slip of paper.

Caskey said, "Why not phone it in from here and save time?"

Jones agreed and went to the telephone. The sheriff said to the woman, "Mind if we have a look around the place?"

"Not at all," Mrs. Worm replied. "And I hope you find what's happened to Tommy."

DEPUTY

Les Round, who received the "frantic" call from Mrs. Worm telling of her spouse's disappearance. His tireless efforts were of help in solving the baffling case.



WHEN Jones had finished at the telephone, the three men went outside and started looking around. It was dark now, and they were forced to use flashlights as they made their tour of the numerous out-buildings.

They didn't find anything until they reached the largest hay barn. There, Deputy Round stumbled in the entrance to the shed where Worm had kept his truck. He flashed his light on the object which entangled his feet. It was a huge log chain. It was dusty and bore no signs of having been used in the mud.

Taking the chain with them, the men walked swiftly back to the house. "Is this the chain you told us about?" Caskey asked crisply.

Mrs. Worm gazed at the length of linked steel as if fascinated. Presently, she nodded. "That's it—the only one Tommy owns."

"But if he took it along last night, how did it get back here?" the sheriff demanded.

There was a frightened look in Dorothy Worm's lovely eyes. "That must mean—oh, I don't know what it means!"

"It means there's something very queer happening around here, Mrs. Worm," Caskey said sternly. "Frankly, when we came out here tonight I thought we were making a big to-do over nothing. Now I am not so sure."

"You think something terrible has happened to Tommy?" she asked in a small voice.

Caskey deliberated over her question a moment. "Somebody went to great pains to bring that log chain back," he said presently. "And you can see for yourself that it hasn't any fresh mud on it. That means your husband didn't use it like he'd planned. And we've got to find out why." He paused a moment, then added, "Has anyone been here since your husband left?"

Gene Downer came by this morning to see Tommy," Mrs. Worm said. "But I'm sure he didn't bring the chain back."

"How can you be sure of that?" Caskey snapped.

"He didn't go any further than the front yard," Mrs. Worm replied. "Surely I'd have seen him if he went sneaking back to the barn."

"Maybe you would and maybe you wouldn't," Caskey said. "Did your husband and Downer ever have any arguments about anything?"

The woman shook her head. "Tommy didn't have any arguments with anyone," she said in a positive tone.

The sheriff pigeon-holed Downer's name to be later checked, however.

Before the three men left the Worm farm, they looked over the personal effects of the missing man carefully. But they found nothing out of the ordinary. Worm's books were in order and he had not been involved in any legal actions of any kind. There were no letters which could be called threatening, no signs of enmity with anyone.

Caskey, Round and Jones began a painstaking canvass of the homes near the Worm farm. Most of Worm's neighbors had already heard about his disappearance. They were deeply shocked. Men like Tommy Worm didn't just vanish in thin air, they insisted.

The sheriff then started probing the domestic affairs of Tommy and Dorothy Worm. But this angle, too, ran into a dead end. The neighbors repeated what Round had already stated—that the couple were very devoted to each other and never had any trouble.

None of the neighbors had seen Tommy Worm the previous night. The last time any of them had talked to him was two days previously.

"We'd better check with Aaron Ryan right now," Caskey said to the others. As the trio started back toward Bedford.

Jones nodded. "But if it were Ryan who called Worm out last night do you think he'd be likely to admit it?"

"If he had nothing to do with Worm's disappearance, he would," Caskey replied. "But we'll have to talk to him anyway. If he sounds like he's lying we can check on his whereabouts for the entire night."

A half hour later, the three men were talking to the farmer. Puzzlement was written on his plain face. "But I swear to you men I wasn't even near Tommy Worm's house last night," he protested.

Caskey decided to take a long shot in the dark. "What would you say if I told you your car was seen in that neighborhood yesterday?"

Ryan looked startled, then soon regained his composure. "I drove past Worm's place, if that's what you mean," he replied. "But I didn't stop there. Besides it was early afternoon." "Mind if we look at your car?" the sheriff asked.

The farmer shook his head and led the way to his garage. "There it is," he said, pointing to a 1934 Ford sedan. "Help yourself."

The three men examined the machine carefully. When Caskey flashed his light on the wheels and underneath the car, he saw that both were heavily caked with mud.

"How did you get out of the mud, if Tommy Worm didn't tow you?" he asked pointedly.

"I didn't get stuck, if that's what you mean," Ryan replied, his anger rising. "You know as well as I do that it's rained around here recently. In fact, it rained last night. And the county has a number of roads that



HOME
of killer, who posed as a friend of the missing man and was not suspected by the police until he became the constant companion of Mrs. Worm, victim's wife.

still need improving a great deal." The sheriff then asked the man if he had any ideas about what had happened to Tommy Worm.

Ryan laughed derisively. "Maybe you'd better ask one of Dorothy's boy friends about that," he snapped.

"Just what boy friends?" Caskey asked quickly. "Ever see her with men other than her husband? Got any proof that she ever stepped out on her husband?"

Ryan was somewhat flustered by these questions. He started to hedge. "I didn't actually see anything," he finally admitted, then in a flurry of anger burst out, "But if she thinks she can accuse me of knowing where Tommy is, she's crazy!"

Struggling to curb his irritation, Caskey explained exactly what Mrs. Worm had said about thinking she had heard Ryan's voice the night before. Then he started pinning the man down about his remark reflecting on Mrs. Worm.

"That didn't just pop into your head on the spur of the moment," he went on. "And if you didn't see her out with other men, you must have heard something."

The man hung his head. "You're right. I've heard plenty, but nothing you can put your finger on. You can see for yourself how attractive she is. Probably some of these hell cats around the country trumped up that story on her. Maybe that's where I heard the rumor."

The sheriff persisted in questioning the man but he could get no further information out of him. Before he and his aides left, however, he said, "As a matter of routine, Ryan, you'd better tell us where you were yesterday from eight o'clock on."

The farmer's belligerent expression vanished. "That's easy," he said. "I got in home about five o'clock and never got off the place after that. A couple of my neighbors came over around seven."

Caskey questioned members of Ryan's family and the neighbors he mentioned. They supported the man's statement to the very letter. It became increasingly obvious that Ryan was not the man Mrs. Worm had heard talking to her husband.

THE three men discussed the mystery further as they left Ryan's home.

"Maybe the stranger is Gene Downer," Round suggested. He was the only guy who called at the Worm farm today, looks as if he'd be the only one who had an opportunity of slipping that log chain into the barn."

"We'll talk to Downer soon enough," Caskey replied. "But I'm more puzzled about why the log chain was brought back than how it was done. It doesn't make sense."

"Worm's disappearance doesn't make sense, either, but he's gone, and without a trace." Deputy Round reminded his superior.

When the three men arrived at Downer's home they learned he had gone to Bedford for the evening. Caskey told the woman at the door to have him get in touch with the sheriff's office when he returned. The woman looked puzzled, but agreed.

Caskey and his aides continued to check with Worm's relatives and friends until far in the night. But they learned absolutely nothing. Early next morning, two of his deputies walked excitedly into the sheriff's office. Their clothing and shoes were caked with dried mud.

"What happened to you guys?" Caskey asked. "Get stuck in a mud hole?"

"Not exactly," one of the men replied. "We just got through pulling Tommy Worm's truck out of a muddy field."

Caskey straightened in his chair. "Let's have the details," he said tersely.

"We spotted this truck just off the highway, (Continued on page 45)



CADET
Chou Ping Yuan was killed by another student during hospital chemistry class.



SUICIDE
Police Surgeon O'Hearn attempts to revive killer after the Chinese cadet shot himself.

BLOODY TRAIL of the CHINESE ARMY MURDERER

By CLELL MORGAN

THE sound of a shot roared through the dimly-lighted corridors of the second floor of the Colorado General Hospital. Inside the Chemistry laboratory, where seventeen young Chinese Army Cadets had been listening quietly to their instructor, there was sudden confusion. Wild screams of horror mixed with the pungent odor of gun smoke.

One of the students, sitting in the front row in the classroom, slipped slowly to the floor, clutching at his chest. His Army shirt was already covered with blood.

The others, cream of the young Chinese who had been sent to the United States for specialized training after VJ Day, ran helter skelter from every exit in the room. Glass beakers, bottles of acid and chairs were pushed in every direction.

Suddenly, from the first floor, came the sound of more shots. More screams. This time a woman's voice.

Dr. John W. Berry hurried to the second-story hallway switch, clicked, on the corridor lights. Lazy puffs of smoke hung drowsily in the air. The corridor was empty. Dr. Berry ran to the stairs leading to the first floor, barking orders to a startled interne who appeared out of a side door, to call the police.

When Captain of Detectives James Childers and his men arrived at the hospital located on the eastern outskirts of Denver, Colo. Dr. Berry met the officers at the front entrance.

"As soon as I came downstairs," Dr. Berry said, "I saw a man run from the front door. I don't know if he is the killer or not, but he was getting away from here as fast as he could."

"What did he look like?" Childers asked quickly.

"Just saw his back."

"All right. Tell me what you can remember."

"He was tall—almost six feet, I'd

WHAT SECRET MECHANISM IN THE ORIENTAL MIND CAUSED A NORMAL CHINESE STUDENT TO GO BERSERK AND COMMIT MURDERS FOR PRIDE



INVESTIGATION

Detective Captain James Childers and Detective Art Roush question students to unearth clues that might show the motive for the shooting of the two cadets.

say, but rather slender. He was wearing a dark suit and a felt hat of the same color, blue, I think."

Childers turned to Detectives Douglas Phillips and Arthur Roush. "Try to follow him," he ordered.

The detectives left immediately.

Childers asked the doctor, "How long ago did this happen?"

"Not more than 15 minutes ago. I had an interne call you as quickly as I could."

It was then 8:30 o'clock, Tuesday night, May 28, 1946. That meant the shooting had occurred about 8:15.

"Let me have a look at the bodies," Childers requested.

The doctor nodded. "Follow me."

At the foot of the stairs leading to the second floor, a vivacious young woman dressed in a white uniform was kneeling beside the body of a young cadet lying sprawled out on the floor. His head rested in a pool of his own blood. He had been shot twice in the forehead and once in the chest.

The young woman looked up when Childers and Dr. Berry approached. "He died instantly," she said. "I reached him just a moment after he was shot. It was pretty horrible."

"Who are you?" Childers asked.

"Dorothy Horan. I'm an X-Ray technician here. I was back in the lab working when I heard the shots. I ran out to see what was wrong."

"And what did you see?"

"I saw a man with a gun in his hand running out the front door. I ran back into the lab, and shut the door. I didn't know what was happening."

"Who was he?"

"I don't know. He was short, about 5 feet 8 inches. He had a hat pulled

low on his head. He was wearing a dark top coat and tan trousers. The back of the coat was pulled up. I couldn't tell much about what he looked like. There was so much confusion, people running everywhere. It was all so confusing."

"But you're sure you saw a gun in the hand of the man with the top coat?"

"Yes, I'm sure. That's what frightened me so."

"Was the gun in his left hand or right hand? Be sure now. It might prove very important."

Miss Horan closed her eyes, put her hand to her forehead. "It was his right hand," she said, without opening her eyes. "I'm sure it was."

DR. LERRY took childer's arm. "Come on upstairs," he said.

"There's another dead cadet in the Chemistry laboratory."

Childers frowned. "Another one?"

"That's right. He's also dead."

"Both shot by the same person?"

Childers asked.

"I don't know. But he's the one who was shot first. He was sitting in the classroom at the time. He's Cadet Major Tien Yu-Chung, one of our best students."

Childers nodded at the young man at the bottom of the stairs. "Who is he?"

"Chou Ping-Yuan. He was also in the chemistry classroom at the time Tien was shot."

"Then how did he get down here? He couldn't have run this far after he was shot twice in the forehead."

"I don't know how he got here," the doctor said. "There was so much confusion after Tien was shot I don't

know what happened. The students scattered everywhere after that first shot. Maybe Chou ran down here and someone, waiting for him, shot him."

"Then maybe there were two killers?" Childers asked.

"Maybe."

Before Childers went upstairs to have a look at the first victim of the mad hospital slayer, he walked to the pay telephone nearby, called headquarters. He asked the radio dispatcher to put out a pick-up order for a tall, thin man in a blue suit and a short man with a dark topcoat, tan trousers, and hat worn low on his head.

Then Childers joined Dr. Berry again. They started up the stairs. Childers asked the medico to tell him as nearly as he could just what had happened at the Colorado General Hospital that night.

Dr. Berry said the class had been in progress for 15 minutes, when suddenly everything was disrupted by a shot. There were three distinct shots, the doctor thought. Cadet Major Tien fell to the floor. The students ran in every direction. After that, all was confusion.

"Where did the three shots come from?" Childers asked.

"From the hall doorway, I think. No one seemed to be sure. But the students I have talked with so far thought it was someone outside the door that leads to the west wing corridor."

"And you're sure that dead student at the foot of the stairs was in the classroom when Tien was shot?"

"Positive. There is an exit at the back of the classroom. He must have run out that door and started down the stairs when someone shot him."

Dr. Berry had recalled the remain-

WITNESS

X-Ray Technician Dorothy Horan of the Colorado General Hospital views the body of Chou Ping Yuan. She saw killer running through corridor with smoking gun.



ing 12 students from the 14 who were in the classroom at the time of the shooting back to the chemistry lab so that Childers could question them if he desired.

Childers had a look at the body in the classroom. He was a young man about 22. He had been shot once in the chest and once in the head.

The Detective Captain frowned. This had at first looked to him like the work of someone who had gone mad and started shooting anyone who got in his way. But the more he thought about it and the more he learned about the double shooting, the more he was convinced that this had been a carefully-planned murder of Chou and Tien. Maybe there was one killer, maybe two. Childers wasn't sure about that yet. But he was convinced that Chow and Tien had been the intended victims and that there had been a definite motive involved. There could be only one possible motive—revenge or hatred. What he had to do was to locate the enemy or enemies of the two cadets, then lay the murders at their feet.

From the back of the chair where cadet Major Tien had been sitting, Childers dug out a spent bullet which had passed through Tien's body. It was a .38 calibre slug. At least that was a starter. Childers would run down every .38 calibre gun in the state if necessary to get his hands on this double killer.

Childers questioned the 12 cadets carefully. They were all so upset and excited by the scene of horror which they had just witnessed that none of them could give very coherent stories about what had happened. What they did have to say about the actual shooting Childers had already heard from the doctor.

But the detective captain did learn a little more about the background of the two victims.

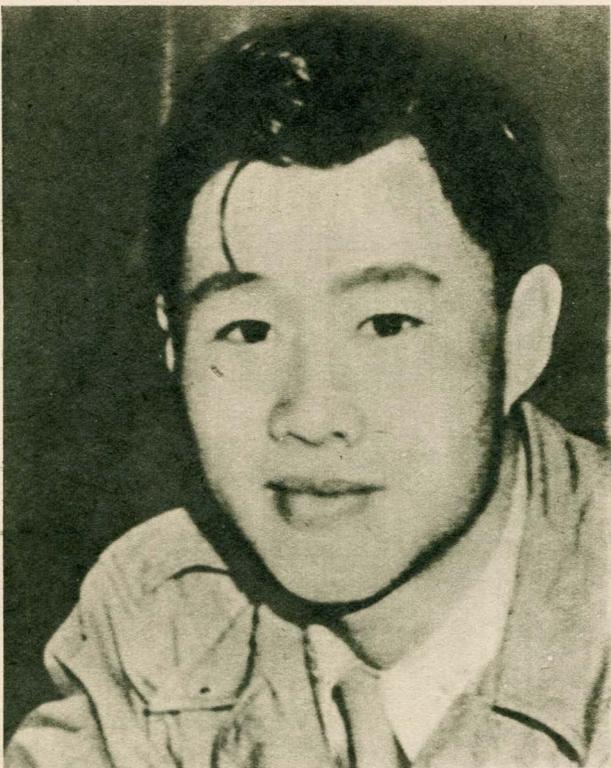
Chou and Tien had arrived in the United States, along with a large group of picked young Chinese Army men, just two months before the double murder. The group were specializing in Armament training. At the present time they were stationed at Lowry Field, near Denver. But before coming to Denver they had been stationed at Montgomery, Alabama and at Midland, Texas. They had been at Lowry about a month. Their immediate commanding officer was Lt. Ping Wu Ming. The officer in charge of the entire Chinese detachment at Lowry Field was Major Fu Chang.

Maybe, Childers thought, Major Chang or Lt. Ming could give him more information about the two victims than the 12 chemistry cadets had. Or maybe some of the other Chinese students, not so upset as the chemistry cadets, could be of help.

CHILDERS immediately telephoned Major Chang at Lowry, told him what had happened. He asked Major Chang to get Lt. Ming, and any Chinese students who knew the two victims, together. He wanted to talk with them that night. Chang said he would do so at once.

Then Childers called headquarters again, asked that more officers be sent to Lowry to assist him in the questioning.

Before Childers left the hospital, however, he went through each room, examining it carefully to make sure that the killer was not hiding some-



REVENGE

caused the death of Cadet Major Tien Yu Chung. He had reprimanded killer, son of a General, who vowed to erase the disgrace of an inferior embarrassing him.

where in the building waiting until the excitement died down before he made his escape.

But this investigation drew a blank and the detective had already started out the front door of the hospital, when he bumped into the two officers he had sent to follow the killer.

Standing between the two officers was a tall, thin man dressed in a dark suit and hat. It was so black outside, Childers could hardly see the man's face. He stepped back inside the hospital doorway, nodded for the officers to follow him.

A moment later, he was looking at a kindly-faced man who appeared to be about 30 or 35 years old. Certainly the man didn't have the look of a killer. He nodded at Childers, then smiled.

The detective explained they had bumped into the man on the corner of East 9th and Harrison Streets.

"What's your name?" Childers asked.

"Jack Dugan," the man replied.

"You live here in Denver?"

Childers glanced at his stern, quiet-faced detectives. He turned back to Dugan. "Were you here at the hospital this evening?"

"Yes, sir. I was visiting a friend here. The visiting hours were about

over, so I had started home. I was walking down the hallway when all of a sudden I heard some loud noises. Sounded to me like some gun shots. I waited a minute, wondering what to do. Then way down towards the middle of the hallway, I saw a man run across the hallway with a smoking gun in his hand. I thought he was going out the front door so I took out after him."

Childers' left eyebrow lifted slightly. "You ran after him, huh?"

"That's right. I ran like the deuce. But I couldn't catch him. He was a fast boy."

"Have any idea who he was?"

"No, sir. I don't think I had ever seen him before."

"Could you give me a description of him?"

"Not a very good one. I didn't get much of a look at him. I never got very close to him."

The description Dugan gave Childers of the man he was following tallied closely with that already given the officer by the attractive X-Ray technician.

Before this, Childers had thought maybe there were two killers, one on the first floor, and another on the second. But (Continued on page 53)

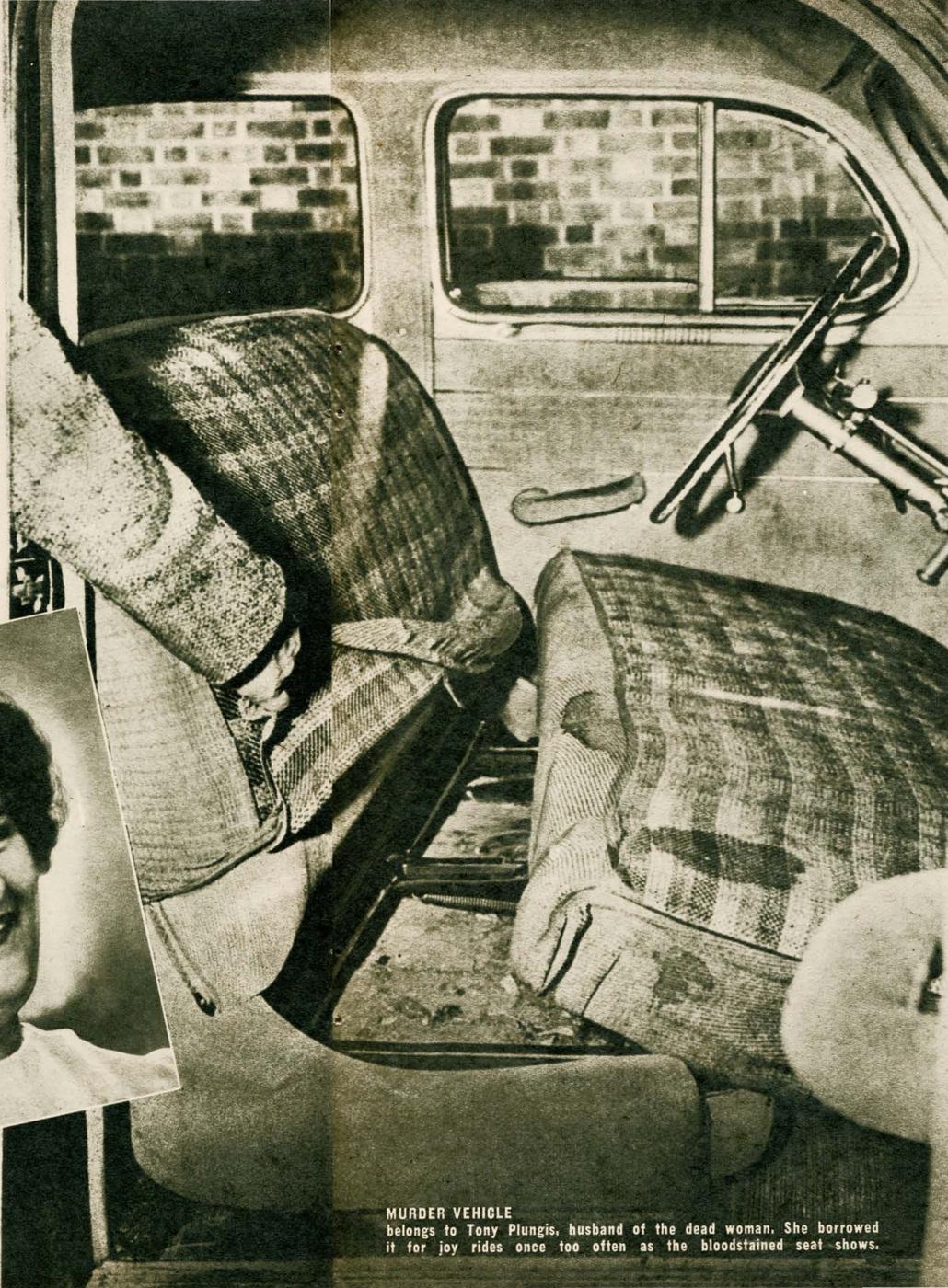
MYSTERY of the NUDE NYMPH

By HAL WHITE

HER MATE WAS A BIT TOO OLD FOR HER SO SHE LOOKED AROUND FOR COMPANIONSHIP. HER INFIDELITY TO ONE BOYFRIEND PUT AN END TO HER PASTIME



AMOROUS VICTIM
whose extra-marital romances were ended by a bullet from a thwarted suitor's gun.



MURDER VEHICLE
belongs to Tony Plungis, husband of the dead woman. She borrowed it for joy rides once too often as the bloodstained seat shows.

A RAW, frost-laden wind whined mournfully across the vast parking lot outside the Waterbury, Connecticut, war plant as Anthony C. Plungis, night shift tool setter, left his work and went toward his parked sedan at the edge of the lot.

But the cold wind was no bleaker than the bitter chill which penetrated the heart of the middle-aged workman as he started for his lonely home on that morning in early November of 1944.

Tony Plungis knew that his young, fun-loving wife would not be home to welcome him with a warm breakfast when he arrived. He knew that their two children would be getting up that morning in the home of strangers. Neighbors had taken them in when Tony's wife left him months before after many violent quarrels and misunderstandings.

As Plungis approached his small sedan he noted that it had been moved from the place he'd left it the night before, and immediate suspicion entered his mind.

Had Stephanie taken the car again without his permission?

More than once during recent weeks his attractive wife had come to the plant while he was at work and taken the car for joy-rides with other men. It was those joy-rides, in fact, that had led to their final split-up.

The voluptuous, 24-year-old girl of Lithuanian extraction he had married nine years before, when she was just past fifteen, had from the beginning been attracted to other men.

Three years ago, shortly after the birth of their second child, she had openly demanded her freedom. Stephanie was perfectly frank about it. She didn't object to continuing her marriage to the older Tony, but she insisted she be permitted to go out with younger men at the same time.

For a while Tony had put up with it, hoping that she would tire of the wild life she was leading, and return to her duties of wife and mother. But things had not worked out that way. Instead, Stephanie had become ever more neglectful of her little family. And six months before, things had come to a head, when Tony threatened to divorce her. She took the children to the home of relatives to be cared for, and went to live with a woman friend in another part of the city.

Since then Tony had seen his attractive wife often, but had not been able to persuade her to return to his little cottage at the edge of the city. The best he could get was assurance that the parties she went on with other men were innocent of any real wrong-doing. But she refused to come back to him until he would agree to let her continue her friendships.

Now, as the disconsolate husband approached his car, he realized that Stephanie must have been using the machine while he was at work. His suspicion was heightened when he saw a late edition of a Waterbury newspaper lying on the front seat. That paper hadn't been out when he'd parked the car there the evening before. Tony also noted that the blanket he kept in the back of the car was missing. The keys, which he always left in the car, so that it could be moved in the event of an emergency, lay tossed carelessly on the seat under the steering wheel.

As he drove to his home he vowed

to call the house where his wife was staying, and have it out with her, about taking his car on her parties.

A FEW minutes after seven o'clock on the morning of November 2nd the telephone rang in the home of Miss Anna de Bella, some two miles from the Plungis cottage.

"I want to talk with Steffi!" The man's words came harsh and rapid and Miss de Bella realized that her friend must have been having another row with the husband from whom she was separated. Her own voice was sympathetic when she replied:

"I'll have her call you back later, Tony." The girl hesitated to tell the irate husband that his wife hadn't been home all the night before. Things between them were bad enough as it was, she knew.

"Listen, Anna, if she's asleep wake her up. I want to talk with her now. If she won't come to the phone I'll come over there and have it out with her."

There was a long minute of silence, and then Tony Plungis heard her say: "But she's not here, Tony. She didn't come in last night and I thought she

might have gone back to you. It's the first time she ever stayed out all night without letting me know."

Tony's anger was gradually being replaced by a sensation of apprehension. It was true enough that Stephanie liked a good time, enjoyed staying out late with the gay friends whose company she found so much more interesting than his. It was also true that she had borrowed his car before. But in the past she had always left a note inside, mentioning the fact.

PLUNGIS finished his breakfast and thought about retiring but he knew sleep would not come until his mind was at rest. He went outside the cottage, determined to make a closer examination of the car.

Picking up the newspaper he noted again that it was a late edition, which meant that it had been left there sometime between 7:30 o'clock the evening before and morning. He glanced at the fuel gauge and saw that the gas tank was less than a quarter full. When he parked the car Wednesday evening it had registered three-quarters. That meant that the car had been driven more than fifty miles.

As the man's eyes went from the dashboard to the front seat again he saw that beneath the spot where the paper had been thrown was a dark, congealing pool of sticky substance on the plaid-covered seat. Closer examination brought to his nostrils a sickening, pungent odor. He recognized the smell of blood and his face went white as he recovered the newspaper, turned it over and saw the crimson stains where it had rested on the cushion. A moment later he was running toward the home of his neighbor, Patrolman Francis Zukauskas, whose backyard adjoined his. The popular member of the Waterbury police force had been a friend of the Plungis family for years and the worried husband sought his advice before going to the authorities with a formal request for action.

Officer Zukauskas, although he'd been forced to remain away from his scheduled tour of duty the night before because of illness, left his home immediately to examine the car after Plungis' story was told him by his wife. She had met her neighbor as he came running up to the house.

One glance at the soiled front cushion and the policeman confirmed the other's suspicion that blood had been spilled there within recent hours. He knew considerable about their troubled marital relations; and on learning that Stephanie had failed to turn up after presumably taking the car the day before, he immediately suggested that a call be sent in to police headquarters. Zukauskas was serving only on a temporary appointment and hesitated to assume the responsibility.

While they waited the arrival of detectives, Officer Zukauskas telephoned Miss de Bella and learned that the missing woman had left there at about three o'clock the previous afternoon.

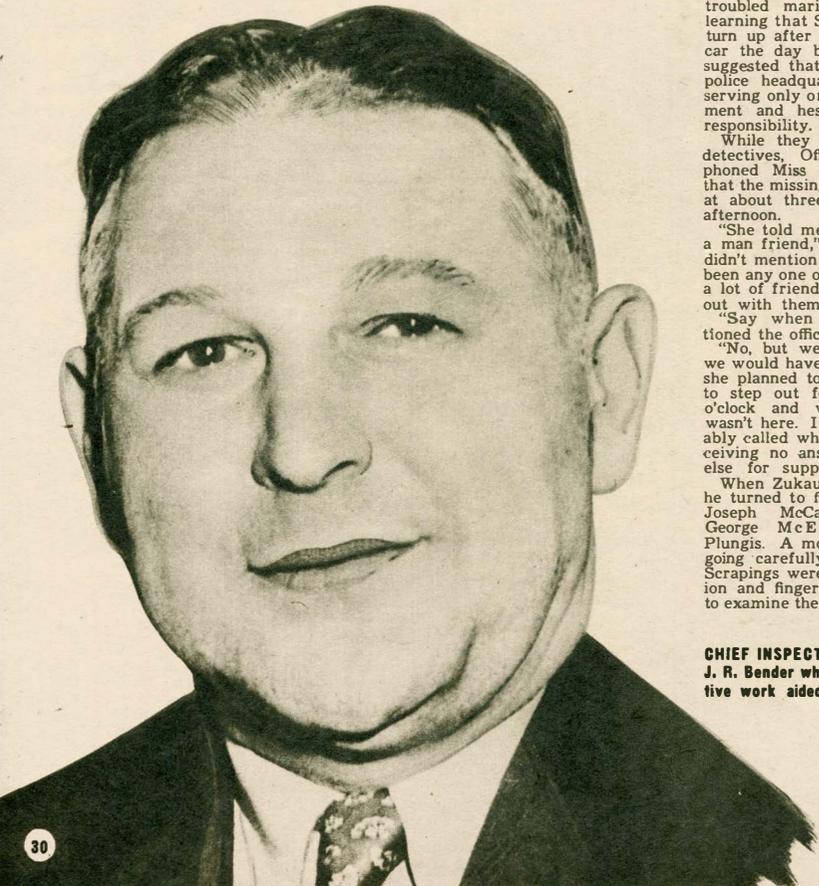
"She told me she was going to see a man friend," related the girl. "But didn't mention any name. Could have been any one of a dozen men, she had a lot of friends and frequently went out with them in the afternoon."

"Say when she'd return?" questioned the officer.

"No, but we'd spoken about what we would have for dinner so I'm sure she planned to get back early. I had to step out for a while about six o'clock and when I returned she wasn't here. I thought she had probably called while I was away and receiving no answer went some place else for supper."

When Zukauskas finished speaking he turned to find Detective Sergeant Joseph McCarthy and Detective George McElligott talking with Plungis. A moment later they were going carefully over the automobile. Scrapings were taken from the cushion and fingerprint men were called to examine the machine for any prints

**CHIEF INSPECTOR
J. R. Bender whose conscientious detective work aided in trapping the killer.**



POLICEMAN-KILLER

who was placed in the unique position of investigating a murder he committed.

that former occupants may have left.

Plungis said that the car had been washed the morning before and since that time no one, to his knowledge, had been near it except himself and Officer Zukauskas.

Meantime Miss de Bella reported that she had found Mrs. Plungis' suede handbag where she had left it in her bedroom. It contained the missing woman's engagement and wedding rings and close to fifty dollars in cash.

"Steffi probly carried only her change purse when she left the house," the woman reported. "She must certainly have been planning to return. She told me Tony had given her some money to pay for the children's support and she wanted to get the matter attended to last night."

While examining the car the detectives found two tiny holes in the rear of the front cushion. It was their opinion that these had been made by bullets of a small calibre. The material was cut from around them and would be sent, along with the scrapings of blood, to the police chemical laboratory for analysis.

DURING the next twenty-four hours a search was made for the missing woman in various places which she had been known to frequent, but no one could be found who had seen her since she left Miss de Bella's home. A description of the Plungis car was broadcast and anyone having seen it the night before was asked to come forward.

On Friday morning the laboratory report came in and showed that the stains on the seat cushion were human blood. These had been left from six to eight hours before their discovery. The material surrounding the holes bore traces of powder marks and it was the experts' testimony that they had been made with .32-calibre bullets.

On the car itself were three distinct sets of fingerprints. Those left by Plungis and the uniformed officer he'd asked to examine the car were quickly accounted for. The third set, of a much smaller hand, were quickly compared to a set of the missing woman's fingerprints on file with the Federal immigration authorities. Before the day was over it was learned that the two groups matched. Mrs. Plungis had definitely been in the blood-soaked car on the night of her disappearance!

Upon receipt of this information the police expressed their conviction that she had been murdered and her body done away with. They based this belief principally on the fact that more than a quart of blood had been spilled in the car, seeping down through the seat cushion.

In the rear seat of the machine, stuffed down behind the cushion, a woman's small linen handkerchief was discovered. Both Plungis and Miss de Bella said that they had never seen the article in Stephanie Plungis' possession so the authorities concluded that another woman might have been in the machine at the time of the crime.

Mrs. Plungis had been wearing only a light overcoat when she was last seen. Her overshoes were still at her



friend's house, therefore the police believed she had planned to remain out for only a short time.

Chief Inspector Joseph R. Bendles personally took charge of the investigation and following a conference with State's Attorney William F. Fitzgerald instructed his men to prepare a complete list of every man known to have been seen in the woman's company within the past few months. He was convinced that the crime had been motivated by jealousy on the part of one of the many suitors.

"The man we're looking for probably lives right here in Waterbury," Bendler suggested after questioning Plungis at length. "In the first place the woman hasn't spent any time away from the city; and secondly, if some out-of-town person is responsible for her disappearance he'd hardly have brought the car back and parked it for her husband to find the next day."

"But there was that missing gasoline; someone drove the machine at least fifty miles on the night of her disappearance," countered Detective McElligott.

"Well, if someone did kill her, and do away with the body, he'd certainly have taken it a distance from her home to dispose of it," replied Inspector Bendler. "In any event, once we round up every guy she's chased around with, we should have little

difficulty in checking their alibis for that night. And I'll want to know which one of them possessed a .32-calibre revolver. Which ones had automobiles of their own and which had to depend upon her for transportation to and from their rendezvous?"

The husband said that he had cleaned out his car at the time it was washed on the morning of November 1st, and was thus sure that the handkerchief found in the back seat must have been left there after that time. Had this belonged to another woman, as now appeared to be likely, Inspector Bendler theorized that at least two persons had been with the missing Mrs. Plungis the night she disappeared. He believed it improbable that she would have sat in the front seat alone, while a second person occupied the back seat.

Questioning Miss de Bella once more, he learned that Stephanie Plungis had virtually no other women friends. It was also extremely unlikely that she and her boy friend would have gone riding accompanied by some other couple, since she had been forced to keep her affairs with other men as secret as possible because of her marital situation.

Anna de Bella's whereabouts from Wednesday afternoon until Thursday morning was thoroughly checked and proved that (Continued on page 63)



WEALTHY

Armando Valdez and child, unaware of the fate destiny had planned for him.

CUBAN BEAUTY.

Gloria Valdez, wife of the wealthy avocado pear importer, witnessed her young husband's murder. He was shot in their home by one of two masked housebreakers.

THERE was nothing on that warm tropical night in Tampa, Florida, to suggest murder. A yellow moon rode high in the starlit heavens, and a cooling breeze gently rustled the palms. Tampans were relaxed, gay, and pleasure-bent.

Surely it was no forewarning of murder that kept Chief of Detectives W. D. Bush late at his desk at headquarters on that night. For he was busy with purely routine paper work.

And what of pretty, dark-eyed young Gloria Valdez as she alighted with her husband from their car in front of their comfortable home at 2706 Elmore street?

"Armando, I am very happy," she told her husband in soft Spanish as they walked towards the house. "We are back in America again. We have our little daughter. You are so handsome, Armando, and so successful in

business. Si, my loved. I am very happy."

Armando felt a sense of pride as he helped his wife and infant daughter up the front steps. And why not? All that his wife said was true. Armando's heart, too, was young and gay.

Valdez inserted his key in the lock, opened the door. His family entered the living room, snapping on the light. A slight frown of annoyance crossed Mrs. Valdez's pretty face.

"The light is on in the kitchen," she remarked. "I must be getting careless; I don't remember leaving it on when we went to the movie."

Her husband laughed good-naturedly and went into a bedroom to change his clothes. Mrs. Valdez, with the baby in her arms, went into the kitchen. As she crossed the threshold, the young mother stopped in amazement. The kitchen floor was littered

with cigarette butts. Surely she had not left her kitchen in such an untidy condition.

Suddenly, without warning, a man leaped from a corner of the room. He was dressed in dark clothes, a felt hat pulled low over his eyes, a handkerchief tied across the lower part of his face. A snub-nosed revolver was in his hand.

Mrs. Valdez stared, recovered quickly from her shock. "What are you doing here?" she demanded.

Valdez from the bedroom called out. "Did you speak to me, darling?"

"No, there's a—"

A hand clapped roughly over her mouth, cutting off the young mother's warning. Armando Valdez hurried into the kitchen. As he entered the room, another man, also in dark clothes and masked, leaped from behind the kitchen door. A pistol was jammed into Valdez's stomach.

"Who are you?" Valdez demanded angrily. "What do you want?"

"You know what we want, Valdez," the gunman answered in low, guttural tones.

With his free hand, the gunman began searching Valdez's pockets. Valdez made an attempt to grapple with the intruder. The gun barked twice at close range and Armando Valdez slumped to the floor. Standing astride the fallen man, the gunman deliberately fired three more shots into the writhing form of his victim.

Mrs. Valdez screamed. Placing her baby on the floor, she dropped on her knees beside her husband. "Armando . . . Armando!" The two gunmen fled from the house.

Five minutes later a squad car screeched to a stop out front. A group of officers hurried into the house led by husky, six-foot Chief of Detectives Bush. He was closely followed by Detectives Jose Vasquez and Joe Morris and Doctor Douglas Meighn.

STRANGE CLUE of the

WHAT SINISTER MOTIVE WAS BEHIND THE WANTON KILLING OF THE WELL-LIKED CUBAN IMPORTER OF AVOCADOS

By BENNETT WRIGHT



HATEFUL EYES
of the killer caused Mrs. Valdez to be able to identify him many months later.

Medical Examiner was not needed. The Medical Examiner needed only a glance to tell him that Armando Valdez was dead. He then turned his attention to quieting the young wife sufficiently to give a coherent account of what had happened. Chief Bush, meanwhile, conversed with J. W. Poston, a neighbor, who was in the house. "I'm the one who phoned you," related Poston. "I was in my bedroom next door when the Valdezes arrived home. I heard two shots, then three more a few seconds later. I heard Mrs. Valdez scream. Then I saw a man run out of the front door; another ran out of the back door and up the alley between my house and this one.

"I ran over here to see what was wrong. Valdez was on the floor like you see him now. I tried to phone the police from here, but the phone was dead. So I ran back to my house, called you, and came back over here." "What about those two men?" pressed Bush. "Describe them as fully as you can."

"They were gone before I got a good look at them," Poston frowned. "All I can say is that they were both medium sized and dressed in dark clothes with hats pulled low over their eyes. Both men had handkerchiefs tied over the lower part of their faces."

Bush strode to the front door and called the officers of a second squad car that had arrived. He ordered a swift canvass be made of the entire neighborhood, both in patrol cars and on foot, particularly in side streets and alleys. Returning to the kitchen, he asked Poston,

"And you say the telephone here was dead?"

"Yes," nodded the neighbor. "I had to return to my house to phone you."

"That's right, Chief," called out Detective Vasquez from the living room. "The wires on the phone have



ESCAPE

The masked gunmen fled down this alley after the murder, dropping Mrs. Valdez's jewelry as they ran. They hoped to confuse police in determining the motive.

been cut. This thing was obviously planned out in advance."

"I'll say it was," agreed Bush, looking down at the cigarette stubs on the kitchen floor. "Those two men waited here a long while to smoke this many cigarettes. Apparently they were hiding here in the kitchen waiting for Valdez to come home."

"Here's where they got in, Chief," sang out Detective Morris, examining a kitchen window that opened onto the back porch. "They forced the screen out here and jimmied the lock."

"Get a fingerprint man on that window sill right away," Bush replied grimly. "And have him see what he can do with these cigarette stubs."

On the back porch were several overturned crates of avocado pears, a mellow tropical fruit with a large seed in the center, the fruit scattered about the porch and in one corner

of the kitchen. Many of the pears had been sliced in half with a knife.

"They were cool devils," remarked Vasquez, "to stand around eating avocados while waiting for Valdez to come home."

Bush stooped down for a closer look at the fruit. "None of these pears were eaten," he answered, perplexed. "They were just sliced in half, then thrown aside."

Vasquez shrugged. "Maybe they were too green to suit the tastes of the killers."

Chief Bush let the puzzling factor of the avocados ride for the moment and went in to see how Mrs. Valdez was getting along.

"You can talk to her for a few moments," Meighn told him. "But take it easy. She's had a tremendous shock."

Of Cuban (Continued on page 59)

AVOCADO PEAR. . . .

WOMEN in the NEWS

ONE WOMAN (1), disappeared without leaving a trace, another (2) captured an armed bandit, a third, the former wife of a popular screen and radio actor (3) was jailed when police quelled a riot, and a fourth (4), herself a famous screen, stage and radio singer and comedienne, was the victim of burglars.

Perpetrator of the vanishing act was attractive Frances H. Gleason, 17-year-old Hyannis, Mass., high school senior, (1), who became the object of a nation-wide search when she disappeared from home. A tall blonde with green eyes, she was believed to have gone to New York or Hollywood in quest of a career as a model or an actress.

The amateur policewoman was 18-year-old Wanda Zebrowsky (2), not only very nice to look at but who takes her physical education course at Michigan State University, where she is a freshman, quite seriously, as a masked bandit found out to his sorrow.

Wanda and her family were awakened by bandits who had entered the Melody Inn, operated by her parents, through a window. Two of the trio fled, but Wanda managed to drop one of them, a husky 19-year-old, with a kick in the stomach, grab his double-barreled shot gun and cover him with it. Wanda and her mother trussed up the youth and turned him over to police when they arrived. Wanda wants to be a physical training teacher, and it looks like she's well fitted for the job.

The female Ray "Lost Weekend" Milland, Mrs. Virgie Peary (3), former wife of Hollywood actor Harold Peary, better known as "The Great Gildersleeve," chats with Officer E. L. Burke at Lincoln Heights Jail in Los Angeles, Calif., after she was booked on suspicion of drunkenness. It all started when Mrs. Peary insisted on singing in Bud Abbott's Back Stage Supper Club, and a woman patron objected. Soon the whole night spot was in an uproar, and it took eight policemen to quell the riot. Mrs. Peary was but one of the arrested. Two of the policemen's eyes were blackened in the free-for-all.

Hollywood actress Betty Hutton and her husband, Ted Briskin (4), re-enact the "cupboard was bare" line of the nursery rhyme, "Old Mother Hubbard," as they stand in front of empty shelves and examine one of the few antique items left behind by burglars. Dishes and figurines valued at \$2000 were stolen from the couple's guest house. Two bathroom towels with Miss Hutton's name inscribed on them were also stolen.



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PATHOS is nothing new to the human race. Emotional suffering is as old as man himself. But most people conceal their sentiments or attempt to disguise them. Only on rare occasions do people completely give way to their feelings. However, in a few places, such as the criminal courtroom, heart-rending and anguishing scenes are enacted frequently and uninhbitedly.

Unable to control herself (1) was Eunice Irise Smith, 31, Santa Monica, Calif., beauty parlor operator who told a Los Angeles coroner's jury how her common-law husband, Fred H. Gabbert, 42, shot and killed her secret admirer, Ralph G. Snyder, 31, to climax a mounting jealousy. She then completely collapsed and was led from the courtroom by Officer E. L. Hicks and Policewoman Florence A. Allen.

"Don't worry, mother," pleaded (2) eighteen-year-old Lois Lawson of San Pedro, Calif., "everything will be all right." But the girl's words failed to stop the tears, for Mrs. Matilda Lawson had just heard Lois accused of automobile larceny, a charge which grew out of a joyride in a car said to have been stolen by the girl's boy friend.

Also sobbing (3) was Wilnetta Wheeler (left) in the arms of Erma Ralphs at the inquest in Los Angeles into the slaying of two Inglewood, Calif., store officials by a former employee. Miss Wheeler crawled under a gun battle to escape the killer, who was later slain in a gun battle with the police.

Mary Vedeneff (4), sister of Alex Haproff, victim in the "invitation to death" slaying in Lynwood, Calif., weeps at the inquest in Los Angeles. Virginia Manthey at left, consoles her. Ernest Brougher admitted beating Haproff at his home after Haproff had been invited there to attend a party. The jury recommended that Mr. and Mrs. Bougher and Donald Lawhead, a friend of the Boughers, be held to answer for the murder of Alex Haproff, who died as a result of the beating.



CASE OF THE GUN- CRAZED WIFE KILLER

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15

end of the trail," Horton said. "The killer probably spotted the patrols on the highway and decided he had a better chance floating downstream in the current."

"He must have come ashore again, somewhere," Cibulla reasoned. "Let the dogs roam along the bank here for a while and then try the New Jersey side. He may have crossed over."

After issuing these instructions, the lieutenant took the wet shoe and returned dejectedly to the radio car where he made his report to Captain Dunn.

Dunn studied the shoe thoughtfully. "So far this is our only clue," he remarked. "I'll send it down to the boys in the crime lab, and see if they can give us a line on the identity of the murderer."

"One thing we can be sure of," Cibulla observed. "This punk is more than just a prowler. A chicken thief doesn't shoot cops to get away from a rap like that."

Captain Dunn nodded in agreement. "And the fact that the townspeople don't know anything about him indicates he's not a local man. There's an alarm out on him to neighboring states, but the description is so meager, it may not help much. Dunn paused to light a cigaret, then said, "I'm going back and dig into the files, while you keep this end covered."

Before leaving Brainards, Captain Dunn sent a trooper to the crime laboratory with the mud-covered shoe. Then, taking Detective Bodenstein with him, the captain returned to the Washington headquarters. There the two officers spent the next half hour leafing through the rogues gallery files. They selected the photographs of several criminals whose general descriptions resembled that of Sergeant O'Donnell's kill.

"Perry is in no condition to look these over," Dunn pointed out. "We'll have to check on them ourselves."

The job of following up on the criminals was a tedious one but the officers went at it vigorously. They found that some of the felons were back in prison, while others had died or disappeared.

By ten o'clock that same morning, all but one of the ex-convicts had been eliminated for one reason or another.

Dunn and Bodenstein centered their attention on the last of their suspects.

"Joe Mazzeo," the captain read from the criminal's record. "Two-time loser for armed robbery."

"I know that trigger-happy punk," Detective Bodenstein said. "We sent him away for a stick-up job in Camden. I worked on the case myself. I remember he was a little too handy with a gun."

"According to the information on him," Dunn revealed, "he has a girl friend named Libby Cole in Phillipsburg. That would be a likely place for him to hide out."

"It adds up," Bodenstein remarked.



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"Mazzeo may have been on the lam from some stick-up when he ran into O'Donnell and Perry. After the shooting, he might have stolen a boat somewhere and made the trip down to Phillipsburg on the current."

"And that's where we're going," Dunn snapped. "On the double!"

MINUTES later, the two officers were speeding south along highway 24. In Phillipsburg, Dunn and Bodenstein went directly to the apartment of Libby Cole.

In answer to their knock, the door was opened a few inches and a faded blonde peered out.

"You Libby Cole?" Bodenstein asked, flashing his badge.

"Yehi," the blonde replied drily. "Is there a law against it?"

"Skip the comedy," Dunn glowered. "Where's Mazzeo?"

"He ain't here." The woman tried to close the door, but a large, square-toed shoe was thrust against the jamb.

"We're not playing games, sister!" the captain rapped. "We're on a murder case. If you're harboring a criminal or withholding information, you'll be in line for a long stretch yourself."

Reluctantly, the girl jerked open the door and motioned the officers into a small, untidy, one-room apartment. A quick search by Dunn and Bodenstein satisfied them that no one else was there. Not till then did Bodenstein remove his hand from his coat pocket.

Suddenly, he bent over and picked something from the wastebasket at his feet. It was a bloodstained man's handkerchief, and in one corner it bore the single initial "M".

"You'd better give us the straight story," Dunn told the woman. "Start from the beginning."

The blonde dragged nervously on a cigaret. "Joe was here about seven o'clock this morning," she admitted. "His hand was cut and he looked like he'd been on a bender. He told me he'd had a fight in a barroom somewhere. I bandaged his hand, and after a while he went out for a drink." The woman ground out her cigaret. "That's the last I saw of him," she concluded.

Without delay, Dunn and Bodenstein left the woman and began a canvass of the local bars.

At their fourth stop, a dingy, side-street tavern, the officers found their quarry hunched over the bar.

"Don't make any funny moves. Mazzeo." Dunn counselled as he and Bodenstein flanked the thug. Before the ex-convict knew what was happening, his wrists were handcuffed and he was being led out of the tavern.

Back at headquarters, Mazzeo glared insolently at the officers. "What are you coppers after me for this time?" he snarled.

"A little matter of murder." Dunn retorted. "A state policeman was killed and another wounded by a man who fits your description. Where did you spend last night?"

"I was sleeping off a jag in a barn outside of New Village," the ex-convict answered. "But I didn't kill anyone."

Captain Dunn looked down at Mazzeo's bandaged hand and said, "The guy we're looking for was wounded. It wouldn't be a .38 slug that ripped your hand, would it now?"



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(The average American today has a choice of just going where 'his feet take him', or choosing wisely the course to follow. Let's skip ahead 10 years, and take a look at John Jones—and listen to him . . .)

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"I've got a little money coming in, regularly. Not much—but enough. And I tell you, when you can go to bed every night with nothing on your mind except the fun you're going to have tomorrow—that's as near Heaven as man gets on this earth!

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"Don't do it, John!" she said. "Please don't! For the first time in our lives, we're really saving money. It's wonderful to know that every single payday we have more money put aside! John, if we can only keep up this saving, think what it can mean! Maybe someday you won't have to work. Maybe we can own a home. And oh, how good it would feel to know that we need never worry about money when we're old!"

"Well, even after she got better, I stayed away from the weekly poker game—quit dropping a little cash at the hot spots now and then—gave up some of the things a man feels he has a right to. We didn't have as much fun for a while but we paid our taxes and the doctor and—we didn't touch the Bonds.

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UNCENSORED DETECTIVE

"I cut my hand in a barroom brawl yesterday afternoon," Mazzeo replied. "I got witnesses to prove it."

Mazzeo supplied the name of the tavern in which the fight had taken place. Captain Dunn promptly telephoned the place and requested the bartender to come to headquarters.

FIFTEEN minutes later, the barman arrived and unhesitatingly corroborated the ex-convict's story. The witness further testified that on Sunday Mazzeo had spent the entire afternoon and most of the evening in the tavern.

With Mazzeo's alibi established for the time of the shooting, Dunn had no choice but to release the man.

After the thug and the bartender had departed, Bodenstein slumped into a chair. "That puts us out on a limb," he gloomed. "We don't even have a suspect now."

"Better check the teletype alarms and the 'wanted' circulars that came in during the past couple of hours," Dunn ordered. "In the meantime, I'll see if they've found out anything about the shoe that was found near the river."

While Bodenstein was leafing through the recent alarms, Captain Dunn put in a call to Chief Chemist John Duffy at the crime laboratory in West Trenton.

"We checked with the manufacturer," Duffy told the captain. "From the serial number in the shoe, we learned that it was part of a job lot sold in a Newark department store. In addition, we've analyzed acid stains and brass specks on the welt, and my conclusion is that your man is unquestionably a metal worker of some kind."

Dunn thanked the chemist and hung up. The report hadn't told him much, but it confirmed his earlier suspicion that the killer was from out of town.

Just then the door opened and Bodenstein barged in, a triumphant look on his face and a yellow teletype sheet in his hand.

"Wanted in connection with the murder of his wife," the detective read. "Ernest Rittenhouse, age 30, medium height, black hair, swarthy complexion. The description fits our man, and he certainly had a strong motive for avoiding arrest. His wife's body was found in their apartment on Liberty Street, Orange."

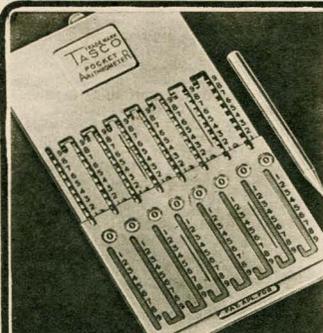
Captain Dunn consulted a map on the office wall. Orange was fifty miles east of Brainards, and five miles from Newark where the shoe had been bought. The loose ends in the case were falling into a logical pattern.

"It looks as though Rittenhouse is our killer, all right," Dunn agreed. "But he's still hiding out somewhere. We'd better check with Cibulla before we go chasing anywhere else."

BACK at the riverbank, the manhunt was still going full strength. Most of the men had gone without rest since the start of the chase.

Dunn and Bodenstein found Cibulla and the main searching party two miles below Brainards on the Pennsylvania side of the river approaching the property of the Portland Cement Plant.

"We've gone over both banks of the river with a fine-tooth comb," Cibulla reported. "We've worked our way inland up to this point and figured the shacks and outbuildings here



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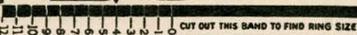
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might be a likely place for a hideout." A thorough search of the cement company's buildings proved fruitless, but the men pushed on. At the edge of a clearing, a half mile farther on, the policemen came upon a small, one-room shack such as is used by hunters during the duck season. The shack seemed, at first glance, to be deserted. But a closer inspection showed that a rear window had been forced open.

Quickly and silently, half a dozen officers surrounded the building. Trooper Donald Wentzel of the Pennsylvania force and Trooper Edward Carroll rushed the door while Officer Frank Vedo covered them with his gun.

Under the combined weight of the policemen, the latch gave way and the door swung open.

In a far corner, crouching like a trapped rat, the swarthy-faced killer crouched. Timidly, he walked out of the shack, his hands well above his head. One foot was shoeless and on his right foot was the mate of the shoe found at the river bank. He readily admitted that he was Ernest Rittenhouse, an unemployed braser, and that his home was in Orange, New Jersey.

On examination, the officers learned that Rittenhouse had caught two of Trooper Perry's bullets, one in the left leg and one in the left hip. The wounds, however, were superficial and had caused no great damage.

After the killer was taken from the shack, he was brought back to the Washington, New Jersey, station and lodged in a cell.

Then, in the presence of witnesses and a police stenographer, Rittenhouse admitted shooting Sergeant O'Donnell and Trooper Perry. When the officers had accosted him on the railroad bridge, the prisoner said, he

thought they were after him for his wife's murder.

Fearing capture, he had blasted his way to temporary freedom, the killer related, and at times his pursuers were so close that he could hear them crashing through the thicket.

"I stayed in the water till long after dark," Rittenhouse told the officers. "Then I waded ashore and walked to the highway. When I saw all the police cars on the road, I figured I'd better get back to the river. I floated another mile or so downstream and came out again."

He had tried to break into an old pump house before finding the shack in which he was captured.

Sergeant O'Donnell's gun, which the killer had dropped in the river, was later retrieved with the aid of an electro-magnet.

Following the capture of Rittenhouse, New Jersey and Pennsylvania authorities lost no time in settling the question of jurisdiction in the case. The wife-slaying charge against Rittenhouse was held in abeyance, giving full priority to the two indictments.

In a packed courtroom, Warren County Prosecutor Saul Schechter presented the case against the murderer of Sergeant O'Donnell. Public sentiment was reflected in the fact that the jury deliberated less than two hours before returning a verdict of guilty.

On September 19th, 1945, Judge Clark C. Bowers sentenced Rittenhouse to eight years at hard labor on the assault charge and life imprisonment for murder.

THE END

The names, Libby Cole and Joe Mazzeo, as used in this story, are fictitious in order to conceal the identity of persons innocently involved in investigation of the case.—EDITOR.

KILLED EX-G. I. GROOM



Las Vegas, Nev.—Mrs. Bridget Waters, 26-year-old Irish war bride, shot and killed her estranged husband Frank Waters while holding her baby in her arms. She flew here from Britain to attempt to fight his divorce suit.

I HELPED FLEECE THE SUCKERS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 19

customers was merely by giving them inferior accommodations for one hell of a big price. If that had been so I never would have fainted dead away in a courtroom some few months later.

The other methods were strictly illegal in anyone's book. The enterprise which netted the most cash was a devious form of downright blackmail.

ON MY third day on the job I was introduced to this racket. I learned quickly the reason Al had offered me a job. He needed a confidential employee who wouldn't holler coppers when she saw what was going on. The fact that I knew several attractive girls, an important item without which Al couldn't have worked one of his rackets, helped my getting the job.

We would watch the check-ins carefully. Now, no matter what you may think it is not too difficult to tell a man and wife of long standing from a man and girl friend of recent date. Of course, sometimes we'd be wrong. But we had an out on that and no harm was done.

To give you an idea, let us take the man and girl who registered as Mr. and Mrs. Jerry Wixen of New York City. He was well in his forties and she was all of twenty-three. She was good looking but flashy. His clothes were expensive but cut as conservatively as a senator from Ohio.

At about ten o'clock at night, I plugged their room in on the switchboard. Al was standing behind to make sure everything went all right. The girl answered the phone.

"Mr. Wixen, please," I said. "I have

a long distance call from New York."

Wixen got on the wire. I cleared my throat and went into my act. "Mr. Wixen? Will you hold on for a moment. Your wife is on the wire from New York."

Now, if Wixen had howled, "You're crazy! My wife is standing right here." I would have simply apologized and pretended I'd given him a call meant for someone else.

But when Wixen said as he did "Good God, how did she know I was here?" Or any equivalent, we'd get ready to give him the works. Of course, the call would never come through. I told Wixen that the circuit was broken somewhere and that the call would doubtless come through again.

It never did but that didn't matter. All we wanted to do on the first step of the racket was to scare the sucker, to put him into a receptive frame of mind for what was coming a few days later.

Forty-eight hours later Al asked Wixen to come to his private office. I sat at a desk there acting the role of confidential secretary in order to hear what went on.

"Mr. Wixen," said Al, "we've had a couple of private detectives here lately. They wanted to take photographs of the hotel register."

"Really?" said Wixen. "Why?"

"I have learned," said Al gravely, "that they are employed by your wife. I assume they want a photostat of your handwriting on the register to prove you were here with another woman."

At this point Mr. Wixen wore a most unhappy expression.

SLAIN BY WAR BRIDE



Frank Waters died instantly from a bullet fired by his Irish war bride following an argument that started when he called upon her to take their child for a walk. His wife was held by the local police for questioning.



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"Moreover," said Al, "if the facts are correct this hotel can not countenance such goings on."

By now Wixen was abject. "Have you let them take the pictures? Have you told them anything?" "Not yet."

At this juncture, Wixen and all his counterparts usually made their proposition. In consideration of a fat fee, Al promised to get rid of the non-existent private detectives, to cover Mr. Wixen up to his wife and to permit him to enjoy his stolen holiday.

Mr. Wixen and others paid in cash for these things. And, I may add, Mr. Wixen paid gladly. And that is the hallmark of any racket. When the sucker is eager and willing to pay his money, when he entertains no desire whatever to squawk the boys who take him are happy, he's happy, and the coppers can sleep quietly in their precinct houses.

BY EARLY February the Crosston Hotel was running full blast. The rates which the guests paid alone would have filled the pockets of an average greedy guy. But Al was greedier than that.

At night a dozen card tables were set up in the lobby and bridge and gin rummy took over. Here, Al worked on a concession basis. The card sharps paid him so much for the privilege of taking the suckers in Al's lobby.

The guests never had a chance. The sharpers posed as vacationists and went to town with their marked decks and "readers."

But the number one stunt which was worth all the other money making

devices put together was the false arrest gag. It's only drawback was that it couldn't be pulled too often without arousing the suspicions of the authorities.

The first time I heard of it, Al said to me one night, "June, do you have a girl friend as good looking as yourself. I've got something where she can pick up a fast couple of G's."

Two G's sounded good. I said, "What's the matter with me?"

Al shook his head. "I want a girl to move in for a fast take, then get out. On this racket we need a different girl each time. She can't hang around after we land the sucker. Now, do you know anyone?"

Well, I knew a number of hot looking kids with few enough scruples to fill the bill. After a little thought I selected Doris.

Doris was a tall slim blond with an imperious air which hid an avaricious heart. I dare say that there were certain things which Doris would not do for money. However, none of them come to my mind at this moment.

She came into the hotel about eleven o'clock one night and I introduced her to Al. Al took her into his office to give her instructions. She emerged a half hour later, sidled over to me and said, "Who's George Rasen?"

Rasen, who was at that moment sitting in the lobby, was a man over fifty who dressed like Leo Durocher. He had never admitted that he wasn't as young as he made out. He was a skirt chaser from way back and never took a vacation from that pastime.

In addition to these qualifications, he was a most frugal character. De-



Chicago, Ill.—Mrs. Doris Murray sacrificed her reputation to save her husband's life. She told of her eight-hour tryst with Canadian Army Major John Fletcher, which ended in her husband killing his life-long friend.

spite the fact that he was extremely wealthy, he never laid out a nickel for anything when he might obtain it for free.

Al had picked a perfect specimen for his new angle.

Al came out of his office as Doris was eyeing Rasen. "Okay," he said, "you know what you're do?"

Doris nodded. "I'm to pick him up, to go to his room with him and then snatch his wallet."

"Right," said Al. "And be sure he sees you when you snatch it."

That baffled me. I'd heard of dames pinching guys' wallets before. I'd even seen it done once or twice but I'd never heard of anyone deliberately making certain that she was seen doing it. I said as much. Doris and Al smiled at me.

"Hang around," said Al. "I'll need you anyway. Get on the switchboard and wait."

If Doris had been twenty years older and only ten percent as pretty she still would not have had any difficulty in picking up George Rasen. As it was she accomplished the task with neatness and dispatch in something well under par.

A few minutes later Rasen summoned a bellboy, ordered cracked ice and soda up to the room and headed for the elevator with Doris on his arm and a self-satisfied smirk on his face. Al stood by the desk and kept an expectant eye on the stairway. I assumed my position at the switchboard.

Less than twenty minutes later it happened. I heard French heels clicking down the stairway and the switchboard buzzed like a swarm of bees. I glanced at the board and saw Rasen's room was ringing.

I plugged in and said, "Office. Good evening."

It seemed that Rasen was in no mood for the amenities. "Damn it!" he yelled. "That dame's run off with my wallet. She went down the stairs. Grab her and call the cops. I'll be down in a minute."

No sooner had he hung up than Doris appeared in the stair well. She winked at Al. She had a pigskin wallet in her left hand. Al glanced over at me. "Did he tell you to call the cops?"

I nodded.

"Well, call 'em. Hurry."

I stared at him in amazement. "You mean you really want me to call the police. You really want them to arrest Doris?"

It was Doris who answered astonishingly. "We sure do, kid. And get a move on."

"Here," said Al. "Give me that wallet."

Doris handed the wallet she had presumably stolen from George Rasen. In something of a fog, I plugged in and called the police station, requested that an officer be sent immediately to the Crosstown Hotel.

At this time Al had put the wallet in his own pocket. The elevator opened and Rasen walked into the lobby. His face was as red as the hibiscus which blossomed in the hotel garden. His tie was awry and his coat wrinkled.

He glared like a headlight at Doris. "You little tramp," he roared. "You crook. Where's my wallet?"

Doris gave him her best North-Sea-in-the-winter look. "I don't know what you're talking about," she said.

Rasen cursed. He turned to Al. "Did you call the police?"

"Yes," said Al. "And I hope you know what you're doing, Mr. Rasen.

The hotel doesn't want to get involved in any trouble."

At this moment a patrolman strode into the lobby. He eyed our little group and said, "What's the trouble?"

"Arrest that girl," said Rasen. "She stole my wallet."

"Wait a minute," said Al warily. "I want it understood that Mr. Rasen, not the hotel, is making this complaint."

"You're damned right I am," he roared. "I'll go along with you and make the charge."

Doris, Rasen and the copper went out of the lobby. Al came behind the desk and said, "Give me the pass key. Quick."

I took it down from its hook and handed it to him. "What do you want that for?"

"To put the sucker's wallet back on his bureau."

"But why?"

AL HAD no time to answer me. He went upstairs, replaced the wallet, then came down again. Only then did he explain.

"Doris has Rasen cold on a suit for false arrest. It's so cold he doubtless will settle out of court. He says she stole his dough and has had her pinched. When the matron searches her, she'll find no wallet. Rasen will find it where Doris pinched it. It's absolutely cold. Any civil jury in the world would award Doris a fat sum."

He was absolutely right. Doris was released that night. Rasen found his wallet and thought he had been seeing things. His lawyer assured him he could never successfully defend Doris' suit. He settled out of court for seventy-five hundred dollars.

Of course, this was a delicate stunt to work and it couldn't be pulled too often. However, that is exactly what we did, pulled it just once too often.

I procured three girls for Al to work this racket. The last time it fell down. The D. A.'s office had become suspicious of two false arrest actions from the same hotel under exactly the same circumstances.

At the time we fell flat on our faces I'd dug up a cute little brunette, named Alice. We had a perfect sucker as a guest, an old lecher whose name was Forrester.

During the time we were setting up the play I was spending most of my spare time with the company of a tall, sunburned lad named Dan Balsan. He had told me he was a Chicago business man and we were mutually attracted to each other.

The first part of the take went on schedule. Alice went up to Forrester's room, stole his wallet and came racing down the stairs. An instant later the expected phone call came from Forrester's room. He demanded I hold the girl and call the police.

I did both these things. Alice gave the wallet to Al, and a little later the copper arrived and went off again with Alice and a fuming Forrester.

Behind the desk, Al handed the wallet and the hotel passkey to me. "Go up," he said, "and put this leather back on Forrester's bureau."

I took the wallet and went up to the room on the fourth floor. I was just about to put the key in the lock when I felt a hand on my arm.

I turned my head to see Dan Balsan. I smiled at him but he did not smile in return.

He said, "What are you doing?"

"Nothing. I'll be with you in a minute. I'll meet you in the lobby."



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"You'll meet me in the Dade county jail," he said. "That's Forrester's wallet you have there."

I stared at him in surprise. "What do you know about it?"

"More than you think." He held a glittering badge out in the palm of his hand. "I'm from the D. A.'s office. I've been looking into some of the things in this hotel. Maybe you'd like to tell me about them."

I shook my head stubbornly. "All right," he said. "Forrester's wallet was stolen. You've got it. Any jury would send you up for that."

I was panicky then. "But I didn't steal it."

"I know you didn't. But you'll either come down to the D. A.'s office and tell us exactly what did happen or go to jail for stealing, yourself."

There wasn't much choice there. There was an empty sensation at the pit of my stomach. Dan took my arm and led me out a side entrance to the street. A few moments later I was talking to the D. A. And brother, I was talking fast.

The natural upshot of that was that Al and I were indicted. I spent a mis-

erable and remorseful six weeks in jail awaiting trial. Then at last it came. And right after it my sentence.

I regained consciousness to find Waldron, my lawyer, holding a glass of water to my mouth. I gulped it and managed to sit up. I observed that the judge was regarding me with something akin to sympathy.

"Counselor," he said to Waldron, "if your client is ready I shall finish pronouncing sentence."

"She is ready, your honor."

"Very well—to a term of five years in the State Penitentiary at Raiford. However, in view of the fact that the jury has recommended mercy, because of her aid to the District Attorney, I hereby suspend that sentence."

Have you ever been snatched from the hangman's rope? Have you ever been dragged from the blackest pit of despair? That's how I felt then.

I'm no dope. I've never been in jail. But I've been closer than I ever want to be again. Little Junie is back car-hopping again. I'll never make a million in it but I'll sleep nights in my bedroom instead of a cell.

GRAVE GUARDS



Chicago—Police armed with riot guns stand on guard against body snatchers at tomb of James M. Ragan, racing news czar. He died from gunshot wounds but thorough medical autopsy revealed mercury in body.

SECRET OF THE REAPPEARING LOG CHAIN

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 23

about a mile from town." the deputy said. "It looked odd, sitting out there in a sea of mud. When we checked license numbers, we found it was Worm's pickup."

"Where is the truck now?"

"Outside. We were careful about driving it in, not ruining fingerprints and all that."

Caskey called in Deputy Round and the two of them went outside and inspected the muddy machine. He looked for a log chain in the short bed. There was none. There were no bloodstains nor other indications of a fight.

Exasperated he turned to Deputy Round, "See that nobody touches this machine until we go over it more thoroughly."

The deputy nodded and Caskey went back to his office and put in a call to the state identification bureau at Des Moines and asked that a fingerprint expert be sent over immediately. The bureau chief consented and in less than an hour, an expert was dusting all possible surfaces and looking for clear latents. He spent a couple of hours on the truck and when he finally packed up his kit, Caskey said, "Well!"

"Several good impressions on the door, the steering wheel and the windshield," he said. "I don't know yet how they'll turn out. They might be of one man or a dozen. They probably belong to the owner." "You mean if anyone else had anything to do with Tommy Worm's disappearance he or she would probably wear gloves?" Caskey questioned.

"Exactly," the expert replied. "And what I found along with the fingerprints practically proves it."

"What do you mean?" the sheriff asked tensely.

"I found prints on all surfaces which could have been left there only by a piece of cloth or a pair of gloves," the man said.

Promising to give an early report, the expert went back to Des Moines to photograph and classify the latents which he had lifted with cellophane tape from Worm's machine.

Then Sheriff Caskey and Deputy Round went back to the vicinity where the deputies had found Worm's truck stuck in the mud. They canvassed residents for several miles around in hopes of finding someone who had seen the truck being driven off the highway into the muddy field. They worked hard for several hours, but had no luck. No one had seen or heard anything.

When Caskey got back to Bedford, Gene Downer was waiting for him in his office. "Heard you wanted to see me, Sheriff," he said.

"That's right," Caskey replied. "I guess you've heard by now that Tommy Worm is missing. His wife said you stopped by to see him yesterday?"

"And that I did," Downer replied with a sharp tone. "He wasn't there, as you know. Any harm in my stopping?"

"That remains to be seen," the sheriff retorted. "You didn't happen to return something you'd previously borrowed, did you?"

Downer looked puzzled. "No. I wanted to see Tommy about some feed

for my stock. Just what did you think I'd borrowed?"

"A log chain, maybe?" Caskey said, and he watched Downer's reaction closely.

The farmer shook his head. "I don't know anything about a log chain, Sheriff. But I'll be happy to do anything I can to help you find out what happened to Tommy Worm."

"Then you don't have any ideas about his disappearance?"

"Not a single one," Downer replied emphatically. "He was an honest, God-fearing, sober man who never looked at any women but his wife. There simply isn't any reason for him to disappear. Unless—"

"Unless what?"

"Unless he is a robbery victim." Caskey nodded. "We've thought of that too. And just as a matter of routine, I don't imagine you'd mind telling me just where you were on the night of November 4, from eight o'clock on?"

"Not at all," Downer replied. And he proceeded to give Caskey a detailed account of his movements on the night in question. The sheriff assigned Les Round to check on it. The deputy soon returned with the report that Downer's statement had checked out okay.

THE news had broken in both daily and weekly newspapers by this time and the entire county was buzzing with speculation over the mystery. Caskey instructed his men to be on the alert for chance remarks which might serve as a lead. And he and Jones and Round kept up their relentless questioning of everyone even remotely connected with the missing man. He put Worm's description out over the police teletype and asked Iowa State Police to broadcast the particulars at regular intervals. Also, he sent wires to Worm's out-of-town relatives and friends in hopes of obtaining a clue to his whereabouts in that manner.

Days passed, however, and not one of the many angles being worked bore fruit. Worm's disappearance had been thorough, indeed.

As Caskey and Round talked over the work they had accomplished to date, the sheriff said, "If he's been kidnapped, his wife would have received ransom notes by now."

Round nodded. "What about the possibility of amnesia?" he suggested.

"In that case, there's been plenty of time for us to find out about it," Caskey replied. "The way I see it, there's only one answer to the question of what's happened to Tommy Worm."

"You mean—murder?" The sheriff nodded. "I'm convinced of it."

"But there are no clues pointing to it, and not a shred of evidence," Round pointed out.

"Tommy Worm's murderer was indeed clever," the sheriff said. "But he's bound to have made a mistake somewhere. First, we'll start looking for a body or some circumstance which might tell us what was done with the body."

Caskey planned his strategy with characteristic thoroughness. And dur-

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ing the next few days, dozens of men in organized posses and hundreds of Bedford citizens acting on their own swarmed over every nook and corner of Taylor County. But when they got through and pooled their results, Caskey discovered that the gigantic effort had not turned up one clue or lead.

In desperation, the sheriff called the state police bureau in Des Moines. "I want one of your best men to work with me on the Worm case," he told the bureau chief. Early the next day, State Agent Gregson arrived in Bedford. After Caskey had brought him up to date on the facts, the two of them, accompanied by Les Round and Attorney Jones, drove back to the Worm farm and questioned the distracted Dorothy Worm. She, too, was now convinced that her husband was dead, but still she could offer no possible suggestion as to a motive.

This left the officers with only one possible theory. "Whoever called Tommy Worm out that night of November 4 must have had robbery in mind," Caskey said.

Gregson nodded. "He evidently thought Worm's billfold was as fat as his cittle." Then in a different tone, "If you don't mind, I'd like to question Worm's neighbors again. They've had a little time to meditate since you made your last rounds and they may recall something important."

Caskey agreed at once. He and Gregson, Round and Jones began another canvass of the residents of Con-

way community. Hours passed and results were disappointing. They still couldn't find anyone who had seen Tommy Worm any later than November 3, a full twenty-four hours before his disappearance.

Just when they were about to give up and drive back to town, they did learn one meager fact from a farmer who lived near the spot where the Worm pick-up truck had been found.

"I didn't see Mr. Worm, but I did see his truck on the night of November 4," the man stated.

"Where was it? And what time did you see it?" Caskey asked eagerly.

"It was on the road near the place where your men found it," the witness replied. "I not only saw the truck, but the coupe trailing close behind it."

"Could the coupe have been hitched to the truck with a log chain?" Gregson broke in.

The farmer shook his head. "The truck wasn't towing the coupe, if that's what you mean. Looked to me more like it was arranged for the coupe to follow it. When the truck slowed up, the coupe would slow up. You get what I mean. As to the time, it was between nine and ten o'clock."

"I don't suppose you recognized the persons in either machine?" the sheriff asked.

The man shook his head. "There was only the driver in each vehicle. It was too dark to see who they were. And I didn't particularly try. I rec-

SELF-DESTRUCTION



New York—Bruno Bunick, 27-year-old Ex-Navy man, choked his wife to death and later committed suicide in his jail cell. He called the Police Dept. and said calmly: "I just strangled my wife. I guess you better come and get me." Mrs. Bunick, the victim, was an expectant mother.

ognized the truck as belonging to Mr. Worm and took it for granted he was driving it."

Did the coupe mean anything in the mystifying puzzle of Worm's disappearance? The investigators decided that it did and began probing around for other clues pointing to a coupe in connection with Worm's still unknown fate. In this manner, they learned something else of seeming significance from one of Worm's nearest neighbors. He stated that he had noticed a strange coupe parked in a lane near the Worm home on several occasions.

"When is the first time you noticed this particular car?" Caskey asked.

The man's answer jolted the investigators. "Three years ago," he replied.

"You're certain the coupe you saw on the several occasions is the same one?" Gregson put in.

"Positive," the man said firmly. "Not only did it park in the same place, but it always had the same parties in it—a man and a woman."

"Any particular time of day it parked there?"

The man nodded. "Nearly always early in the evening. Usually left around nine or ten."

"I don't suppose you recognized this man and woman in the coupe?" Caskey questioned.

The informant shook his head. "Never got that close. Figured it was none of my business what man and

woman wanted to cuddle up in that lane. I've seen other cars parked there and I wouldn't have remembered that particular coupe if I hadn't seen it so many times."

THE sheriff turned the man's statement over in his mind. It was obvious that the lane was being used as a rendezvous for lovers. And it was equally as clear that the parked coupe might have nothing to do with the coupe seen trailing Worm's pickup on the night of his disappearance. But on the other hand, there might be a connection and the investigators could not afford to overlook the possibility.

At Caskey's request, the farmer guided the officers to the lane in question. They discovered it was on the Worm property.

"I told Tommy about the cars being parked here at night," the farmer declared. "And more than once. I warned him he ought to investigate."

"And how did Worm take your warnings?" Caskey asked.

"He just laughed," the farmer replied. "Said he didn't see any particular harm in letting boys and their girls do a little necking in his lane."

Caskey and his aides looked the terrain over carefully in hopes of discovering a clue, but their hopes soon faded. They found a woman's handkerchief and a number of footprints and tire prints. These items had no meaning, however, except to corroborate

THROTTLED WIFE



New York—Mrs. Bruno Bunick, shown in her wedding dress, was choked to death by her husband because she nagged him. He told police, before committing suicide, that on the morning of the crime she began her usual bickering and he, unable to endure it another moment, strangled her.

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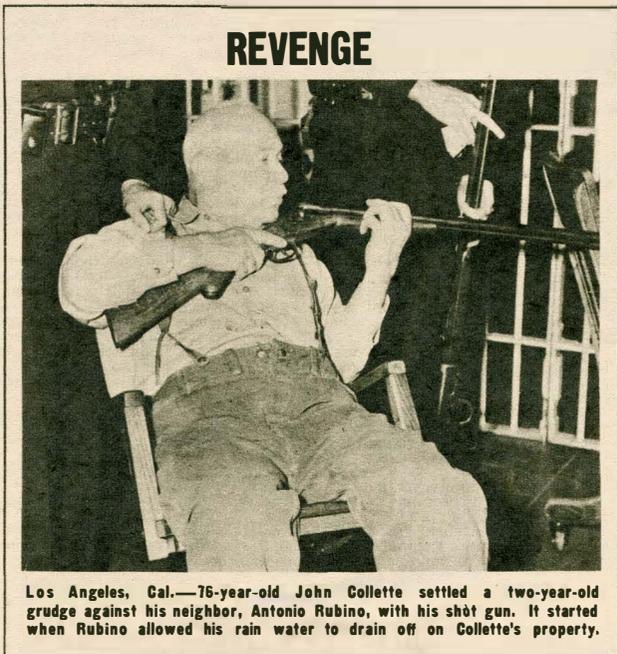
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Los Angeles, Cal.—76-year-old John Collette settled a two-year-old grudge against his neighbor, Antonio Rubino, with his shot gun. It started when Rubino allowed his rain water to drain off on Collette's property.

orate the farmer's statement about what the lane had been used for. The official party went on to the Worm farm. Here they observed that the lane could only be partially seen from the farm, due to a screening hedge-row.

But this didn't further the investigation any. Mrs. Worm personally posted a reward of two hundred dollars for information concerning the fate of her husband, but as days passed even the monetary reward failed to bring out any pertinent facts.

Mrs. Worm became ill with anxiety and grief but continued to lend material aid to Caskey and the assisting officers. If the sheriff had any doubts as to the woman's loyalty to her missing husband, her apparent grief and her ceaseless activity dispelled them.

Although Aaron Ryan's alibi had cleared him completely, Caskey and Gregson questioned him again in hopes he knew something significant. But this angle, too, fizzled out as rapidly as it was conceived.

"However," said the sheriff as they rode away from the Ryan place for the last time, "I can't help but feel that Ryan could tell us something if he chose to do so."

"But the point is, what could he tell us?" Gregson countered. "I don't know," the sheriff said. "Whatever rings that particular bell in my mind is so vague I can't put my finger on it."

Gregson was thoughtful as he viewed the late autumn scenery. "Still think the log chain is connected with Worm's disappearance?"

"What else can I think?" Caskey replied irritably. "It didn't get back to the farm by itself and Mrs. Worm is positive her husband had it in his

truck when he left that night."

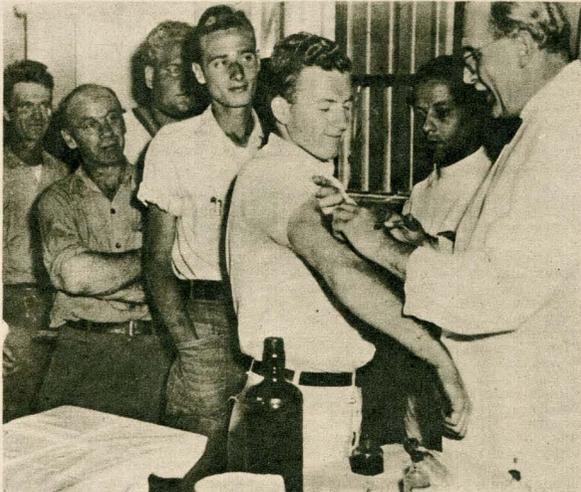
Caskey felt certain that if he could discover how the log chain got back to the Worm farm he would solve an important part of the mystery. The reason for the log chain's return, however, escaped the sheriff completely. Even had Worm been murdered by the man pretending to be stuck in the mud, what could the murderer hope to gain by bringing the chain back to the farm?

During the next few weeks, Caskey and his aides dug deep into Tommy Worm's background. But they learned little more than they had previously discovered. Worm's success on his rich farm was the talk of the countryside and his happy marriage was discussed with equal enthusiasm. According to the couple's friends and neighbors, there had been no clouds of any kind on the Worm horizon.

FOR lack of a better procedure, Caskey started checking the regular visitors to the Worm farm. He soon discovered that while Tommy and Dorothy Worm were well known in Taylor County and apparently popular, their regular visitors were few indeed. Their most frequent company were John Anderson and Henry Schmitt. Anderson was a farm hand who worked near the Worm place, was about thirty and a handsome person, while Schmitt was a farmer in his middle fifties who lived in the Lenox community.

The sheriff and Gregson visited Anderson first. He readily admitted going to the Worm farm frequently. "Tommy always insisted on my coming," he related, "and besides Tommy's being such a good guy, Dorothy's an excellent cook. Why shouldn't I

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take advantage of their hospitality?" "No reason at all," Caskey replied. "Except that it's odd that you are one of their few visitors."

"And do you know why they didn't have much company?" Anderson returned. "It was because they weren't home long enough. Tommy and Dorothy were great gadabouts themselves."

Caskey's eyes narrowed as he studied Anderson's handsome face. "And do you still go over there since Tommy's disappeared?" he asked carefully.

Anderson shook his head. "Dorothy were great gadabouts themselves. I asked her if I could be of any help and guess what she said?"

"What did she say?" Caskey asked curiously.

"She told me," Anderson replied, flushing, "that I could best help her by staying away. She intimated that with Tommy gone there might be some talk if she received male visitors. Naturally, I didn't go back after that."

The sheriff was silent as he thought that over, then he asked, "I don't suppose you ever saw anything suspicious, something that might now be connected with what happened to Worm?"

Anderson shook his head. "I never did see anything out of the way over there," he answered.

"Just for the record," said Caskey, "what were you doing on the night Tommy Worm disappeared?"

"The farm hand's brow wrinkled in deep thought. "I remember now," he said presently, "I left the place where I work about 7:30. It must have been midnight when I got back."

"And just where were you then?"

"Alone part of the time, with friends the other part," came the quick answer.

Anderson obligingly gave Caskey a list of names to check. And he started with the man's employer.

The farmer quickly supported his hand's statement as to the time he had left home and returned.

"Any particular reason for you to remember so clearly what happened that far back?" Caskey questioned.

"Yes, there is," the man replied. "John left in such a hurry that night he forgot to lock up the chickens. That meant I had to do it. And I had just gotten through about eight o'clock when I heard those two shots."

Instantly, Caskey pounced on the man's statement. "You mean gun shots?" he inquired. "Could you tell the direction they were coming from?"

The man hesitated. Finally, he spoke. "Maybe I'm imagining things on account of Tommy's being missing. But as I remember it, they came from the direction of Tommy's farm. I didn't think anything of it at the time."

Had the mysterious caller shot Tommy Worm after he had gotten him out of the house? Caskey said to the farmer, "Did John Anderson have time to get as far as the Worm farm when you heard those shots?"

The man deliberated a second. "Yes. But you don't think John had anything to do with whatever happened to Tommy?"

"There seems to have been opportunity," the sheriff said dryly. "And I can easily imagine a likely motive. Dorothy Worm, although older than your farm hand, is very attractive.

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"John's not that of that stripe," the farmer replied quickly. "He's a good friend of Tommy's, but that's all."

Under subsequent questioning the farmer continued to cling to his belief in Anderson's complete innocence of any connection in the Worm case. Caskey changed the line of his questioning and asked the man if he had seen the mysterious coupe reported by another farmer. But Anderson's employer denied ever seeing such a vehicle.

"I've seen a coupe around the Worm farm," he amended hastily. "But not a strange one. Furthermore, this coupe always drove up to Worm's own front door."

"And who owns this particular coupe?" the sheriff asked quietly.

"Henry Schmitt, a good friend of Tommy's," the farmer replied. "And a good friend of all of us around here. He buys and sells horses and he's turned a good deal for most of the folks living in this community. A right friendly and honest man is Henry Schmitt."

When it became certain that Anderson's employer could add nothing more, Caskey and his aides left. Round and Jones were assigned to check the rest of Anderson's alibi, while Caskey asked the still grieving woman whether or not she or her husband had fired any shots on the night of Worm's disappearance.

"Thought maybe you might have killed a marauding cat, or something like that," Caskey ventured.

The woman looked thoughtful a moment, then shook her head. "There wasn't any shooting that night, Sheriff," she replied.

"Tommy did shoot off his gun a couple of times before that, along in September, but not since."

"But maybe you heard some shots fired after your husband left," Caskey persisted.

The woman shook her head. "I didn't hear anything that even sounded like shots that night," she declared. "But I can show you where the bullets hit the time Tommy fired his gun."

Mrs. Worm took the two men to the front porch and pointed to a spot on the wall. "Tommy fired two shots, Sheriff, and there they are." She went on to relate that her husband had been attempting to kill a bat he found clinging there. But the bat had gotten away.

"What about the gun? May we see it?" Caskey asked.

The woman nodded and fetched a .22 caliber rifle to the porch. During this time Caskey had drawn two small leaden pellets out of the wall. He knew, from vast experience, that these slugs had been fired from a .22 caliber rifle.

Caskey and Gregson examined Worm's rifle carefully. The weapon was well cleaned and oiled and if it had been fired on the night of November 4, there was no trace of it now. The sheriff thought of the coupe in the lane. He asked her if she had ever seen it.

Mrs. Worm nodded her head. "I tried to get Tommy to do something about it, but he wouldn't. Said he didn't see any harm in people parking there."

"What about you?" asked the sheriff. "Why didn't you go out and chase that coupe away?"

"I never got close enough," Mrs. Worm reported. "The cars always left before I got there. I finally gave it up.

It was like Tommy said. There didn't seem to be any harm in letting folks park there."

"Maybe both of you were right—at one time," Caskey said. "But I've a hunch that parked coupe has something to do with what's happened to your husband. And I think you'll live to regret the day you didn't prohibit its parking in your lane."

Mrs. Worm's face was shadowed with grief and worry. Her beauty, the sheriff noted, was rapidly vanishing before the onslaught of her anxiety. She was fast becoming haggard and was now looking very much her age.

THE sheriff and Gregson drove back to town. There, Deputy Round told them that John Anderson's alibi had checked out closely. He had arrived in Bedford within a few minutes of leaving his employer's farm and would have had little time to have stopped enroute to do any shooting or to have called Tommy Worm out on a fake accident plea.

With Anderson completely exonerated, Caskey and Gregson went to see Henry Schmitt at his home near Lenox. They found the huge, deep chested horse trader living on an estate as prosperous as the Worm farm. Like Worm, Schmitt was a well respected member of his community. He served on the school board and was a leader in all civic enterprises. He was the father of a large family and a devoted husband to his wife. He readily answered the sheriff's and Gregson's questions about Tommy Worm. His picture of the missing man and his family was the same as they had received all the way down the line.

"When did you last see Worm?" Caskey asked the horse trader. Schmitt was thoughtful. After a moment, he answered, "I saw him on November 4. I think that was the day he left home and never returned, isn't it? I stopped at Tommy's place about five o'clock. He was okay, then, and I didn't notice anything suspicious."

"And what time did you get home?" the sheriff inquired.

"About six," Schmitt replied. "But if it's an alibi you're wanting, I can tell you I went to a school board meeting at eight o'clock. I got home a little before midnight."

Caskey nodded. "We're checking all of Worm's friends. Matter of routine, you know."

A later quick check of Schmitt's statement proved he was speaking the truth. And here from the appearances, the investigation seemed to bog down. But the sheriff and his deputy, Les Round, hadn't ceased plugging away on the case at all. They merely started to work under cover in hopes of lulling the guilty party's suspicions sufficiently for him or for them, in case more than one person was involved, to make a slip which would trap them.

Caskey and Round frequently discussed the mysterious case. And one day Round said, "Dorothy Worm's certainly slipping since Tommy disappeared. She looks ten years older."

"I've noticed that," Caskey remarked. "And I'm wondering if that is due to grief and worry, or to something else."

"What else?" Round countered. "That infernal log chain, for one thing," Caskey said. "How could anyone return that without her knowl-

edge? And another thing, those shots Anderson's employer heard. He's too experienced a man with guns not to know the difference between gunshots and back-firing. And then there's Mrs. Worm's statement that she heard no shots at all that night. Somebody's lying—either her or the farmer."

"But how are you going to figure out which one?" Round asked.

"Don't know yet," Caskey replied. "And that's there's the stuff about that coupe. Seems strange to me that Dorothy Worm couldn't slip up on those couples parked in their lane before they had time to get away."

"You mean you think Dorothy Worm is lying about that and that she might have been meeting someone in the lane?" Round asked.

"It's worth checking, isn't it?" Caskey said shortly. "I'm only guessing, but shots in the dark are all we've got in this case. The coupe angle bothers me too. I don't know how everything connects up but we can try and fit it together."

"Henry Schmitt is the only person we've talked to who owns a coupe," Round said. "But he admits going to the Worm place and everyone says he was Tommy's friend."

"I'm more worried about Dorothy Worm losing her good looks than I am about Henry Schmitt's owning a coupe," Caskey replied. "But I want to keep an eye on both of them, especially Mrs. Worm."

Several months later, Deputy Round came into Caskey's office with something like satisfaction written across his face. "Well, you can quit worrying about Dorothy Worm," he announced.

"You mean you've found Tommy?" Caskey asked, incredulous.

"Nothing like that. I mean Dorothy's being well taken care of. Somebody's looking after her, but good."

"And who is the fairy godmother?" "God father," Round corrected him.

"And it's our old friend, Henry Schmitt. His coupe has been seen parked at the Worm home, as usual, even though Tommy is gone. That is, when Dorothy is at home. She seems to be away a lot—off on long trips."

"Alone on long trips?" Caskey asked.

"Nobody knows. Maybe Schmitt is squiring her around parts unknown."

Caskey felt jolted. Henry Schmitt was a substantial citizen. Had he taken advantage of Worm's absence to make a move to the attractive Mrs. Worm?

"You'd better make certain about this before you go any further," he warned the deputy. "We don't want Schmitt suing us for defamation of character."

The deputy agreed. "I'll look into the matter a little deeper," he said. Accordingly, Round probed the angle further and learned it was common knowledge that Mrs. Worm and Schmitt were very friendly and had been seen together frequently. But all this was since Worm's disappearance. Both Round and Caskey felt that there was nothing in this to connect the man with Worm's disappearance. Schmitt's wife would be the only one who could rightfully raise a stir about their being together.

But Round kept digging, not only on this angle, but on several others, all revolving around the attractive Mrs. Worm. If Schmitt had been attracted to her, it was reasonable to suppose that other men had been also. But as the sheriff and his deputy probed

around, they learned a curious thing. Since her husband's mysterious disappearance Mrs. Worm had shunned all men except the elderly Henry Schmitt! They not only had John Anderson's word for this, but the word of several others as well.

"Keep a night and day watch on Dorothy Worm's movements," Caskey ordered his deputy. "If she knows anything she hasn't told us, she'll make a slip sooner or later."

Caskey's prophecy was soon to come true. For Deputy Round turned up the information that Mrs. Worm had been seen with Henry Schmitt on several occasions prior to her husband's vanishing act. He learned also that Mrs. Worm had not only approached a parked car in the lane, even as she had stated, but had gotten into the car, a black coupe. She had repeated this performance on numerous occasions, Round's informant declared.

Was Henry Schmitt the man she had been meeting in the lovers' lane? Caskey and Round both felt that he was. And they were now convinced that it was Schmitt's coupe which had been trailing Worm's pick-up truck on the night of November 4, 1943.

CASKEY quickly called Agent Gregson back to Bedford and brought him up to date on the facts. Gregson agreed with Caskey and Round that Schmitt should be investigated most thoroughly and watched both day and night. As the three men discussed the bizarre case, Round said, "And it would seem to me that with all the attention Dorothy is getting from Schmitt, she ought to be regaining her beauty. Instead, she looks worse all the time."

Gregson and Caskey both agreed that this looked strange and wondered. Was it her conscience that was putting wrinkles in her pretty face, or was some person keeping her in anxiety and suspense, possibly with threats?

The three men kept a double check on Henry Schmitt. They received still further corroboration of Dorothy Worm's meetings with the coupe in the lane when another informant stated emphatically that the occupant of the coupe was Henry Schmitt.

"They had a signal between them," this man explained. "If Tommy was not at home, Dorothy would hang a white cloth on a clothes wire back of the house. Soon after the cloth appeared on the wire, she would go across the field and down to the lane. If there wasn't a cloth on the line, then she wouldn't come down and Schmitt would back the car out and go away."

"Did Tommy Worm ever hear about this?" Caskey asked sternly.

The man shook his head. "I don't know, except if he did, he would have stopped it, wouldn't he?"

The man's statement was logical to the sheriff. Perhaps when Tommy had gotten around to trying to stop it was when he had disappeared!

But, the officers agreed ruefully, how could they prove anything without a clue to the whereabouts of Tommy Worm or his body? Could they establish the fact that murder had been done without the corpus delicti?

"The way I got it figured," Caskey said in one of their numerous discussions, "Mrs. Worm is worried about something more than her husband's continued absence. Looks to me like she is worried about her own skin. Now if we could only get her to open

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up and explain about the log chain, the shots in the dark and a few other things—

"You mean she might be afraid of Henry Schmitt?" Gregson questioned and when Caskey nodded, the state agent continued, "In that case, we've got to make her more afraid of the state than she is of Schmitt. I move we start asking her questions and don't let up until she does some talking."

Caskey agreed to this plan. The three officers made repeated visits to the Worm home, asked pointed questions about the log chain, the shots Anderson's employer had heard, and finally about the coupe in the lane and about Henry Schmitt.

After each visit, the sheriff could see that the woman's resistance had been worn down a little more. And finally, the strategy bore the fruit the investigators had hoped for. Mrs. Worm began her statement by saying she was afraid Henry Schmitt would kill her, her mother, and her son.

"And it's because you know too much, isn't that it?" Caskey queried. She jerked her head vigorously in the affirmative. "It's because I know he killed Tommy, shot him twice in the back with a pistol and a rifle."

"Then the story about the stalled motorist was just so much hokum?" Caskey asked gently.

The distraught woman nodded. "Henry thought it all up," she said. "But he forgot to put the log chain in the back of the pick-up truck. Otherwise, you wouldn't have found it in the barn."

"Why don't you tell us the whole story, from the beginning?" Caskey asked her.

"You've just about put the whole story together with your investigation," she said in a dull voice. "Henry came by about five that evening, just like he said. But he didn't go home as soon as he stated. Instead, he stuck around until Tommy got to the house. When Tommy went out to feed the stock, he followed him. I had a feeling then that Henry was going to kill Tommy, so I got our rifle and hurried after him. Before I got outside I heard a shot. Then I saw Tommy. He was lying on the ground halfway between the corn crib and the barn. He was still alive for he was moaning loud."

I screamed and went after Henry. I tried to hit him with the rifle but he was too strong. He took it from me and shot Tommy again. Then he threatened to kill me if I told the truth. He said I was in it as deep as

he was and that if he didn't get me, the law would."

"And what happened to your husband's body?" asked Caskey.

"We buried it in a field on the farm. But Henry wasn't satisfied with that, so he forced me to help him dig it up and bury it again on his son's farm near Lenox. He told me after that he had dug it up again and threw it into the Mississippi near Keokuk."

"And I suppose Schmitt killed your husband because he was in love with you?" Caskey probed.

The woman nodded. "That's right. He forced his attentions upon me and I was afraid he'd kill me, my son and my mother if I didn't string along with him."

Then she described how Schmitt, with a gun in his hand, had forced her to drive with him on long trips. He had even forced her, the sheriff learned, to accept a large payment on a fur coat which the woman coveted. He had forced other luxuries upon her and the frequent trips out of town.

Mrs. Worm readily signed her confession. Schmitt was taken in custody at once and faced with the woman's statement. The elderly horse trader made a confession, too, but he declared that Mrs. Worm had fired the first shot into her husband's body.

During the next few days, Caskey, Gregson, Round and Jones escorted Schmitt to various points about the country in an effort to find Tommy Worm's body or clues which would point to where it had been. But they found nothing.

Schmitt maintained that he had heaved it into the river at Keokuk.

He was sentenced upon a plea of guilty a few days later, on March 30, 1946, and was sentenced to 99 years in the penitentiary for his crime.

On April 6, Mrs. Worm was indicted for first degree murder and on Thursday, April 25, she entered a guilty plea to second degree murder and was given a 45 year sentence. She was taken immediately to the woman's reformatory at Rockwell City, Iowa, where she is now serving out her sentence.

Thus, even without his body to establish the fact of murder, Tommy Worm's violent death was ultimately avenged.

THE END

EDITOR'S NOTE: Names of Aaron Ryan, Gene Downer and John Anderson are fictitious to protect the identities of innocent parties.

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BLOODY TRAIL OF CHINESE ARMY MURDERER

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 27

after he checked Dugan's story and found that the man had been telling the truth about his visit to the hospital, the detective captain began to change his mind.

It now looked as if there had been only one killer. That he had begun his wild shooting spree at the chemistry room on the second floor and continued it on the first floor, where he had shot his second victim.

What had motivated the cold-blooded shootings? Was the killer someone who had gone berserk and started shooting anyone in sight? But both victims had been Chinese. Was the killer someone who held a grudge against the Chinese students as a group, and killed indiscriminately? Or had the two victims been singled out by the killer and the entire shooting affray premeditated?

Childers asked Dugan if he remembered approximately the trail over which he had followed the man with the gun. Dugan said he did, so Childers sent the two detectives along with the fellow to try to find some clues, at least a footprint.

WHEN Captain Childers arrived at Lowry Field 30 minutes later, he found Major Chang at the front gate waiting for him. Chang was anxious for all the details and Childers told him what he knew on the way to the Major's office. Chang said that the detectives from headquarters had already arrived at the field, and he had directed them to Lt. Ming, the officer directly in charge of the students in the chemistry laboratory when the shooting occurred.

In Major Chang's office, Childers went over with the Army Officer the records of the 14 chemistry students. He studied particularly the records of the two victims. Chang said their records were of the best. He had never had any trouble with either of them. They came from good families. Both were brilliant young men.

Childers then asked for a list of the names of the cadets not on the field and accounted for at the time of the shooting.

There had been one other class of Chinese students in session at the hospital at the time of the double murder. The detective captain got the names of each of them.

He also got the names of the 15 students who were on night passes, of the one who was A.W.O.L., and of the four who were on 2-day passes.

If the killer was Chinese, he must necessarily have been one of the cadets who was off the field at the time. Childers and his men would have to question every one.

The detective captain was still talking with Major Chang when he got a telephone call from Detective Roush.

Roush said that he and Phillips had gone with Dugan over the path that Dugan had chased the short man carrying the smoking gun.

Roush and Phillips had some luck. They had been able to get a good, clear footprint of the man. It was a size 8 or 9, Roush said. He'd give the cast to the laboratory man at headquarters as soon as he got back, find out for sure.

"But that isn't all," Roush added. "Also found a half-empty box of sleeping pills. According to the label in the box they were sold by Rocky's Pharmacy at 2001 E. 17th Ave. to a man named Jammy Croft."

"Sounds interesting," Childers said. "Of course," Roush added, "the killer might not have dropped them. Might have been someone else who went along the same way."

"Nevertheless, locate this Jammy Croft, find out what he has to say." "Right, Captain."

Childers asked Major Chang if he had heard of anyone named Jammy Croft. Chang shook his head.

Childers went to Lt. Ming's office where the Detective Captain's men had been questioning the friends of the two victims, and learned some very interesting things. Childers had thought all along the two victims must have some enemies, if he just could get hold of the right people to tell him about them. The detectives had found the right people.

Cadet Chou, shot on the first floor at the hospital, had been in an argument two weeks before his murder with a cadet named Ming Yuan Wong. For some time—even before sailing to the United States—Chou and Wong had not been on exactly friendly terms. But two weeks ago they had gotten into an argument over a card game. Chou claimed that Wong had cheated him. The argument finally resulted in a fight in which Chou had given Wong a thorough thrashing.

Tien, the cadet major who was shot in the chemistry laboratory, had also had his troubles with a cadet named Yuan Fu Tien. Yuan Fu was the son of a high-ranking Chinese Army General and was very cocky about it. He resented taking orders from his superiors. Tien had tried to put Yuan Fu in his proper place. They had words, then a fight, started by Yuan Fu. Yuan Fu was restricted to the Field. But he had gone A.W.O.L.

"So far, so good," Childers said, lighting a cigarette. "Yuan Fu is A.W.O.L. and Wong is on a pass. Either one could have done the shooting."

"Wong is due back from his pass at 7 o'clock in the morning," one of the detectives said. "We can question him then."

"And we'll question this Yuan Fu as soon as the Military Police catch up with him."

But that wasn't all the detectives had learned. Chou, the second murder victim, had had more trouble. Nothing serious, but it bore looking into.

An ex-G. I. named Tom Billings had been engaged with him in a heated argument just 3 days before the murders. Billings had been employed as a civilian at Lowry since his discharge. He had been stationed in the Pacific during the war. Three days ago he had been talking with a couple of his friends and made some remarks about China. Chou resented it and told Billings so. They had a few words, but no fight.

There, the Lowry Field angle came to an end at the moment. Childers and his men went back to headquarters. At least, they had something to chew on.

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Back at his office, Childers at once dispatched two men to pick up Tom Billings, bring him in for questioning. Detectives Roush and Phillips had been making some progress. The laboratory man had examined the cast of the shoeprint found near the hospital. The shoe was almost new and was size 8½. It was a common make, found in many department stores.

The depth of the shoe print in the soft dirt indicated that the wearer was not a heavy man, weighing probably between 125 and 150 pounds.

"What about the druggist where the sleeping pills were sold?" Childers asked.

"No luck. He didn't remember this Jammy Croft."

"Got any leads yet on Croft?"
 "None. There are six Crofts listed in the telephone directory. We've checked 'em all, but none of them ever heard of a Jammy Croft."

"Keep checking all hotels and rooming houses. Don't overlook an angle."

THE officers who were to pick up Tom Billings for questioning had been gone only 10 minutes when two patrolmen came in with a young man about 22 years old. His blue sport shirt was fresh and clean. His tan gabardine trousers looked as if they had just come from the cleaners.

"This fellow says his name is Tom Billings," the patrolman said. "He came close to the description of the man on that second pick-up order, only he didn't have a top coat on. He was standing in an alley near a tavern out by the hospital. He looked suspicious so we picked him up."

The Detective Captain sat at his desk eyeing the man. This was a surprise. He sends two men to get Tom Billings for questioning. Then two patrolmen bring in Billings from the pick-up order issued shortly after the double murder.

Billings did fit the description rather closely, except for his height. He was about 5'11", but didn't weigh more than 150 pounds. The X-Ray technician might have been mistaken about the killer's height!

"I'd like to know what this is all about," Billings said, with a shrug of his shoulders. "It's not that I mind so much being picked up by the police. It's just that—"

Childers got up from his desk, walked up to Billings. "We want to question you about a murder. That's what it's all about."

"A murder?" Billings' eyes bulged. Then he smiled, regaining that calm, nonchalant air. "What murder?"

"Did you know a Chinese Army cadet called Chou Ping Yuan?"

"Don't recall the name."
 "Maybe you'll recall the incident. You made some remark about China three days ago. Chou called your hand."

"Oh," and again Billings smiled, "yes I remember that. He took me wrong. I don't have anything against China. It's OK. I just like the United States better, that's all."

"Maybe you'd better tell me where you've been all evening. You see, Chou was murdered early tonight."

"For heaven's sake!" This time Billings didn't smile.

"Your activities of the evening—remember?"

"Oh yes," Billings hesitated a moment. He frowned, then he started talking. He said he had gotten off work at the Field at 7 P.M. He went

by a tavern, had a glass of beer, then went home, arriving there about 8 P.M.

He had cleaned up, eaten and left home at 8:45. He was to meet a friend at the tavern, and was to be picked up, at 9 o'clock. The friend didn't show up, however, and Billings had started home when he was picked up by the patrolman at 11:45.

That was his story, and he clung to it.

His shoe size was 9½, a size difference between his shoe and that which had made the tracks by the hospital. Not too great a difference. Still, it was not an 8½! And Billings weighed 148 pounds!

Childers sent two officers to check the youth's story.

At the same time, he put four men on the job of checking every .38 caliber gun registered in Denver and the surrounding area.

The investigation slowed down then until 7 o'clock the following morning. That was the hour Ming Wong was due back at Lowry from his pass.

But Wong didn't appear.
 Detectives Mark O'Brien and James F. Hayes had been at the field waiting for him. O'Brien telephoned the information to Childers.

"Now what?" O'Brien asked.
 "Find out where he planned to go on that pass," Childers said.

"Already have. He was going up to a friend's cabin near Evergreen."
 "Evergreen, a resort town back in the mountains, is only 30 miles from Denver. Childers told O'Brien and Hayes to go there at once, see what they could find out about Wong."

When the officers checking on the registered .38 caliber guns brought in the list to Captain Childers, he ran through the list hurriedly. But he stopped suddenly when he came to the name, "Yu Chin." There were three other Chinese names on the list, but they had owned their guns for a long time.

Yu Chin had purchased a .38 caliber revolver at a pawn shop in downtown Denver on May 4, just a few days after the Chinese students had arrived in Denver.

"Interesting coincidence to say the least," Childers said slowly. He picked up the telephone, called Major Chang at Lowry Field.

But the major said he had no cadets under him by that name. Childers groaned.

The detective captain sent two men to Lowry to question all the cadets who had been off the field at the time of the murder.

"And be sure to ask them about a guy named Yu Chin," was Childers' parting remark.

THEN the detective captain gave four men the job of checking personally everyone who owned .38 caliber revolvers in Denver.

Billings was a very relieved man the officers who had been checking his story returned to headquarters and told Childers that Billings had been telling the truth. He was at home when the double murders were committed and could not possibly have been the killer. So Billings was released with apologies.

Billings had no sooner been dropped from the picture, however, when Jammy Croft jumped into the limelight again. Roush and Phillips, checking all the hotels and rooming houses, had found that a Jammy Croft had registered at the Western Hotel at 1129 21st Street at 11:30 P.M. the night

of the murder. He gave his address as Colorado Springs.

When Croft registered, he asked the hotel manager, Frank Kyono, for the room number of Dr. T. K. Kobayashi, a resident of the hotel. Kyono told Croft that Kobayashi had gone out on an emergency call and he didn't know when to expect him back. Croft then had gone to his room, but left the hotel a few minutes later. He had not yet returned.

Children instructed Roush and Phillips to wait in the hotel lobby until Croft came back, then bring him to headquarters for questioning.

Who was this Jammy Croft? How did he fit into this picture of double murder? What had he been doing out by the Colorado General Hospital? When had he dropped that box of sleeping tablets?

Children called the hospital. No one by the name of Jammy Croft worked there. They had no patient by that name.

The Detective Captain telephoned Chief of Police I. B. "Dad" Bruce at Colorado Springs, asked Bruce to try to get some information on Croft, since Croft had used Colorado Springs as his address when registering at the hotel.

A telephone call from Detective O'Brien at Evergreen did nothing more than to complicate the picture still further. Ming Wong, the student who had no return to the Field when his pass expired at 7 o'clock that morning, had left his friend's home near Evergreen the previous night about 4 o'clock, intending to come to Denver. But he had not arrived. What had happened to him? A pick-up order went out for Wong immediately.

When the officers who had been checking the addresses of the registered owners of .38 caliber guns returned to headquarters, they were smiling. They had located all the guns and all the owners, except Yu Chin! The address Yu Chin gave was a private home. The people who lived there said they had never heard of him.

"I've got an idea," Children said suddenly. "Get me a sample of Chin's handwriting from the store where he bought the gun. And get me a sample of Croft's handwriting from the hotel. We might learn some interesting things."

Children had a talk with Dr. Kobayashi. The doctor said he did remember the name Croft. He said Croft had come to him for a prescription for sleeping tablets.

Croft said he was a Chinese-American. That he had been in the Army and overseas. His nerves were shot. He couldn't sleep. But other than that, the doctor didn't know anything about him.

Children knew a little more about Croft, however, when his officers brought him samples of Croft's and Chin's handwriting.

They were identical! This mysterious Jammy Croft and Yu Chin were one and the same person!

"But who in the devil is he really?" Children said, banging his fist down hard on his desk.

There was still no report from Ming Wong!

Chief Bruce telephoned from Colorado Springs that he had been unable to get any trace of a Jammy Croft, Roush and Phillips were relieved from the hotel guard to get some rest. Police Sgt. Steve Allison and Patrol-

man Merle Huttenhow took up the watch.

Children was about ready to tear his hair out when he got a telephone call from the Military Police at Lowry Field. They had been checking on the A.W.O.L. cadet, Yuan Fu Tien. They had located a friend of Tien's in Denver who had some interesting information on the cadet. Would Children like to talk with him?

Children was at the Field in a matter of minutes.

Tien's friend said that Tien had purchased a ticket for Colorado Springs on Monday, May 27—the day before the murder. Tien had received \$250 from home that day and he said he was going to Colorado Springs and "blow it."

"But that wasn't what worried me," the friend said, frowning. "Tien talked to me for 30 minutes about Yu Chung and Ping Yuan—the two cadets who were murdered. He said they had disgraced him and he would never live it down. He said he hated Yu Chung because Yu Chung whipped him. He hated Ping Yuan because Ping Yuan was a friend of Yu Chung's and had told his superior officers that Tien had been behaving badly."

"Do you think Tien killed the two cadets?" Children demanded.

"I don't know. I just said I was worried about it, after what Tien told me."

Children asked Major Chang, the Commanding Officer, for a sample of Tien's handwriting. Then Children saw the whole picture. Tien, Chin and Croft, they were not three persons, but one! Chin and Croft were really Yuan Fu Tien, the A.W.O.L. cadet!

IT was 7:30 Wednesday night, and Children was still examining Tien's handwriting when he got a telephone call from Police Sgt. Allison.

"Something's about to break here, Captain," Allison said quickly. "The hotel manager just came down from Croft's room. He went up to give it to another guest, thinking Croft had left for good. But the room is locked from the inside. Someone is already in there. It's probably Croft. He must have crawled in the window of the room from the fire escape."

"I'll be there, pronto," Children said. "Don't let him get away."

"Don't worry!"

When Children arrived at the Western Hotel 20 minutes later, Kyono, the hotel manager, met him at the front door.

"It's already over," Kyono said, shaking his head. "Croft is dead. He shot himself."

Yuan Fu Tien and Children to "Croft's" room. The young cadet was lying on the floor near the foot of the bed. In his hand was a .38 calibre revolver. There was a large, gaping hole in the center of his forehead.

Allison explained what had happened. Allison had gone out onto the fire escape to keep the cadet from skipping out that way. Huttenhow had demanded that "Croft" open the door. "Croft" refused. Huttenhow shot the lock off. But not in time to keep the cadet from killing himself.

On the dresser in the room was a one-way bus ticket for Colorado Springs, purchased May 27!

Beside the bus ticket was a note, written by the cadet. It read: "I am not weak. I will not beat anybody, but I will not let anybody beat me. I am so ashamed to be abused.

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I cannot live with these animals because my mind is very clever."

Ballistics tests proved that the gun Tien held in his lifeless hand was the one that had been used in the double murder at the hospital. Also, Tien's foot was size 8½!

Wong returned to the Field with a good alibi. After he left his friend at Evergreen, he met another friend and they went to Colorado Springs. They were at Colorado Springs when the two cadets were shot. Early Wednesday morning they had started back to Denver, driving through the mountains.

Their car had broken down. They

couldn't get to a telephone to call.

After the Hospital Murder was marked "closed," the bodies of the two victims and the killer were shipped together to Bliss Field at El Paso, Texas for a military burial.

After the Army received word from the next of kin of the three cadets, and of the Chinese government, final disposal will be made of the remains.

THE END

EDITOR'S NOTE: The names Ming Wong, Jack Dugan and Tom Bilings are fictitious to save embarrassment to persons innocently involved.

UNHOLY CRIME OF CHEATING LOVERS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

Howell gave Chief Kean the address in Harrisonburg where the game was held the previous night. He also handed Kean a list of all the men who attended the poker party.

Kean turned the list over to Joseph. "Just to be sure, check 'em."

Howell, watching the officers, took two deep drags on his cigarette. He said, "Officer Joseph here was asking me if I knew of any enemies of Frank. I told him the only one I ever heard about was a guy named Jim Thompson."

"Go on," Kean said. "Well, Thompson and Frank got into a fight about February 3rd. I believe it was, out at the Spotswood Country Club."

"Sounds interesting," Kean said, leaning across his desk. "Go on."

"Well, the way Frank told it to me, was like this: Frank and Grace were out to the country club watching a jitter-bug contest. Frank thought Thompson was paying too much attention to Grace and he told Thompson to scram or there was going to be trouble. Thompson apparently didn't like the idea and he and Frank had some words. Then they went outside the club and Frank cleaned up Thompson, but good."

Kean turned to Joseph. "Bring in Thompson, after you check the poker party."

Getting no more information from Howell and Stilwell, Chief Kean turned to Marvin Taylor.

Taylor said he had brought Frank Smith home from the Rockingham Garage the night of the murder. He said Frank got out of his car at 6:30 P. M. on the corner of Shenandoah Avenue and West Market Street.

"How did Smith act?" Kean asked. "Oh," Taylor said, "friendly as usual."

When Howell, Stilwell and Taylor had left the office, Kean leaned back in his chair. His eyes half closed. He wondered about this Jim Thompson; about the man in the big black Buick sedan who had been so attentive to Grace Smith during the year before her husband was discharged from the Army. The two facts put together were adding up to some rather interesting conclusions. Just how interesting would depend upon the information Policemen Rogers and Norwell brought in after checking the background of the pretty widow of the murdered man.

Frank Smith's funeral was a rather elaborate affair, which was handled

by the American Legion. Chief Kean attended to keep a close eye on everyone present.

ARRANGEMENTS for the funeral were made by Ralph Garner, manager of a restaurant in Harrisonburg. Garner was a veteran of World War I. He had remained in Paris for 12 years after the war and had been in charge of colors for Marshal Foch.

So far as Chief Kean was able to observe, Grace Smith behaved as any woman would, attending the funeral of her husband. Her girl friend, Dorothy Bell, was by her side all the time. Also with Grace Smith during the funeral was her brother, C. R. Montgomery. Grace was clad in a black dress, dark hat and veil.

Officer Joseph completed the checking of the poker party and was not at all excited with the results. Howell and Stilwell had been at the party from 8 o'clock, the night of the murder, until 2 A. M. the following morning.

Joseph had picked up Jim Thompson as he had been instructed to do. The results were more interesting.

Thompson, a man about 40 years old, was dressed in a neat gray suit and gave the air of a prosperous business man. He stood about 6 feet 2 inches and weighed about 200 pounds. He offered Kean a cigar and when the Police Chief refused, Thompson took one himself, lighted it. He sat down in the chair in front of Kean's desk.

"I guess, Chief, you want to know about the little scrap I had with Frank Smith out at the Country Club?"

"Well," not much to tell. I was talking with Grace Smith a few minutes all right but there was nothing at all out of the way. I offered to get her a better place to sit to watch the jitter-bug contest going on at that time. I talked to her a little bit about the contest, then Frank stepped up and said to leave his wife alone. He called me a nasty name. We went outside and had a fight. That's all there was to it."

"How long have you known Frank Smith's wife?" Kean asked.

Thompson dragged on his cigar and watched the smoke drift slowly up into the air. "For some time, but not in the way you're thinking. I met her down at the insurance agency where she works several months ago. My business takes me there quite often. That's as far as it ever went.

I never asked her for a date. I just knew her, that's all."

"What kind of a car do you drive?"

Kean asked.

"Oldsmobile sedan."

"What color?"

"Black, but why are you so interested in the kind of a car I drive?"

"Just wondering," Kean said.

After Jim Thompson left headquarters, Kean asked State Trooper Kiser to check further on Jim Thompson. There was something odd about that man.

When Officers Rogers and Norvelle came back to Kean's office, they knew considerably more about the life of the glamorous widow. From a friend of Grace Smith's, the officers had learned that the woman was a rather frequent customer of a fortune teller, Marie Haynes, who lived in the nearby village of Staunton, Virginia.

"Fortune tellers usually know a lot of things," Rogers said. "Maybe we ought to have a talk with Marie."

"I'm interested," Kean said, "but I'll put Joseph on that angle. I want you and Norvelle to keep covering Grace Smith. The widow interests me."

Kean had, in fact, become so interested in the "widow angle" of the case that he paid another visit to the home. He asked Mrs. Smith if he could check through Frank Smith's belongings.

"Why, certainly," she said, smiling. "If there is anything there that would help. If Frank was murdered, I want to know who did it."

"I think we may be able to tell you soon," Kean said. "We'll certainly keep you posted what is happening."

CHIEF KEAN went through Frank Smith's letters, his Army memoirs and other personal papers. Nothing interested him until he found a small slip of paper, a statement from Dr. R. E. Jones in Harrisonburg. Smith had been to see Dr. Jones three times. The first visit was made on February 4, 1945, the day Smith and Thompson had their fight! The last visit was made on February 20th, the day of the murder.

Chief Kean went immediately to see Dr. Jones.

What the medico had to say was most enlightening. Smith had first come to him complaining of a severe stomach ache. Smith told the doctor he had taken some cough syrup that morning just before going to work and had become extremely ill. He said the cough syrup tasted very strange and he spit most of it out.

Dr. Jones asked to see the cough syrup and Smith brought him the bottle. The doctor tested the contents and found it to be poisonous white iodine, not cough syrup.

Kean made a quick return visit to Grace Smith.

"Oh, that cough syrup." Her face turned white. Her hands trembled, but she tried to smile. "Frank came home and asked me about that. I told him I had gotten some white iodine and guessed I must have put it in the wrong bottle by mistake."

"I've a different idea," Kean said. "I think you put the white iodine in that bottle on purpose. I think you intended to poison your husband!"

Grace Smith's face suddenly flamed with anger. "How dare you say such a thing?"

"You better get your coat, Mrs. Smith. I'm taking you to jail and

booking you on suspicion of murder." After Mrs. Smith was placed in jail, she quickly recovered from her violent anger and became most humble and sweet once more.

"But why would I want to kill Frank?" She asked Chief Kean and Commonwealth's Attorney Lawrence H. Hoover.

"We don't know yet," Kean said. "If we did, we would charge you with murder right now."

Kean was more positive than ever that he had taken a step in the right direction by arresting Grace Smith, when State Trooper Kiser brought in the information that a woman neighbor who lived across the street from the Smith house saw Mrs. Smith return to her home the night of the murder at 9 o'clock. The woman said she was sure of the time because she had just turned on the 9 o'clock news broadcast.

"Then that means," Kean said suddenly, "that Grace Smith was at home when her husband was murdered about 9:30 or 10 o'clock!"

"Wait a minute," Kiser broke in. "That's not all. I found another neighbor woman who lives on the same block named Mrs. May Ryan. She told me that she saw Grace Smith and some large man about 45 years old standing on the front porch of the Smith home about 10:15 the night of the murder."

Kean got suddenly to his feet. "Jim Thompson, do you suppose?"

"I don't know. Mrs. Ryan tells me that she saw the same man at the Smith home several times during the past year. But she didn't know who he was."

"Go get Thompson again," Kean demanded. "Also get this Mrs. Ryan and bring her down here to take a look at Thompson. We will see if he is the man she's been talking about."

Kean now had enough information to crack down. Commonwealth's Attorney Hoover charged the woman with first degree murder.

But when Mrs. Ryan had a look at Jim Thompson she shook her head. "He's not the one."

So the question of Mrs. Smith's "frequent visitor" who drove the big black Buick sedan still remained a secret.

KEAN and Hoover questioned Grace Smith for over eight hours, but she consistently denied meeting anyone at her home at 10:15 the night of the murder. She said there had been no one to see her who drove a big black car, except her brother. "But he didn't come to see me the night Frank was murdered," Mrs. Smith said.

But Grace Smith's story began to gradually fall apart when Officer Joseph returned from Staunton, after paying a visit to the fortune teller, Marie Haynes.

"The fortune teller told me," Joseph said, "that only five nights before Frank was murdered, Grace Smith came to see her. Grace asked the fortune teller if her lover was true to her, and the fortune teller told her she should not ask such questions because she was a married woman. The fortune teller said that a man driving a big black Buick sedan usually brought Grace to the fortune teller's home. Marie Haynes said the man usually remained in the car, although he brought Grace Smith to the door and came to the door to get her after

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Mrs. Smith had received her reading." Then she would recognize the man if she saw him, wouldn't she?" Kean asked.

"She said she would."

Kean's eyes narrowed. "We're on the right trail, I know it. You get what men you need and start checking all through Harrisonburg and in every village around here. Get the name of every man who drives a big black Buick sedan or a big black sedan of any kind."

Then Kean went to see Montgomery, the brother of the brown-haired widow. Montgomery said he had gone to see his sister several times during the past year but had not been to the Smith home any time during the day or night of the murder.

KEAN was sure, however, that the sun was breaking through the clouds at last, when a cleaner in downtown Harrisonburg reported that a man named Ralph Garner had brought in a suit stained with blood. Garner, when he gave the suit to the cleaner, explained that he had been in a fight with some troublesome man down at the restaurant, where he was manager.

"You told me to call you whenever anyone brought in any bloody clothes," the cleaner told Chief Kean. "So I thought I better call you."

Kean was more interested in Ralph Garner, when he found out that Garner owned a big black Buick sedan.

In a way, however, the whole idea that Garner was involved in this case seemed ridiculous. Garner had been in charge of the colors during the American Legion funeral. During that time Garner had paid no attention to Grace Smith.

Kean immediately got a search warrant and went to Garner's home on Clinton Avenue. He gave the place a thorough going-over. In the basement of the house, Kean found more bloody clothing, a shirt that was almost saturated with blood; a blood-stained tie and coat.

He picked up the telephone directory and glanced through it. The page on which the "Frank Smith" name would have appeared was torn out of the book. That was strange.

Kean took the telephone directory along with him.

As soon as he arrived at headquarters, Kean put two more men on the job of following Ralph Garner. Then Kean called in Dr. Henry J. McCormack and George W. Kyl, crack FBI investigators.

When the FBI investigators took the telephone directory and studied it thoroughly in the laboratory, they made a most interesting discovery that brought all the loose ends of the investigation to a head.

On the page of the directory on which the name "Frank Smith" was located, the FBI men found the faint imprint of two telephone numbers which had been written by someone with a pencil.

The two telephone numbers were 466 and 629-W. The first telephone number was that of the insurance agency where Grace Smith was employed. The second telephone number was that of Grace Smith's home.

Chief Kean immediately got a sample of Ralph Garner's handwriting from the man at the restaurant where Garner was employed.

Kean gave the sample handwriting to the two FBI investigators.

Laboratory tests indicated that the handwriting was the same as that left by the pencil imprint on Garner's telephone directory.

Ralph Garner was immediately arrested and brought to police headquarters. Then Mrs. Ryan, and Marie Haynes, the fortune teller, were brought to headquarters and asked to look at Ralph Garner and see if they could identify him.

Mrs. Ryan said that Garner was the man who had been visiting Grace Smith during the year while her husband was in the Army; and Marie Haynes said Garner was the man who had been bringing Grace Smith to her home in the big black Buick sedan.

That was all the officers needed. Ralph Garner was immediately charged with first degree murder along with Grace Smith.

"This is the damndest outrage I ever heard of," Garner screamed. "I tell you I never knew Grace Smith until her husband died and I was in charge of the funeral. Naturally I got acquainted with her then. That's the first time I ever saw her."

Grace Smith had the same thing to say about Ralph Garner, but when the two came to trial the jury did not believe either one of them.

On October 23, 1945, Grace Smith was found guilty of second degree murder and was sentenced by Judge H. W. Bertram to 20 years in the Virginia State Penitentiary.

Through legal maneuvering, Garner was not brought to trial until April 25, 1946.

Garner was also convicted of murder and was given a sentence of 20 years.

THE END

The names of Jim Thompson, T. D. Powell, Bob Stilwell, Dorothy Bell, May Ryan, Marie Haynes, Mrs. M. A. Evans, Mrs. R. B. King, Dr. R. E. Jones, C. R. Montgomery and Marvin Taylor are fictitious and are used in this story to protect innocent persons —EDITOR.

For Additional FACTS ON CRIME

... READ ...

Headquarters Detective

STRANGE CLUE OF THE AVOCADO PEARS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 33

birth, Mrs. Valdez could speak only a few words of English. With Detective Vasquez acting as interpreter, Bush patiently asked a few necessary questions.

Sobbing gently, the bereaved wife related that she, her husband and infant daughter, had dined at home on that evening of September 26, 1932, then had gone to a movie uptown, afterwards stopping for coffee at a cafe in Ybor City, Tampa's large and colorful Latin settlement. They had returned home about ten-thirty.

Mrs. Valdez then related how they had found the two masked men in the kitchen. Her description of the killers was sketchy, the same as that supplied by Poston. The young wife was positive that she had never seen either of the men before.

"But I looked straight into the eyes of that devil who killed my Armando," she declared bitterly. "They were black, hateful eyes and I will never forget them as long as I live. I will know that man if I ever see him again!"

Chief Bush asked, "You say one of the men told you husband, 'You know what we want.' Have you any idea what he meant, Mrs. Valdez?"

"That, I do not know," frowned the young mother. "Unless it was Armando's money. My husband usually had fairly large sums with him. But they fled after shooting Armando, and did not take the money."

BOTH residents of Havana, Mrs. Valdez said that they had been coming to Tampa each summer for the past four years where her husband was in business importing avocado pears. The fruit was shipped from Cuba to Tampa by boat. From Tampa, Valdez, operating a fleet of trucks, had the pears driven north to the large wholesale markets in Jacksonville and Atlanta. It had proven a profitable business, growing in volume each year.

Bush looked up quickly. "What about trouble with the local growers?" he asked Mrs. Valdez. "Did any of them protest about your husband bringing in fruit from Cuba to compete with them?"

The girl shook her head. She had never heard of any trouble like that. Her husband had never undersold the current market prices and there had always been a ready sale for as much of the fruit, both local and imported, as could be supplied. So far as she knew her husband had been well liked throughout the trade.

"And in Havana?" asked Bush. "Did he have any enemies there?"

"No," replied Mrs. Valdez. "Armando was regarded highly by everyone. He built his business on his reputation."

The truck drivers, explained the wife, had been paid on a salary and commission basis. To the best of her knowledge, there had never been any dissatisfaction as the result of these transactions.

"You have the names and addresses of these drivers?" Bush wanted to know. "In fact, all of the persons with whom your husband dealt?"

Mrs. Valdez replied that she did, and produced a complete set of books

pertaining to her slain husband's business. Detective Vasquez, translating from the Spanish, made notes of all information that might aid the investigation.

Valdez had made the local deliveries and collections in Tampa personally. That evening he had had \$150 in his pockets which represented his collections for the past few days. This had not been an unusual amount, declared Mrs. Valdez, but she could think of no other reason why her husband had been murdered.

A search of the victim's pockets revealed that the \$150 was still intact. Chief Bush was puzzled. Could thwarted robbery have been the motive? If so, why had the sliced avocado pears been strewn about the back porch and kitchen? Did the destroyed fruit indicate an intense rivalry somewhere in the background of the slain importer's business, unknown to Mrs. Valdez, or had this been nothing more than a wanton act of vandalism carried out by the waiting killers?

After Mrs. Valdez had rested, Bush requested that she make a search of the rest of the house. The young woman complied, and disclosed that some of her jewelry was missing from a dresser drawer in the bedroom; two pearl necklaces, her wrist watch and one of her husband's wrist watches. All had been valuable, but not precious.

Other jewelry more valuable, however, was still intact in a leather box in another drawer of the dresser, including rings, brooches, another wrist watch, a gold crucifix. So here was another puzzling factor. Why had less than half of the jewelry been stolen?

"They might have been ransacking the dresser when the Valdezes came home and interrupted their search," suggested Detective Morris.

Bush was doubtful. "From the number of those cigarette stubs on the kitchen floor," he answered, "those men were in the house long enough to search every bit of it without interruption."

The heartbroken young mother and her baby were given over to the care of relatives while Bush and his men speeded their efforts to find a clue that would be of help in solving the mystery. Bush told Meighn before the victim's body was removed.

"Let us have those slugs in the body as soon as you can so we can know what kind of gun was used."

The fingerprint man finished his work. "A lot of smudges and one good print from the screen," he reported. "That's all. These birds weren't amateurs; they didn't leave their calling cards all over the place."

"Check that print with the files," directed the Chief. "If they weren't amateurs, we may have something on them."

No further evidence or clues could be found in the murder house. The night-long search of the neighborhood did not provide a single suspect. This was not surprising, however, since even a working description of the killers was lacking.

The Medical Examiner sent the death bullets over to Bush's office shortly after daylight. They were 32



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The fingerprint lifted from the window screen failed to identify any of the known criminals on record in the Identification Department. Bush promptly dispatched a copy of the print to the FBI in Washington for a check with their files.

SHORTLY before noon, Detective Vasquez, who had gone back out to the house, returned with Mrs. Valdez's missing jewelry, the two necklaces and the two watches. A neighbor, Hilda Prendez, had found them in the alley beside the house. Bush looked at the jewelry and shook his head in bewilderment.

"Everywhere we turn in this case," he frowned, "one theory disputes another. Now, was this stuff accidentally dropped in the alley, or was it deliberately flung aside?"

"It beats me," admitted Vasquez. "One minute it looks like robbery, then like something else."

"Well," the Detective Chief said doggedly, "get some men and start checking on this list of Valdez's business associates. Then check on all of his competitors. See if you can find somebody who had a grudge against him. I feel somehow that the motive behind this murder was something far deeper than a robbery that misfired."

One by one, the slain man's former business associates were checked out as possible suspects. All of the truck drivers were honest hard-working men who expressed complete satisfaction with their dealings with Valdez. No competitor could be found who had harbored a grudge against the slain fruit broker. With a good description of the killers lacking, and the single fingerprint and death bullets as the only clues, there simply was no opening into the mystery.

Mrs. Vasquez offered \$500 reward for any information that would lead to arrest and conviction of the killers. Chief Bush added another \$100. But even the lure of this reward money failed to bring forth a tangible clue.

"The answer to this riddle," Bush suggested on the fifth day, "might be found out in Ybor City. Valdez was a Cuban and had several customers out there. Also, he and his wife probably spent a lot of their leisure time in local clubs."

Detective Vasquez shrugged. "We can try, Chief, but they are mighty clannish out there."

"Take Detective Lopez with you," suggested Bush. "You boys both speak Spanish and have a lot of friends out there. See what you can find out about Valdez's friends or enemies."

The 30,000 Cubans and Spaniards who inhabited Ybor City were mostly engaged in the cigar making industry; they lived tightly among themselves, with Spanish as the common tongue in the district. Vasquez and Lopez spent several nights idling about the ornate clubs, gambling casinos, cafes and bolita joints.

They reported back that Valdez had been well known in the settlement, but only as a hard working, successful fruit broker. He had belonged to no secret fraternities or clubs, nor had he incurred the enmity of any one.

"In Ybor City they are talking only of the coming revolution in Cuba,"

reported Lopez. "It seems that many refugees are already reaching Florida. There's very little interest in the Valdez murder."

"Well, we're interested in it," declared Bush. "Mighty interested. Mrs. Valdez has gone to the hospital suffering from shock."

And on the night of October 7th, Ybor City again entered the Valdez mystery in a puzzling manner. At 11:00 P.M. on that night, Garcia's Restaurant, deep within the Latin settlement, was held up by five masked men. Lining up 37 patrons against a wall, the bandits relieved them of cash and valuables totaling \$48.00.

Two of the bandits, wearing gloves, rifled the office safe. Calmly, deliberately, they searched every paper and box in the safe. They finally took \$69.00 in cash. The quintet then went out through the kitchen. One man kept his gun on the patrons and personnel in the dining room while the others loaded several crates of avocado pears into the back of a black sedan. The quintet made their escape in the car.

A DESCRIPTION of the two men who had rifled the safe fitted in a general sort of way the two who had killed Valdez. Both had worn dark clothes, both had worn handkerchiefs over the lower parts of their faces and the ringleader had had blazing, violent black eyes.

"That was the restaurant where Valdez stopped to have coffee on the night he was murdered," Bush pointed out, reading the report. "If you remember, this restaurant was one of Valdez's steady customers."

"And those two guys in the dark clothes worked pretty smooth," added Detective Vasquez. "Such as wearing gloves and talking plenty of time to look through that safe. It was a professional job, all right. And the Valdez killers weren't amateurs, either."

"But what gets me," frowned Bush, "is these damned avocado pears again. Why would a gang of heisters take time to lug away several crates of avocados? It's as good as our old question; why would a couple of murderers slit open a lot of avocados and leave them lying around the Valdez home? I feel that these two cases are connected in some crazy way."

"In the Valdez case the killers took no money," Detective Lopez reminded him, "and Valdez had a wad in his pockets. They did take some jewelry, but they later threw it away."

Bush's eyes narrowed, his fingers drummed the desk top.

"Because that wasn't what they wanted," he guessed shrewdly. "They made it look like a bungled robbery, but they were after something they didn't find in Valdez's home. This restaurant stickup could have been a phoney, too. They could have been looking for something besides money. I don't know what, but it seems to be something connected with avocado pears."

"Valdez's avocado pears?" asked Vasquez. "Or, just any avocados?"

"Valdez's avocados," was Bush's theory, "since this restaurant was one of his customers."

"In that event," Lopez put in quickly, "if they didn't get what they want from this restaurant job, they will make another play for some of Valdez's fruit."

Bush nodded vigorously. "They may, at that! I want a man to hang out at every place where Valdez's avocados are being sold or served—restaurants, clubs, hotels, fruit stands, anywhere. If anyone acts suspicious—examines the fruit, or buys a large quantity of it—bring him in."

The next morning an effort was made to pick up the trail of the five men who had held up the restaurant. A dragnet was thrown over Ybor City. Bush went to the Garcia's restaurant and talked with the manager about the two crimes.

"I knew Valdez only as a business acquaintance, Senior," the manager told him. "He sold me avocados. On the last night he was here, we had coffee in my office, discussed his next delivery of fruit, and then he left. I know nothing about his personal affairs."

"What about his fruit?" persisted Bush. "Was there anything about it that made it greatly desired over some other dealer's? Something that gave it an unusual, tremendous value?"

The manager shrugged, spread his palms. "Certainly not, Senior. It was just good, ripe fruit—and Senior Valdez was dependable. Does that answer your question, Senior?"

"No," replied Bush, more to himself than the other, "but I don't think the answer lies here. It's somewhere else along the trail of Armando Valdez's avocados."

The Detective Chief went next to the steamship company that ferried Valdez's fruit from Cuba to Tampa. It had been shipped across the Gulf in a small freighter.

A talk with the ship's captain gained nothing. In Cuba, the fruit had been delivered to the docks and placed aboard the ship by stevedores. So far as the captain knew, there had been nothing irregular about this procedure.

A talk with one of the ship's deck hands, however, did gain something.

"Senior, I recall a strange incident on the day that Valdez's shipment of fruit was unloaded," this individual told Bush. "A man approached me and asked if we had brought one special crate of pears along with Valdez's shipment. He said that the crate would bear a special tag—that is, one half of a tag. This man had one half of a tag himself and said that he could identify the crate by matching the two halves."

"I told him that I knew of no such crate, and advised that he should inquire of the Captain. But this man insisted that first we should locate this special crate with the special tag. He paid me ten dollars to help him examine all of the crates that had been assembled on the dock. When we could not find this particular crate of pears, Senior, the man became very angry and left quickly."

"Did this man tell you his name?" Bush asked quickly. "And who had sent this special crate from Cuba?"

The sailor shook his head. "No, Senior. He merely said that it had been sent by a friend from Cuba who wanted him to have one case of choice pears, and that he could identify it by the torn half of the tag. But I could not understand, Senior, why one should become so angry over a single case of pears."

The seaman described the stranger as a Cuban, of average height, dressed in a white linen suit, wearing a straw hat. "His eyes, Senior? Yes, they were

very black, very hard eyes. But that is all I remember. I had never seen this man before, Senior, nor have I seen him since."

A short time later Bush sat in his office surrounded by detectives who had been working on the case. He told of what he had learned at the waterfront.

"My guess is that something was smuggled in that special crate of pears that came across with Valdez's shipment. Apparently the tag came off during transit and the box got mixed up with Valdez's fruit."

Lopez agreed. "The man with the tag is probably the killer," he said. "That's why the pears in Valdez's house were slit open. When they didn't find their smuggled stuff there, they next tried one of Valdez's biggest customers, the restaurant."

"It could have been dope," suggested Vasquez. "I've never heard of dope being smuggled in avocados, but it could easily be done by removing the seed."

"Whatever it contained, we're going to try and find that special crate ourselves," declared Bush. "You men start looking over the avocados at all of the places operated by Valdez's customers. If you see any individual pears, or crates, that are suspicious, buy 'em and bring 'em in."

IT TOOK several days, and many cases of opened avocados before the right one was finally found, at a small fruit stand on a side street in Ybor City. The detective who brought it in, explained:

"The pears in all of the other boxes are packed in rows. But in this one they are jammed in tight in the center. So I thought we'd better look this box over."

In Bush's office, the detectives began slicing the pears in half, discarding them. Finally a detective picked out an unusually large pear from the center of the box. It immediately fell apart in his hands. The large seed had been removed from the pear's center. In it's place was an oilskin pouch. The detective opened the pouch, poured the contents out on Bush's desk.

"Holy catfish, so that's the answer!" Bush exclaimed.

All of the officers gasped in amazement. At last, the strange mystery of the avocados had been solved. For out of the oilskin pouch cascaded a small fortune in jewels; diamonds, rubies, pearls, sapphires, emeralds!

"This box was packed tight in the center to hold the slit pear together," Vasquez pointed out. "No wonder Valdez was murdered, if they thought he had all this ice!"

"And this explains why they discarded Mrs. Valdez's jewelry in the alley," said Detective Morris. "This was the stuff they were after, so why take a chance on getting caught with that cheaper stuff?"

Bush calmed down. "We still don't know who killed Valdez," he said grimly. "You boys go back and shadow those fruit places again."

"Bring in any guy who seems to be looking for what we've got here."

This day and night vigil at the fruit stands brought in several suspects who seemed to have an unusual interest in avocado pears. One by one, they were checked out after presenting iron-clad alibis. Finally only one remained, a short swarthy individual who gave his name as Mario Zarate. He had

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been picked up while examining
closely a crate of pears at a Ybor
City market.

"So what?" he demanded angrily,
when brought to headquarters. "I am
very fond of avocados. So are hun-
dreds of other people. And I always
look 'em over closely to make sure
they are ripe. Is that any crime?"

"Not in itself," admitted Bush. "But
we'd like to ask you a few questions."
Zarate fitted in a general way the
description of the Valdez killer, as
well as one of the restaurant holdup
men. He indignantly disclaimed any
knowledge of either affair and the
smuggled gems. Mrs. Valdez was too
ill in the hospital to have a look at
him, so Bush called in Poston, the
neighbor.

"I can't be sure about him," Poston
declared, after looking at the suspect.
"He's about the same height and build
as the man who ran out of the alley,
but, like I said, I didn't get a look at
at their faces."

The witnesses in the restaurant hold-
up were equally uncertain; not sure
one way or the other. Bush had Zarate
mugged and fingerprinted and checked
the result with the print that had been
found on the kitchen screen in the
Valdez home. The prints were not the
same.

Bush told two of his detectives, "I'm
not sure about this Zarate, but I don't
have any evidence on which to
hold him longer. I'm going to turn
him loose, and I want you boys to
shadow him closely. If he's not one
of the men we want, he might at least
lead us to the others."

The released suspect led his two
tails on a winding trail through Ybor
City, in and out of a bar, a gambling
casino, a Cuban club, into the streets
again. Grimly, the two detectives
clung to their quarry. But that evening
a heavy tropical downpour and
electrical storm blanketed Ybor City.
For a brief five minutes the city cur-
rent went off, blacking out the settle-
ment. When it came on again, Zarate
had vanished. The detectives were un-
able to pick up his trail again during
the days that followed.

Bush was now strongly suspicious
of the vanished suspect. "If he had
stuck around town in sight, he would
have been okay," declared the Chief.
"But now that he skipped, he becomes
hot again. We've got his mug and
prints; I'm going to get out some flyers
on the guy."

Bush sent out thousands of circulars
on Zarate, directing a good portion of
them to Cuba, Mexico, Central and
South America. But months passed,
and the suspect's trail still remained
cold. Mrs. Valdez recovered from her
illness and returned to Havana. She
told Bush before she left that she
knew nothing about the gems found
in the avocado pear.

In spite of widespread publicity on
the strange case, no person came for-
ward to claim the precious stones.
Detectives Vasquez and Lopez, close
to sources of information in Ybor City,
soon provided a logical answer.

UNREST and revolution were brew-
ing in Cuba. Political opposition
to President Gerardo Machado was
strong and already outbursts of violence
were taking place. The inevit-
able looting and confiscation of
wealth was soon to follow. Many
wealthy refugees were seeking safety
on the Florida mainland. The govern-
ment would not permit them to take

money or valuables out of the country.
It seemed likely that one of these
refugees had attempted to smuggle his
jewels in the crate of avocado pears.
The murderers of Armando Valdez
must have learned of the precious
shipment and made an attempt to
hijack it.

"For the owner of the jewels to
come forward now and claim them
would only make him another target
for the killer's bullets," pointed out
Lopez. "Perhaps after we get the
killer, he will then claim them."

On the afternoon of February 11,
1933, Mrs. Valdez was walking along
Havana's famous waterfront promenade,
the Malecon, when she was
slightly jostled by a man who passed
her in the crowd. Mrs. Valdez turned,
saw the man, then blanched white.

"Those eyes!" she suddenly
screamed, pointing. "That is the man
who killed my husband! I have never
forgotten those eyes!"

Police officers came running, quickly
searched the crowd, but the man
whom Mrs. Valdez had seen had dis-
appeared.

Chief Bush, as soon as he received
this report, dispatched Detectives
Vasquez and Lopez to aid the Cuban
authorities in picking up the long-
sought killer's trail. A painstaking
search, throughout the dives and
shabby buildings of Havana's teeming
waterfront finally led to a dingy
rooming house in a side street near
the Malecon. There, in a back room
of this house, the officers closed in
on a man who seemed to be the one
Mrs. Valdez had seen on the street.

Taken to Havana police headquar-
ters, this man was placed in a lineup
with several other suspects. Mrs. Val-
dez was called in to see if she could
identify her husband's slayer from
the group. Quickly, unerringly, her
finger pointed to the man who had
been captured in the waterfront
rooming house, the same one she had
seen on the Malecon.

"That is the man!" she cried posi-
tively. "Those eyes I will never for-
get!"

The man she identified was Mario
Zarate! In Zarate's room was found
a .32 calibre pistol. A ballistics check
promptly identified it as the gun that
had killed Armando Valdez.

Vasquez and Lopez brought Zarate
back from Cuba on February 20, 1933.
Again the prisoner denied any knowl-
edge of the Valdez murder, the Garcia
Restaurant holdup, the smuggled
gems. He also denied ownership of
the gun, claiming it had been in the
room at the time he rented it.

Zarate was charged with the Valdez
murder and held for trial. It was then
that a wealthy Cuban refugee in
Miami came forward to claim the
jewels. They had been confiscated,
he declared, by a rival political group
and he had been held in prison for
a year on a trumped-up charge. This
refugee established full ownership of
the jewels to the Tampa officers' satis-
faction and they were further con-
vinced that he had no knowledge of
Mario Zarate.

Zarate was not brought to trial until
May, 1935, due to Cuba's internal dis-
orders and the resultant difficulty in
locating and bringing witnesses to the
United States. Finally, however, on
May 31, 1935, in the Hillsborough
County Circuit Court in Tampa, a
jury declared Mario Zarate guilty of
murder in the first degree with a
recommendation of mercy.

He was sentenced to life imprisonment in the Florida State Prison at Raiford, where he is still serving his time.

The Tampa police are still seeking the second killer who left his finger-

print on the Valdez window screen. If their determination in capturing Mario Zarate is any evidence, they will some day nab him.

THE END

MYSTERY OF THE NUDE NYMPH

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 31

she could not have seen her friend after three o'clock of the day she disappeared. Plungis' story was also checked carefully as a matter of police routine and there could be no doubt that he was telling the truth when he said he'd not been away from the factory after arriving there to go to work at 3:30.

DETECTIVES McElligott and McCarthy late Saturday dug up one fact which proved highly interesting to the Inspector. While questioning residents in the vicinity of Plungis' home they learned that at a few minutes after sundown on Wednesday night a car believed to be Tony Plungis' had driven up to the side of the house. That would have been between 7:15 and 7:30 o'clock.

"A woman who might well have been Stephanie Plungis, it was too dark and foggy to see clearly, got out and started yelling," they were told. "Calling someone?" suggested the detective sergeant. "Did you hear any name mentioned?"

He was informed that the woman had shouted for someone to come to her car, calling the person addressed a "dirty schlemiel," a foreign word meaning "dope."

The informant said that she had not listened longer. Sometime later, however, this woman had heard the sound of arguing from the direction of the Plungis' back yard.

Plungis himself said that to his knowledge no one had been near his home during his absence and he was the only person who had a key to the place since his wife had left him.

Continuing their investigation in the neighborhood, the detectives went to the home of Patrolman Zukauskas, directly to the rear of the other house. There they questioned the policeman's wife who told them that she had been home all day Wednesday with a sick child. Later her husband had come in and gone to bed with a cold. That was at just seven o'clock and Edna Zukauskas then went out to a neighborhood store for food for supper.

The policeman's wife had heard no commotion while she was at the house. Detectives returned to headquarters to ask her husband if he had heard anything of the supposed commotion but Zukauskas said he'd been in bed with a splitting headache and heard nothing.

Zukauskas added two names to the list already compiled of suspected by friends of the missing woman. He said that he had known the Plungis family for several years and that the husband had frequent quarrels with his wife because of her "chasing after younger men."

One of the men named by the patrolman was known to possess a .38-calibre revolver. He had told the officer on the day after the disappearance that he had to leave the city to find a job in a neighboring town. He

had not been seen since in Waterbury. "Did this fellow ever admit to you that he was running around with your neighbor's wife?" asked Inspector Bendler.

"Not only admitted it, but asked me to follow her and another guy out to a spot on Lover's Lane several weeks ago and take notes on what I saw them do there. He said the woman was two-timing him and he wasn't going to stand for it. You'd have thought he was her husband himself, by the way he acted."

"And you obliged him?" asked the Inspector.

"Yes, I found her out there necking the other fellow and warned my friend he'd better stay away from her after that."

Bendler, thinking of the .38-calibre gun which Officer Zukauskas had seen in the suitor's possession, was aware that the laboratory technicians who had examined bullet holes in the car might have been mistaken in their conclusions.

He thought also, that it was strange Zukauskas had not heard that argument not a hundred feet from his bedroom window. Zukauskas himself must have been pretty familiar with the woman and her clandestine affairs to have volunteered to make that Lover's Lane expedition, Bendler concluded.

Wasn't it possible, he wondered, that Zukauskas had done his snooping because of some more personal interest in the case? He turned to him and suggested thoughtfully:

"You know the boy's maybe wrong about that being a .32-calibre revolver."

As he spoke Bendler withdrew from his desk the seat cover in which the two bullet holes had been discovered. He asked the other to follow him, and went to the basement of the building where a shooting gallery had been rigged up for use of the police. There he turned once more to Zukauskas.

"Got your service revolver with you?" He referred to the .38 police special that had been issued to the patrolman when he was taken on the force in a temporary capacity the year before.

Zukauskas nodded and the Inspector asked him for the gun. The next moment he fired a single shot through the seat cover.

"That ought to tell us if a .32 was used," he said easily.

Zukauskas agreed eagerly and the two of them bent forward to study the hole. Inspector Bendler had brought the pieces cut earlier from the seat cover and containing the other two holes.

Even without the aid of measuring instruments it was instantly apparent to both men that the bullets which had made those first two holes had been considerably smaller in calibre than that fired from Zukauskas' revolver.

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"Well, that should pretty well clear your friend with the .38," Bendler said solemnly. "Unless, of course, he had another weapon."

Following the bullet-hole test the Inspector called the two detectives. For several hours he went over the list of names they had gathered and listened to the stories told by those questioned. A strange coincidence in the statements taken from all appeared to be that each man, while admitting readily enough that he had taken the woman out at one time or another, insisted on telling tales about her other suitors.

Stephanie Plungis, it appeared, had attracted the attention of a score of men other than her husband. In almost every case there had been hints of jealousy, and yet among those questioned, all were able to prove that they were not near the woman on the night of her disappearance.

Bendler realized that the only men whose stories he had not run down were those named by Officer Zukauskas. He gave the detectives their names and the name of the town to which the owner of the .38 said he was going to look for work.

THE following day McCarthy and McElligott were questioning the man himself. They repeated Zukauskas' story of the revolver and asked to see the weapon. The man swore that he'd never possessed any kind of a gun. Questioned about the time he had supposedly asked the policeman to spy on his married girl friend, the man laughed outright.

"Asked him to spy on me?" he repeated at last. "Why you couldn't keep him from it. More than once Steffi told me he followed her when she took men in her husband's car for necking parties. The guy was crazy over her himself. But of course, living there right behind them with his own wife and kids, he had to keep it on the quiet. He was one of the few guys who wasn't even suspected by Tony Plungis."

"You realize, don't you, what you're saying casts suspicion on one of the very policemen assigned to investigate this case?" asked Sergeant McCarthy gravely.

"I realized that Francis Zukauskas was the man who had most to fear from Stephanie," the other replied, suddenly serious. "She threatened to expose him if he didn't stop chasing after her. He was insanely jealous of her, but didn't dare start anything for fear it would get out and he'd lose his job. And I realize that he was the one man who had the gun to shoot her with!"

"Zukauskas' revolver has been checked; it wasn't that gun that fired holes in the Plungis' car," countered Detective McElligott shortly.

"No? Well how about the .32 he had before he went on the force?"

The detectives, after further questioning of the suspect, realized that what he said, if true, might well put them on the track to a quick and unexpected solution of the mystery. They were still further convinced when they managed to prove that Ed Waterbury, early on the afternoon of the crime and could account for every minute of his time since then.

Within another three hours they were back in conference with Inspector Bendler and Prosecutor Fitzgerald. Early the next day the Inspector called at the Zukauskas home. He timed his visit so that he arrived

just after the patrolman had left for work. Edna Zukauskas, the quiet, home-loving young wife of the officer, met him at the door.

An hour's questioning brought out the fact that on the previous Wednesday evening her husband had been absent from their home during two one-hour periods. Both times he'd said he was going out to "get some fresh air."

Mrs. Zukauskas said that her husband had owned several revolvers, but she was unable to tell the Inspector where he might find them. They had disappeared within the past few days from the drawer where they were kept.

As he turned to leave, Bendler, with an eye on the woman who was preceding him to the front door, stopped suddenly and reached toward the floor. When he rose he held a small linen handkerchief in his hand.

"Your handkerchief, Mrs. Zukauskas," he said. "Must have dropped it as you got up."

The woman turned, not a trace of suspicion in her eyes. "Thank you, Inspector." She took the handkerchief and placed it in the pocket of her apron.

As she took the handkerchief the Inspector saw her glance idly down at it. Had it not been her own she'd certainly have betrayed that fact by the expression in her eyes.

That could mean only one thing. The handkerchief found stuffed down behind the rear cushion of the Plungis' car on the night following Stephanie Plungis' mysterious disappearance was the property of Patrolman Zukauskas' wife!

BACK AT headquarters the Inspector called Patrolman Zukauskas in off his beat and announced he had a few questions to put to him. Why, for instance, had he not mentioned the other revolvers he owned? Why had he said nothing about his friendship with the victim?

For more than six hours the Inspector continued to grill the man, but it was only after he called in fingerprint experts that the other showed any signs of breaking. It was then that Bendler played his ace in the hole.

"Francis," he said, "you're a policeman and you will be able to appreciate the value of laboratory findings. You'll be able to appreciate the fact that some of the fingerprints we found in the car were on the light switch. That means that the man who left them must have turned on the lights. Now, when Plungis found his car where it had been left during the night, presumably by the person or persons responsible for his wife's disappearance, it was already daylight and he had no reason to use the lights."

"Later, when he called you to examine the car, you naturally left prints on the door handle and in other places. But it was still daylight. Certainly you'd have had no reason to touch the light switch."

"Why, then, have we found your fingerprints on that switch? When I talked to you this morning you simply accepted the handkerchief found in the back of the car as belonging to her. Why did she tell us you'd been away from the house twice on Wednesday night after you clearly stated you'd been sick in bed that evening?"

Francis Zukauskas since joining the department had made a point of studying modern police procedure. He

was the last man to fail to appreciate the significance of the evidence which had been piled up against him. But it was only when Inspector Bendler hinted that the young wife he had betrayed might be blamed for his own crime that Zukauskas finally broke.

"All right, I did it," he said softly. "Let my wife alone, whatever she did was only because she wanted to save the woman who broke up our home. Edna is completely innocent, leave her out of this thing and I'll tell you everything. I'll take you out where I hid the body after killing her!"

THE STORY that followed was one of the most bizarre ever listened to by the veteran homicide investigator. It started on a night more than a year before when Francis Zukauskas had attended a dance in the Waterbury Lithuanian Hall. He had been assigned there as a special policeman. He had met his neighbor's wife, Stephanie Plungis, at the dance. It had been love or what the 34-year-old policeman took for love at first sight.

That had been their first night together, and during the following months Zukauskas' passion for the at-

tractive, large-bosomed blonde had increased. He'd learned of her infidelities to himself as well as her husband, became madly jealous, and quarreled violently with her.

Finally, months later, the patrolman's own wife had become suspicious, accused him of faithlessness and threatened to expose him. A reconciliation followed and he'd promised to leave Stephanie alone.

But the man had not taken into account Stephanie's passions. Time and again she'd called him, threatened trouble if he refused to continue their affair. Then, on the evening of November first, Zukauskas had been returning to his home when the woman drove up behind him in her husband's car, shouted for him to come to her.

"You're going out with me tonight, you schlemiel, or I'll tell everything to your wife!" he accused her of crying.

"She already knows," was the man's reply.

"Okeh, so I'll take my story to your chief. I'll get your job this time."

Crazed with fear and anger, Zukauskas struck out. The woman fought back and finally Zukauskas tore him-



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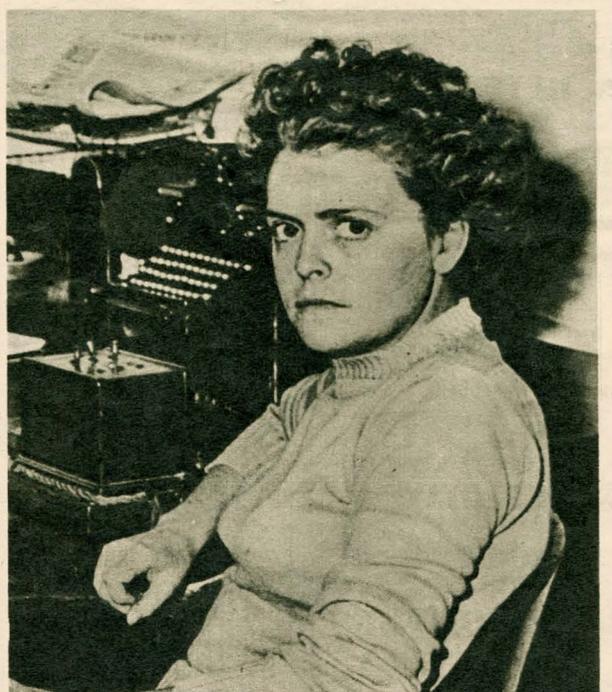


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self away. But the woman followed him. She was still screaming at him. "Zukauskas pulled a small .32 from his pocket and ordered her to leave him alone."

"The next moment the gun went off," his confession read. "I realized I'd shot her and fired once more, almost automatically. I thought of rushing her to the hospital. I managed to get her in the car. I must have dropped my wife's handkerchief in the car at that time."

"Next moment she had revived and started screaming I'd killed her. I must have gone completely crazy then. I reached for my revolver and emptied it into her body. She slumped down on the front seat. I still intended to take her to the hospital. But instead, I drove around for more than an hour. I knew then that she was dead. Finally I stopped and undressed her, wrapped her clothes in the blanket I found in the car."

Zukauskas had returned then to his home, told his wife to call headquarters and say he was ill and wouldn't be able to take his tour of duty. An hour later he returned to the car, drove this time to a lonely country lane near the village of Middlebury. There he removed the body, took the shovel he'd brought from home and dug a shallow grave.

"Before I buried her I took the shovel and smashed in her face. It was horrible, but I had to do it to prevent identification if the body should be found."

On the way back to the city Zukauskas had taken the revolver apart and, along with the bundle of clothing, had tossed it in a creek

In February of 1945 Francis Zukauskas went on trial before a tribunal of three Superior Court judges charged with murder in the first degree. The man's lawyer said his client admitted the crime, but claimed only second degree murder was justified under the circumstances. After less than three hours' deliberation the judges, however, agreed with the prosecutor and sentenced him to die in Wethersfield State Prison two months later.

Numerous legal steps were taken in an effort to save the slayer's life, and on April 9th, 1946, exactly forty-eight hours before he was finally scheduled to die in the electric chair, the State Board of Pardons finally commuted the sentence to life in prison.

Edna Zukauskas was completely innocent in the case and was cleared of any blame whatsoever.

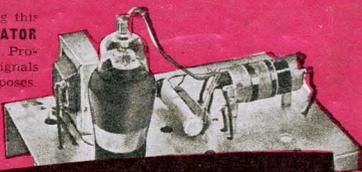
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