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A True Story by Robert Sneddon

DETECTIVE FICTION

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by Judson P. Philips



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DETECTIVE

FICTION WEEKLY



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He edged the door inward
an inch as a warning



The Green Terror

I

SCALZI said they heard him whistling when he went upstairs to his apartment about four that afternoon. Not that it was peculiar to hear Herman Schrader whistling on the stairs. In fact, Scalzi said, it would have been peculiar if he hadn't.

"That guy always feels good about something," Scalzi said.

Hans Schmidt, proprietor and bartender of Schmidt's Brau House, polished a glass with a bar rag. He didn't look at Scalzi, but the color was fading slowly from his face and his fat jowls quivered. Herman Schrader was an old friend of Schmidt's.

Scalzi said they practically set their clocks by the sound of Schrader whistling on the stairs. Schrader would go up to his apartment every afternoon about four and have a cup of coffee and maybe some coffee cake with his wife and kid. It was the one time he could leave his little store safely. About five, when people started coming home from business, he would be busy selling papers, magazines, cigarettes and other odds and ends. That rush would keep up till nearly seven, Scalzi said. The reason Scalzi knew so much was because he was a doorman at a night club and he didn't get up till about four in the afternoon himself.

"I usually hear him whistling on the

The Green Shirts
moved swiftly to
prevent an outcry



*In the cities, in the villages—
everywhere—men awaited the
signal that would loose a Green
Horde on the country*

By Judson P. Philips

stairs just when I'm startin' in to shave myself," Scalzi said.

Hans Schmidt picked up another glass and began to rub it vigorously.

"The funny thing is we didn't even know Gretchen, his wife, was sick," Scalzi said.

"He didn't say anything the last time he was in," Schmidt said.

"I know, it's funny," Scalzi said. "Well, like I'm telling you, I hear him whistling his way upstairs and the walls in that place is so thin you can practically hear everything unless you got your radio goin' loud. So I hear him

open the door of his apartment and call out to his folks. 'Gretchen! Fritz!' he says. I can usually hear the kid run across the room to say hello. It's a kind of a game. The kid takes a flyin' leap at Schrader and Schrader catches him in his arms. Only I don't hear the kid this time."

Schmidt kept his eyes carefully averted.

Schrader called out again to his family, Scalzi said. Then he, Scalzi, heard Schrader hurry from room to room, shouting for Gretchen and little Fritz louder and louder. Scalzi's wife

figured something was wrong so Scalzi wiped the soap off his face, he said, and went upstairs.

The door of Herman Schrader's apartment was open so Scalzi walked in. They were old friends, he explained, so there wasn't any point in being formal.

"Man, I never see a guy look the way Herman did," Scalzi said. "He's like the color of some now old blottin' paper, and he's shakin' all over like he's had a fit of some kind. He grabs hold of me by the arms and I thought he was goin' to tear 'em right out of the sockets. He wants to know what's happened to Gretchen and Fritz. He wants to know if I heard 'em go out. He wants to know if they left any message."

They hadn't left any message, Scalzi said. In fact he and his wife hadn't heard anything suspicious. Scalzi got the idea from Schrader that some of their clothes were gone . . . as if maybe they'd gone away on a trip without sayin' anything.

"Herman acted crazy . . . like he was scared out of his life," Scalzi said. "I told him maybe they'd left a note or somethin' and it blowed away, on account of the back windows onto the fire escape was open. He starts lookin' for this note like a lunatic. Then," Scalzi concluded, and his own voice was suddenly unsteady, "this now sort of gray man walks in."

"*Gott in Himmel!*" muttered Hans Schmidt.

"HE WAS kind of a creepy guy," Scalzi said. "Wore a gray suit, he did, and a light gray overcoat, and a gray hat and gray gloves. Under the brim of his hat I can see patches of gray hair. He wears glasses, with silver rims, and one of the lenses . . . the left

one I think . . . was frosted over like. You couldn't see no eye.

"'Are you a friend of Mr. Schrader's?' he asks me. 'Sure,' I tell him, 'and he's in some kind of trouble on account of his wife and kid are missin'."

"'There's nothing to be alarmed about,' this gray guy says. 'Mrs Schrader was taken ill and it seemed advisable to remove her to the hospital. We took the child with us because we didn't know with whom to leave him. I am the doctor.'"

Scalzi said that sounded on the level to him. Just then Schrader came out of one of the back rooms and sees this man in gray. He just seemed to freeze where he was, Scalzi said.

"Like a stature," Scalzi said. "Then he begins shakin' all over again and tells me to get out. 'Get out,' he hollers '*Get out!*'"

So Scalzi went back down to his apartment, leaving the door into the hall open. After about twenty minutes the man in gray came down the stairs and went out. Scalzi listened but there were no signs from Schrader's apartment. Scalzi said he thought Schrader would be going to the hospital. He, Scalzi, had an hour or so free time and he thought he'd offer to tend shop for Herman, so he went back upstairs.

"I found Herman sitting on a chair in the middle of the living room," Scalzi told Hans Schmidt. "Like somebody slugged him. He looked at me like he didn't know me. I offered to take over in the shop for him and he just looked blank. I ask him if Gretchen is bad . . . pretty sick, if you see what I mean. He looks at me and I swear tears start running down his cheeks. 'Gretchen,' he moans. 'My Gretchen! My little Fritz!' Then he writhes around in his chair like he's got a terrible belly-

ache. 'I'll never see them again!' he says. 'I'll never see them again!'"

Scalzi pushed his glass across the bar for another beer. "He's still sittin' there so far as I know, just moanin' and rockin' back and forth. There ain't anyone tendin' his shop. He acts like he's come all apart."

Hans Schmidt drew the glass of beer and looked around the Brau House. "Mr. Scalzi, I got to make a phone call," he said. "Would you mind watching things a minute? If anyone comes in, just hammer on that little bell. Would you do that?"

"Sure," Scalzi said.

Hans went over to the phone booth in the corner, dropped a nickel in the slot, and dialed a number. His eyes were fixed on the door, watching for someone to come in, and they were dark with fear. Presently his call was answered. Hans Schmidt cupped his hand over the mouthpiece and spoke in a low, tense voice

"I got to speak to Mr. Geoffery Saville," he said. "It's a matter of life and death."

II

THERE was no particular attention paid to the ambulance that drew up at the Grand Central Station at about the same time Scalzi was telling his story to Hans Schmidt. It went to a freight entrance. Two men got out of the back of it and watched the attendants carry a stretcher to a little rubber-tired cart. There was a woman on the stretcher. She lay perfectly still, her face waxen, her eyes closed.

One of the men carried a child in his arms. There was a blanket wrapped around the child so that nobody could see its face.

The man who carried the child was

tall, thin, dark with high cheek bones and bright, black eyes that were set too closely together. His companion was even taller, and monstrously fat. His round face bore the creases of good humor, yet his slate gray eyes were hard and unsmiling. They followed the stretcher down the platform to the Blue Cannonball, famous extra fare train which would leave for Chicago in about forty minutes. The fat man produced tickets and reservations for the porter, and the stretcher was carried into a reserved section. The unconscious woman was placed in a lower berth, and the bearers left.

The thin man unwrapped the blanket from the child and laid him down on the seat. The youngster could not have been more than five years old.

"Damn the little twerp, I think he's croaked," said the thin man.

His companion bent quickly over the infant. "You've smothered him, Cammerer. Here! Work on him. We may bring him around."

"The devil with him," Cammerer said, and laughed. It was a high-pitched, jangling laugh. "Work on him yourself, Krantz, if you feel so kind-hearted."

"You fool," Krantz said, angrily. Already he was working over the child, trying to force air back into the tiny lungs. "They got to be alive. You know that! There's been too much bungling in the last few weeks."

"The devil with it," said Cammerer again, but he was scowling anxiously as he watched Krantz work on the child.

Suddenly the infant stirred and gave a whimpering cry.

Krantz straightened up and wiped the perspiration from his face. "You're lucky, Cammerer. The Leader would not have liked it if the child had died.

He would not have liked it at all. Stay here and watch them. I'm going back to the club car for a drink and to see if Solters and Vogle are on board."

"Okay."

The fat man raised his arm in a stiff, fascist salute. "Hail to our Leader!"

Cammerer returned the salute. "Hail to our Leader!"

HERMAN SCHRADER still sat in the armchair in the center of his living room. It was dark now, and he had turned on no lights. There was some illumination from a street light that cast the shadow of his crumpled figure against the white plaster walls. He moved, rocking first from side to side and then backwards and forwards. At intervals a groan that seemed to come from the very depths of him escaped his parched lips.

The door of the apartment was open. The gray man with the frosted lens in his glasses had not closed it when he left, hours before, and Schrader had not moved from the chair. He did not hear the faint squeak as it opened wider and a man came in. He did not hear the man's soft footsteps as he crossed to the chair.

"Herman Schrader?" the man asked, gently.

Schrader looked up. In the darkness he could see only the outline of a tall, slender man, a snap-brimmed hat pulled down over his eyes.

"In the name of . . . haven't you done enough? Can't you let me alone for a while?" Schrader cried.

"Perhaps we should have a little light on the subject," the man said. He closed the apartment door. He pulled down the window shades before switching on a floor lamp near Schrader's chair.

Schrader frowned as he looked at the man. There was something familiar about him; they had met somewhere before, it seemed to Schrader. In his shattered state of mind Schrader did not realize that the familiar thing about the man was his extraordinary resemblance to Ronald Colman, the actor. The man took a cigarette case from his pocket, extracted a cigarette, and lit it. There was pity in his grave, gray eyes as he looked at Schrader.

"I am your friend," he said. "I have been told of your trouble, Schrader. I want to help you."

"Help?"

"It is not too late."

"It is much too late," Schrader said, desperately. "The only way anyone can help is to let me alone. What are you? Are you here to trap me . . . to see whether or not I can keep still?"

"My name," said the man, "is Geoffrey Saville. I am going to tell you what I know, and what I guess about your trouble, Schrader. Perhaps I can show you that it is not too late, if you are willing to help me."

"Oh God!"

"You are a member of an organization known as the Liberty Crusaders," said Geoffrey Saville, quietly. "They are better known as the Green Shirts, in the press. The avowed purpose of this organization is to fight subversive activities in the United States. Their real purpose is to seize control of our government, our army and navy, our resources and communications, and place them in the hands of a powerful fascist group. They have hundreds of thousands of members. They have stores of ammunition, guns, even airplanes. They wait only for the signal from the Leader to act. Most of you have been trained in military tactics, street fighting, and sabotage. You all

have a post assigned to you for the moment of the big *putsch*.

"You joined this organization, Herman Schrader, because you believed in the ideals they publicly profess to follow. You have lived in Germany. You wished to do anything in your power to keep that sort of thing from happening in the United States. You reached a position of trust and importance in the organization. You keep certain books, certain records, of the greatest importance. Am I right so far?"

Schrader nodded dully. "There is no harm in confessing this, even if you are one of us," he said.

"I AM *not* one of you," Saville said, grimly. "About three weeks ago there was trouble in the Green Shirt organization here in New York. A certain member of the organization, suspected of treachery, was beaten so badly that his mind deserted him. He is now the babbling inmate of an institution in New England, with only a bare chance of recovering his sanity. There were reprisals, Schrader. An organization known as the Park Avenue Hunt Club swung into action. Certain of your men were killed. Your divisional commander, one Carl Wiberg, was arrested. Stories of ammunition and guns were turned over to the police. Am I right?"

"Yes."

"Now we come to you, Herman Schrader. You had heard of the Park Avenue Hunt Club in the past. They had always been the enemies of vice and crime. They have acted in cases where the police were unable to act. Their methods have been lawless, but they have always fought on the side of the right. You knew that and so you began to wonder. You made a vital mistake. You did some of that wondering out loud to a friend . . . a man you

trusted. That man reported you to Walter Hoffman, the new divisional commander. Tonight, when you came home, your wife and child were missing."

Schrader moaned.

"While you were searching for them a man visited you . . . a gray man, with a frosted lens in his spectacles. I know who that man is. He is the chief of staff of the Liberty Crusaders, the man who carries orders from your national Leader to your divisional Commanders. He told you what had happened to your wife and your small son. They have been taken from you to be sent to Germany."

"Oh God!" Schrader buried his face in his hands.

"The Green Shirts might have killed you for your treacherous thoughts, Schrader, but they were afraid. After their recent trouble they don't want to risk murder at the moment. But your silence is essential to them. So they have made certain of it. They are sending your wife and child to Germany. If anything happens to them there, no one will ask questions. Am I right?"

"I . . . I . . ."

"And you will keep still forever; you will work twice as hard for your masters, in the hope that Gretchen and Fritz will be safe."

"What else can I do?"

"And when they get to Germany do you think they will be safe? Do you think they are interested in feeding more mouths in your Fatherland, Schrader?"

The stricken man was silent.

"Well, they are not in Germany yet, Schrader. There is still a chance to save them. *If you will help!*"

"No, no! You cannot fight the Green Shirts. They are too strong . . . too powerful . . . to ruthless. There is only one group of men who might help, but

there is no way to reach them; no way to ask them for help."

"Who are these men?" Saville asked.

Schrader lowered his voice. "The Park Avenue Hunt Club," he said.

"I am the leader of the Park Avenue Hunt Club," said Geoffery Saville, quietly.

III

THE Blue Cannonball left New York at 6:30 for Chicago.

It was after seven when Geoffery Saville left Herman Schrader's apartment.

There had been occasions in the career of the Hunt Club when they deserted their usual base of operations . . . Saville's palatial Park Avenue home. The first brush with the Green Shirts only a few weeks before had made this a necessity, and they had taken up quarters at a little house on Jane Street in Greenwich Village. Their connection with this house, which they also owned, had been kept secret for all the years of their existence.

The Park Avenue Hunt Club had become legendary in the decade that followed the repeal of prohibition. In those years, gangsters and killers, big shots in the world of crime, had turned to more sinister occupations than the running of liquor. It was then that the Hunt Club, under Saville's leadership, had been formed. They had fought death with death. They had acted the roles of judge, jury, and executioner with a grimness that had struck terror to the underworld. They moved swiftly, mercilessly, without the entangling red tape of the law.

In 1939 they had disbanded. Saville had gone to the country with Wu, his Chinese servant, where he raised polo ponies, pattered in his garden, and put aside, he thought forever, the violent

life he had lived for ten years. John Jericho, giant redhead, had turned back to big game hunting and found it tame after years of hunting men. Arthur Hallam, round, bespectacled, had taken up quarters at the Five Arts Club, where the chef proved almost, if not quite, as satisfactory as Wu. There Hallam, gourmet, chess player extraordinary, ex-medical student, and walking encyclopedia of odd facts, had settled down with the vague idea of writing a mammoth work on criminal psychology.

The Green Shirts had ended this dream of peace. The Green Shirts, planning so cleverly that the average citizen scarcely knew of their existence, had become a menace which threatened the very cornerstones of American liberty. Out of retirement came Saville and Wu, rallying the two old friends around them, to fight this menace . . . pledged to carry on until the National Leader and the men who financed him were unmasked and destroyed. So far they had been unable to get at the roots of the Green Shirt organization. They had destroyed one section of them, but, as Saville said, it was like cutting the blossoms off a vine. The roots still grew and sent forth new flowers. Even faster than they had dreamed, it had happened. There was a new divisional commander in New York, new activities, and once more the man in gray had appeared and disappeared, like a shadow, casting a blight on the life of Herman Schrader, a tiny cog in a monstrous machine.

"You might wipe some of the egg off your necktie," Jericho said to Hallam, impatiently.

Hallam's eyes twinkled behind his steel-rimmed spectacles. "Yesterday's egg," he said. "Too late."

Jericho paced restlessly up and down the confines of the tiny living room in the Jane Street house. "This is getting

me down!" he said. "Holed up here for days. Why don't we do something? There's a new divisional commander named Hoffman. Why don't we drag him into an alley and beat his brains out till he tells us who the Leader is?"

"Because he wouldn't tell," said Hal-lam. "They are still far more frightened of the Leader than they are of us . . . or even of death, John." He spread some red caviar on a cracker, sprinkled it with chopped onion. He ate with relish, sipping at a brandy and soda. "We cannot make mistakes," he said. "We do what we can when there is trouble . . . but we don't strike at the Leader and miss, because we would never get another chance. These boys play for keeps, John."

"I hope Geoffery turns something up. Sitting around here like a blasted . . ." He stopped. There was the sound of a key in the lock. Saville came in, tossing his hat on a chair by the door. His grave face was set in an unusually grim mould.

"Get ready to move," he said.

"Where to?" Jericho asked, eagerly.

"West coast," said Saville. "Listen."

He told them the story of Herman Schrader.

"But they've got hours of head start!" Jericho exclaimed. "And how do you know they're heading west . . . and what good does it do you to know it."

"Schrader knows pitifully little," said Saville. "But there have been others sent to Germany. They go from the West Coast in Japanese ships."

"But they've probably taken a plane!" Jericho protested. "They've probably got it timed to a nicety."

"Private planes would be risky . . . too much snooping at air ports. The same thing goes for all flying," said Saville. "I think they will have gone

by train. Probably by one of the extra fare babies where they could get elaborate accommodations and be unnoticed. There have been just two such trains leaving New York since Mrs. Schrader and the boy were taken—the Chief, and the Blue Cannonball. We can beat either of them to Chicago by plane if we move at once."

"Why not tip off the cops?" asked Jericho. "It's kidnaping!"

"Because, John, unless this is handled carefully . . . very carefully indeed . . . Mrs. Schrader and her child will be dead before any cops can break in the door of her stateroom. The Green Shirts don't want her talking. They'd like to keep her alive, as a sword over Schrader's head, but they won't risk her being taken alive. She has seen too much and knows too much."

FROM Chicago to San Francisco by the Overland route on the Medicine Man, crack extra fare train.

The compartment was crowded, what with the half conscious woman lying in the lower berth, the small boy, Fritz, huddled frightened in the corner of the seat, and the huge Krantz with his smiling face and hard eyes, Cammerer, Vogle, and Solters.

Krantz looked pleased with himself. "The change was made, gentlemen, without a hitch."

"Why not," said Cammerer, and laughed that hungry, jangling laugh.

"We go straight through from here to San Francisco without change," Krantz said.

"We will continue to stand watch in four hour shifts . . . Cammerer and I on one, Solters and Vogle on the other."

"Why all the precautions now?" Cammerer asked. "There's nothing to be afraid of. Schrader won't talk . . . so who will be looking for us?"

"Orders," said Krantz. "We are not to run risks. I had a wire from Commander Hoffman at Chicago, as you know. Schrader goes on at his shop as usual. He tells his friends his wife is at a sanitarium. But, unfortunately, there have been leaks in the past month. We must act as if there were chances of further leaks. Then nothing can go wrong."

The woman in the berth stirred. Her eyes were open, the pupils dilated from the drug under which she was being kept.

"Have mercy," she murmured. "Please . . . have mercy."

Cammerer took a step toward the berth, his fists clenched.

"Camerer!" Krantz's voice was sharp. He pushed past the thin man and bent over Gretchen Schrader. "Something you want, Mrs. Schrader?"

Gretchen Schrader tried to rise on her elbows but she was too weak. Tears welled up in her eyes. "Kill us," she pleaded. "In the name of mercy, kill us. It would be better if we were all dead, Fritz and Herman and me. How can it help you to torture us?"

Krantz smiled with his lips. "You are not being tortured, Mrs. Schrader. You are being sent back to your Fatherland. This should make you very happy."

Cammerer's laugh filled the compartment again.

"Kill us," the woman whispered. "We could not harm you then. None of us could harm you then."

"But my dear Mrs. Schrader, your husband is an extremely valuable man to us. We need him. Hasn't he kept our books excellently for years? Isn't he in possession of secrets we should hate to entrust to a new man? Why, you should be proud!"

"Yeah . . . proud!" Cammerer chuckled.

"And with you and the boy doing your bit in Germany, Mrs. Schrader, Herman will work twice as hard for us, and be ever so trustworthy! And you will keep writing to him and telling him that you are well and happy. This will make him even more valuable to us."

"When can I write to him?" Gretchen Schrader asked. The thought behind her question was pathetically transparent. To get word to Herman that death was infinitely preferable to life . . . the life they faced.

"When you reach the Fatherland and are comfortably settled there," Krantz said, "you shall write him as often as you please." He smiled, faintly. "Of course, with a country at war, there is censorship. They cannot risk your inadvertently giving away military secrets."

Slowly Gretchen Schrader turned her face to the wall. Little Fritz whimpered but was quickly still, looking at the four men with the eyes of a frightened puppy. They did not like it when he cried. The man called Cammerer had struck him once, and there was a dark blue bruise on his forehead.

KRANTZ and Cammerer went back to the club car to relax while Vogle and Solters stood guard in the compartment.

There were new faces on the train of course. Only one or two other passengers who had traveled to Chicago on the Blue Cannonball had transferred to the Medicine Man. Krantz sat in one of the comfortable leather chairs, took an expensive cigar from his vest pocket and lit it. He looked around him. Things were going nicely, very nicely indeed. Cammerer went out to the observation platform.

Suddenly Krantz sat very still. There was a man across the way whom he had

seen before. Krantz had an extraordinary memory for faces, but this one eluded him. A sense of danger tightened his nerves. He must place that face. Had something gone wrong?

Then Krantz threw back his head and laughed. There was so much relief in that laughter that the man across the way looked up and saw that Krantz was laughing at him.

"I beg your pardon," Krantz said, his huge stomach still shaking with merriment. "I been sitting here puzzling over you."

"Really," said the man.

"I thought I knew you," Krantz said. "I've got a pretty good memory for faces and who they belong to, but I couldn't place you. Then suddenly I realized it was a trick."

"A trick?"

"Well, a sort of a trick," said Krantz. "You look enough like somebody I don't know at all to be his twin brother."

The man sighed. "I think I can guess," he said. "You're thinking of the actor, Ronald Colman."

"People have probably said that to you before," Krantz said.

"I'm afraid they have," Saville said, dryly.

"Going to the coast?" Krantz asked.

"San Francisco," said Saville.

Krantz sighed. "Well, we got a long time to go," he said. "Suppose we have a drink together."

"Why not," said Saville.

"Good. My name is Krantz." The Green Shirt held out his pudgy hand. "Jefferies is mine," said Saville, blandly.

"Porter!" Krantz bellowed. "Whiskey and soda . . . am I right, Mr. Jefferies? I can always tell what a man will drink by looking at him."

"That's interesting," Saville said. And then to the porter: "My friend

will have rye . . . with a beer chaser."

"By *Gott*, Mr. Jefferies, that hits the nail right on the head. You and I ought to get along fine."

"I'm beginning to think so," Saville said.

ON THE observation platform Cammerer stretched out in one of the chairs and sat staring gloomily at the country-side. There was only one other passenger on the platform. He was a tall, red-headed man, broad-shouldered with enormous hands. He kept a pipe clenched between his strong, white teeth, and from time to time his hands tightened on the arms of his chair. He glanced casually at Cammerer as the Green Shirt came out, and then turned away to watch the landscape himself.

After a few minutes Cammerer took a pack of cigarettes from his pocket. As he started to take out a cigarette the pack slipped from his fingers and fell to the floor near John Jericho's chair. Automatically Jericho reached to pick it up. As he handed it to Cammerer their eyes met.

For an instant Cammerer seemed to freeze where he was. Some of the color left his face. "Thanks, buddy," he stammered, finally.

"That's all right."

"Come through from New York?" Cammerer asked. His fingers shook as he took a cigarette from the pack.

"Chicago," said Jericho.

"Ever been in New York?"

"Many times," said Jericho.

"Recently?"

Jericho turned to face Cammerer, his blue eyes cold. "Say what is this, sweetheart, the third degree?"

"Sorry," said Cammerer, hastily. "I guess you just get tired not having anyone to talk to on these trips."

Jericho grunted. "Okay," he said. "I

just don't like people that start prying into my business."

"No offense," said Cammerer.

He drew once or twice on his cigarette, then flipped it over the rail. "Guess I'll have a drink," he said, and went inside.

At sight of Krantz engaged in conversation with Saville, Cammerer frowned. There was a nerve twitching at the corner of his mouth that he couldn't control. Finally he attracted Krantz's attention. The fat man indicated a chair on the other side of him and Cammerer took it.

"Listen," he whispered to Krantz. "There's hell to pay . . . on the observation platform . . . that red-headed guy. . . . Jericho!"

The expression of good humor did not fade from Krantz's face but his eyes contracted, glittering. "Positive?"

"Wasn't I in the brawl at Schmidt's Brau House when he first got on our trail last month? I'd know him anywhere."

"Did he recognize you?"

"I don't think so. He didn't act like it. Listen, Krantz, the rest of 'em may be on the train too. How did they get wise? How . . ."

"Take it easy," Krantz said. "It may be a coincidence, though I doubt it. Just take it easy. If he goes through our car . . ."

"I get it," Cammerer said. He got up quickly and walked toward the head of the train.

Krantz turned back to Saville, who had been studying his fingernails thoughtfully. "Fellow I'm traveling with," Krantz explained. "I'm a doctor. Taking a patient to the coast who's going to Hawaii."

"Ah," said Saville, politely. "The gentleman your patient?"

"Oh, no," said Krantz. He smiled,

as if something amused him. "He's a . . . a male nurse."

Saville's face was expressionless. "I see."

Just then Jericho came in from the rear platform. For an instant he looked at Saville, and it was an utterly blank look as if he'd never laid eyes on the Hunt Club leader before in his life. He, too, went through the car toward the front of the train. Saville punched out his cigarette.

"Think I'll go to my stateroom and have a snooze," he said.

"Oh, don't run away," said Krantz, placing a restraining hand on Saville's arm. "Couldn't we have another drink?"

Saville hesitated an instant. "Why not," he shrugged.

He could see Jericho disappearing into the car ahead.

IV

JERICHO tamped out his pipe in the palm of his hand and went through the vestibule into the next car. His own compartment was two cars ahead. He had gotten about halfway along the narrow corridor of the car when a compartment door opened, blocking his way. The inquisitive gentleman from the observation car came out.

"Oh, hello," Cammerer said.

Jericho nodded, waiting for him to stand to one side.

"Could I borrow a match?" Cammerer asked.

Jericho stared at him for an instant. The first faint warnings of danger began to make themselves felt in Jericho's nervous system. There was something about this guy. . . .

He reached in his pocket for matches. At the same instant the door directly behind him opened. Jericho half turned, meaning to get out of the way of the

person who was coming out. A gun appeared in Cammerer's hand.

"Back up, pal," Cammerer snarled.

John Jericho had been in a thousand tight corners before, and there was one inevitable reflex to anyone who got the drop on him. Strike! Once a guy thinks he has you he relaxes for just an instant, tension lessening. In that split second Jericho turned the tables.

He struck now . . . his left hand smashing down on Cammerer's gun wrist, his right flashing straight at Cammerer's jaw. He connected with both. But that was not all there was to it. Through an explosion of red fireworks he saw Cammerer go down, and went down himself, slugged from behind by Solters who had emerged from the second compartment.

Solters took him under the arms and dragged him into the compartment where Gretchen Schrader and the boy Fritz were already prisoners. Cammerer followed, unsteadily, holding onto his face and swearing. As the door was closed he lunged out with his foot and kicked Jericho savagely in the back.

"Don't kill the —," Solters said. "Krantz will want to find out about the others." He went into the toilet and came out with a wet towel. He slapped it over Jericho's face. Vogle knelt, went through Jericho's clothes, and produced a forty-five automatic which had been holstered under the redhead's left arm.

After a moment Jericho moaned and opened his eyes. He was lying flat on his back, his long legs twisted under him. Two men sat on the double seat staring down at him . . . two men and a small, frightened boy. Each of the men held a gun, casually, aimed in his direction. On the other side was his pal Cammerer, still rubbing his jaw, also holding a gun, with his trigger finger dangerously tight.

Jericho became acutely aware of the rhythmic clatter of the train wheels. You could fire a dozen guns off in here and no one would be the wiser. Then he saw the woman in the berth. He didn't need to be told who she was.

Jericho pressed down on the floor with his hands and started to rise.

"Stay put!" Cammerer said, and kicked him in the chest.

Jericho's head throbbed violently and he was much too dizzy to be able to count on himself in action—not that he had a chinaman's chance in this confined area against three armed men. This required figuring . . . a lot of figuring.

He saw the handle of the door turn. The door opened an inch or two and he heard a man's voice.

"Been a great pleasure, Mr. Jefferies," said Krantz.

"Not at all. Enjoyed it," said Geoffery Saville, from the corridor.

At the same instant Cammerer dove at Jericho, smothering him with a dusty Pullman cushion. Jericho wanted to laugh. As if he would have called out and let Geoffery betray himself!

KRANTZ came in and closed the door. Cammerer removed the cushion from Jericho's face and the fat man with the beady eyes stared down at him.

"Well, well," said Krantz.

"The clown nearly broke my arm," Cammerer snarled.

"You play too rough, Mr. Jericho," said Krantz, suavely. "We have a number of scores to settle with you on that account."

"I should think four of you with guns might have a fifty-fifty chance," said Jericho. "Although you might have trouble, since it already takes four of you to manage that desperate woman

and that fierce little boy." He laughed.

"Shut up!" snapped Cammerer. He brought his heel down on Jericho's unprotected hand.

"Had you forgotten, Mr. Jericho, that there were several of us who had seen you before. Wasn't it a bit risky to come on this trip?"

"Yes, it was risky," said Jericho. There were little beads of sweat on his upper lip from the agonizing pain in his crushed hand, but his tone was still insolent, and the expression on his face had not altered. "The whole country is risky as long as you and your boy friends are allowed to run around loose, Fatty."

"Are you alone on this train, Mr. Jericho?" Krantz asked, softly.

"Obviously not," said Jericho. "Or can't you see that this compartment is infested with rats? You know, you really ought to eat less pork and sausage, my friend. That belly of yours is revolting."

"Cammerer!" Krantz said, sharply, as Cammerer started forward again. He smiled blandly at Jericho. "I see you fancy yourself in the old romantic tradition, Mr. Jericho. The jaunty, debonair hero in the face of danger. It's an amusing conceit . . . rather British, I believe."

"Definitely not German, Fatty. I promise not to scuttle myself for your benefit, if you see what I mean."

"Jericho, how do you happen to be on this train?"

"Looking for you, sweetheart."

"How did you know we were here?"

"I followed my nose," said Jericho. "An old hunting dog seldom loses the scent."

"Cammerer! I'm handling this. How many of your friends are on this train, Mr. Jericho?"

"We didn't think it necessary to send more than one able-bodied man after

your four little slugs," said Jericho, in a conversational tone.

"It will save you a good deal of unpleasantness, Mr. Jericho, if you will adopt a less offensive manner."

"Reminds me of the headmaster of my prep school," Jericho said. "'Jericho,' he used to say, 'I don't like your attitude. Not for the best interests of the school.' Look, Fatty, you don't really expect me to do any talking, do you?"

"Oh, but I do, Mr. Jericho."

"Sad mistake, sweetheart. Very sad. It's been tried. My grandmother used to bribe me with raspberry tarts . . . pure sense of the word, you understand . . . but I always . . ."

"The devil with you," said Krantz, suddenly flaring into rage. He did not interfere when Cammerer lashed out with the butt end of his gun at Jericho's skull.

THE corridor was empty. Saville stooped down to look out the window, glancing quickly in each direction as he did so. Then his hand closed over the knob of Jericho's compartment, and he opened the door and slipped in.

Jericho was not there.

Saville took out his silver case and tapped a cigarette absently on the back of it. There was no cause for alarm, yet he felt it . . . felt the faint, prickling pin points of danger up his spine and the back of his neck. It was this almost psychic premonition of trouble that had saved him and the others many times. He slipped his hand inside his gray tweed jacket and loosened the automatic he carried in a holster. He opened the door to the compartment's toilet. Empty.

He lit his cigarette and drew the smoke deep into his lungs. There was no reason why Jericho should be here. He'd probably gone ahead to the diner. They were deliberately traveling apart

from each other. It had been agreed that there should be no sign given that they knew each other. When Jericho had passed him in the club car a few minutes before, he had not given the signal that meant he wanted to talk to Saville. Yet there was something wrong.

Saville was almost certain about Krantz. The man was German. His story of a patient making a trip to Hawaii . . . of the male nurse. It could fit the setup they were on the train to discover. That meant Krantz and the male nurse were two of the men they wanted. The fact that they had both been away from the "patient" at the same time indicated that there were others. You couldn't force your way into their compartment and hope for success . . . not with three or four of them on the other side of the door, armed.

Saville opened the door a crack, peered up and down the corridor, and then stepped out. He walked ahead through a string of cars to the diner. No Jericho. He went back to the club car. Krantz was in one of the arm chairs, smoking a fresh cigar, a rye and beer chaser at his elbow.

"Your nap must have been a failure, Mr. Jefferies," he said, cheerfully.

"I never can sleep on trains," Saville said, taking the adjoining chair.

"You ought to fly. Gets the trip over quickly."

"I wanted to see a bit of the country. How is your patient standing the trip?"

"Excellently, excellently. These modern trains with air conditioned . . . traveling is really a pleasure. We reach Omaha in about a half an hour. Chance to stretch our legs. About a twenty minute lay-over, I understand."

They were silent. The clack of wheel on rail went on and on, monotonously. Saville turned his chair slightly so that he could see the vestibule door of the

car out of the corner of his eye. Each time it opened he felt his muscles tense, as he hoped for sight of Jericho's flaming head and broad shoulders. The "male nurse" came through the car once and went out to the observation platform. It was dark now, and Saville could see the red glow of his cigarette as he stood on the rear platform for a moment or two. As he came through the car again Saville saw him look at Krantz and shake his head, ever so slightly, in the negative.

Krantz smiled faintly as the "nurse" disappeared. "Some patients respond to treatment, and some do not," he observed.

"It must be trying when they don't," said Saville.

"It is, Mr. Jefferies. Very trying. But in the end they usually come around."

As the train came to a halt in the Omaha station Krantz rose and went out. Saville followed him to the platform. He had, in the last twenty minutes, come to a definite conclusion about Jericho and what must be done.

He went into the station, saw the blue and white sign of the Western Union office and made for it.

"Well, Mr. Jefferies, a coincidence," said Krantz' voice at his elbow. He was scribbling a message on a yellow blank, shielding it carefully with his left forearm.

"People love to get telegrams," said Saville. He, too, began to write on a blank. He made no effort to conceal what he was writing and he saw Krantz glancing cautiously over his shoulder.

**ARTHUR HALLAM,
17 Jane Street
New York City**

**LONG TRIP ALONE STOP NEED
INSTRUCTIONS REGARDING PAY
OFF STOP WIRE NORTH PLATTE
OR OGDEN REGARDS—JEFFERIES.**

He slid the message across to the

clerk and paid for it. As he sauntered away Krantz was at his elbow.

"Guess we better get back on the train," he said.

They walked toward the observation car. Saville was not looking for Jericho any longer. He knew for a certainty what had happened. The odds were long the way he had to play it, but there was no choice.

"I don't think you ever told me what your business is, Mr. Jefferies," Krantz said.

Saville glanced at him and his lips curled in a faint smile. "Speculation," he said.

Krantz flicked the ash from his cigar. "With the world in its present state of unrest that sort of thing may fall through the bottom one of these days."

"I'm not worried about it yet," Saville said. "I don't think America is ripe for revolution."

"It may come sooner than you think, Mr. Jefferies. Much sooner."

"That is a matter of opinion," Saville said.

SCHMIDT'S Brau House in New York was a scene of revelry. There were perhaps twenty-five men seated at the tables around the room; twenty-five men who would have caused considerable astonishment to the average American citizen. They were all dressed alike in gray riding breeches, black shoes and puttees, green shirts with black trim, and cross belts. These were the Modern Minute Men of the Liberty Crusaders.

A great deal of beer had flowed across the table tops. In the center of the group was a bulky, red-faced man with close-cropped blond hair and thin, cruel lips. He was Walter Hoffman, Divisional Commander of the local unit. He had only recently come into power and this was a party to celebrate the event.

As Hans Schmidt and his waiters refilled the beer steins someone would propose a toast. Each one was more flowery than the last. And at the end of each, twenty-four men rose to their feet, clicked their heels, and raised their steins.

"To our Leader!"

Things were rolling along at a fast clip when the drunk wandered into the bar. Nobody paid any attention to him at first because he was a rather insignificant drunk. He was short and fat and he wore steel-rimmed spectacles. His derby was dented and dusty where it had rolled on the ground at some previous stop. The collar of his Chesterfield was turned up. He clung to the edge of the bar as if his stubby legs were no longer strong enough to hold him up.

With a stein in his hand he turned around, back to the bar, and stared bleerily at the men in Green. In a momentary lull he spoke.

"I want one of those lovely shirts," he said.

There was a roar of laughter.

"Are you an American?" someone shouted.

"M'ancestors came over on the Queen Mary," he said.

More laughter.

"Do you believe in Democracy?"

"S'long as I eat," said the fat man.

"He's not a Communist . . . not with that stomach."

"When in Rome do as the 'Romans' do," said the fat man. "I wanna a green shirt like that . . . an' shiny boots . . . and . . . stuff!"

The steins were refilled. There was another toast, another clicking of heels.

"Hail to our Leader!"

"Neither hail nor sleet nor rain nor . . . nor . . . oh hell," said the fat man, and waved his empty stein.

Hans refilled it. Hans' face was the peculiar color of gray putty. He came around to the center table where Walter Hoffman, flushed and self-satisfied, was surrounded by his friends.

"There is a telephone call for you in my private office, *Herr* Commander."

"Telephone! Who is it?"

Hans Schmidt looked down at the bar rag in his hand. "It is a lady, *Herr* Commander. She wouldn't give her name."

Color mounted in Hoffman's cheeks but he looked pleased. There was a roar of approval from his men. He got up and walked stiffly across the room to the door of Hans' private office. Two of his men, obviously bodyguards, followed.

"It isn't necessary," Hoffman said. "I will take this alone."

"Tha's why I want a green shirt," said the drunk. "Women! Women are *crazy* about uniforms."

HOFFMAN closed the door behind him and walked to Hans' desk where the telephone stood, receiver off the hook.

"Hello!"

There was a buzzing sound . . . the dial hum. Hoffman clicked the receiver violently. "Hello! What the devil!" He replaced the receiver on the hook. "They'll call back," he said aloud.

"Matter of extreme doubt," said a soft voice behind him.

Hoffman spun around. Standing in the corner of the room was a small, yellow man with the slanting eyes of a Chinese.

"Swine! You eavesdrop on me, eh?" Hoffman snarled.

"No, I am not eavesdropping," purred the Chinese. "I am the lady who called you."

"What!"

"You and I are taking walk, *Mister* Hoffman."

"Why you insolent dog!" From his hip pocket Hoffman yanked a blank leather persuader, standard equipment for the Green Shirts. They could crush a man's head like an egg shell. He strode toward the Chinese.

The Chinese seemed not to move, yet suddenly the light from the desk lamp reflected on steel. Hoffman let out a roar of anger and dove for Wu. Wu's side step was as calculated and delicate as the routine of a ballet dancer. The steel blade made a zig-zagging downward slash. Hoffman screamed and clutched at his arm. The leather persuader fell to the floor. The point of the steel blade was pricking Hoffman's throat.

"You see, *Mister* Hoffman, miserable Chinese made unerring prediction. We are taking walk. Quick!"

IT WAS fifteen minutes before Hoffman's bodyguards began to wonder about him. The drunk had been amusing. He had sung a couple of songs. But he seemed to be fading now, clinging to the bar, his chin sagging forward on his chest.

The two bodyguards consulted each other in low tones. They went to the office and opened the door cautiously.

Then wild confusion.

Green Shirts ran in every direction. The Brau House was searched from cellar to garret. At first some suggested the Leader had gone to keep a secret assignation, but this theory died a quick death. There was blood on the office floor . . . blood and Hoffman's black leather persuader. Frantic telephone calls were made; alarms were given.

In the confusion the little fat man, who had been so drunk, staggered out to the street unmolested. No one had time for his amusing songs or his quips. Their Leader had been abducted!

V

IT WAS past midnight and Geoffery Saville sat alone in the club car, listening to the endless clatter of wheels. In forty minutes they would reach North Platte. He would know then just what their chances were. It was nearly eight hours since Jericho had disappeared. One thing Saville knew for certain. Jericho would not talk. Jericho would never talk. The fat Mr. Krantz would never guess that Saville was Jericho's ally unless he arrived at that conclusion by his own wits. He had so far given no indication of suspicion.

If he did not receive the proper word at North Platte, Saville knew that he could not hold himself in check any longer. He would have to act . . . he would have to find a way to act. He could never get into Krantz' compartment by force without risking the possibility of Jericho, Gretchen Schrader and the child being murdered before he could lift a finger to save them. The one chance . . . the long chance . . . was that Jericho would not be killed until they could get him off the train under his own steam. That was the gamble—the gamble that had stretched Saville's nerves to the breaking point.

The door at the far end of the car opened. It was Krantz. He raised his eyebrows in surprise as he saw Saville.

"So you weren't fooling about sleep on trains, Mr. Jefferies."

"No, worse luck."

"Maybe I could give you something that would make you sleep."

"Any kind of sleeping medicine leaves me thick-headed for days," said Saville.

Krantz dropped into a chair. "I cannot sleep for other reasons. My patient needs constant attention. No sooner do I doze off than I am needed. He glanced at his watch. "What would you say to a

little game of cards . . . cribbage, twenty-one, something to pass the time?"

"Excellent idea," said Saville.

They played cribbage. Slowly the hands of the clock moved forward. At last they heard the long, drawn out whistle of warning from the engine. They were pulling into North Platte. They went on with their game. Saville found it an effort to keep his hands steady as he handled the cards. The train had been at a standstill for six or seven minutes, before the car door opened and a boy in the uniform of a telegraph messenger came in. Saville's breath escaped him in a long sigh.

"Dr. Otto Krantz?"

Krantz looked surprised. "That's me, boy." He ripped open the envelope with his thick fingers. As he read the message his face clouded over in a heavy frown. "No answer," he said, sharply. He pushed his chair back from the cribbage board. "I'm sorry, Mr. Jefferies, but this message calls for attention on my part. See you in the morning."

"Right," said Saville.

He watched Krantz go, and the weariness left his gray eyes to be replaced by the bright light of excitement.

KRANTZ' voice was sharp, angry.

"Things have gone wrong," he said to his three friends. He paid no attention to Jericho, who still lay on the floor, dried blood on his cheek, his blue eyes staring up at the ceiling. He paid no attention to Gretchen Schrader or the child who slept in the corner. "This swine's friends," and he indicated Jericho, "have flown west. They are waiting at Ogden to pick up the train. We have our instructions."

"Clean up the whole bunch of them, eh?" Cammerer said, eagerly.

"We leave the train," said Krantz. "We stop, in half an hour, at a place

called Highpoint for water. It has been arranged for two automobiles to pick us up there. We take the prisoners with us."

"Him?" Cammerer pointed at Jericho

"Yes. Our orders are to hold him hostage, if we can do so without risking our own escape. He may be useful to us. I am telling the conductor that it is necessary for my patient to undergo an immediate emergency operation. You will get this man on his feet and off the train. Nearly everyone is asleep. We will not attract attention. But so help me, Mr. Jericho," and Krantz looked balefully down at the redhead, "if you open your mouth you'll be left out there for the buzzards. I promise you."

"Which buzzards?" asked Jericho, through his bruised lips.

THE Medicine Man came to a halt at Highpoint. The train crew were very helpful to Dr. Krantz and his entourage. The stretcher, bearing Gretchen Schrader, was lifted down gently to the platform. Solters carried the child. Cammerer and Vogle walked behind Jericho, and Cammerer's gun was rammed painfully into the middle of the redhead's back.

Highpoint is just a tank stop. There is a tiny station which houses a telegraph operator. As the Medicine Man pulled away on the long Westward climb Dr. Krantz and his party looked around them.

"Where the devil are the cars?" Cammerer demanded.

"Probably waiting till the train is out of sight," said Krantz, comfortably. Jericho laughed

"Shut up!" Cammerer snarled.

"You sure you haven't made a mistake, Fatty?" he drawled. "Maybe your telegram was a phoney."

"What about it?" Solters asked, anxiously.

"It was in Hoffman's private code," said Krantz. "The cars will be here."

The station agent came out of his office. "Anything I can do for you gentlemen?" he asked. "I close up shop now."

"Friends are meeting us," said Krantz. "They'll be here."

The station agent nodded, looked curiously at the stretcher, and went away. They heard the motor of his antiquated car start up and trail off into the distance. To the Westward the mountains rose forbiddingly in the moonlight. All about them in the other directions was an expanse of plain, dotted with small scrubby bush.

"Mind if I sit down, Fatty?" Jericho asked. "I have a headache, and I've also got a hunch you're in for a long wait. Your little green friends have probably given you the run around."

"Stand on your feet, you rat!" Cammerer ordered.

"Keep shouting orders, pal," said Jericho. "You may not have much longer to enjoy the sound of your own voice."

Krantz turned, a thin frown penciling his forehead. "What are you talking about, Mr. Jericho? Do you know something about this?"

"I know your message came in brother Hoffman's private code," said Jericho, "and that you are a lovely, trusting creature."

Vogle muttered under his breath. "Suppose there has been a slip up?"

Krantz was obviously anxious himself. "There must be a telephone in that station. Break in if you have to, Vogle. Get New York."

"Okay."

Vogle walked across the platform to the station door. It was locked. He

moved back a step or two and then hurled himself against it, splintering the lock. He went inside.

The little group on the platform waited. Krantz standing by the stretcher, Solters holding the child who slept, Cammerer with his gun in Jericho's back.

"When one green shirt calls another long distance," said Jericho, "I suppose you might call it a 'poison to poison' call, mightn't you? Brother Vogle is taking a long time."

"Vogle!" Krantz called.

The green shirt in the station didn't answer.

"Put the child down," Krantz ordered Solters. "Find out what the devil's going on."

Solters went away into the station. Somewhere in the distance a coyote howled dismally.

"Two little pigs have gone to market," drawled Jericho, after a moment. "But where are they? Do your men always play hide and seek this way, Krantz?"

With an oath Krantz strode along the platform toward the door. Jericho could feel Cammerer's gun hand begin to tremble. It wasn't a nice feeling. Krantz was calling to Vogle and Solters as he went toward the station. Then suddenly he stopped, turned.

"Cammerer! Help . . ."

Out of the darkness of the station a tongue of flame split the night, just as Krantz reached for his gun. In that one instant the pressure was removed from Jericho's back. It was what he had been waiting for, with muscles tensed. Jericho whirled, his right arm swinging in a backhand arc that caught Cammerer squarely in the Adam's apple. The Green Shirt's bun barked, but the shot went wild as he staggered under the impact of Jericho's blow, choking.

Jericho swarmed over him. The gun fell to the platform, and with his left arm around Cammerer's neck Jericho's right fist smashed the gunman's face again and again.

"So you slugged me when I was lying on my back!" Jericho said between his teeth. "So you slugged that kid . . . that baby!" Merciless, his fist hammered at flesh and bone. The Green Shirt hung over Jericho's left arm like a rag doll, dripping red, his face pulverized.

"John! For the love of heaven, man!" Gently Saville's hand tugged at Jericho's shoulder. Jericho loosed his hold on Cammerer's body and it fell to the platform, limp, and still as death.

"We've bagged the lot of 'em," Saville said. "Are you all right, son? There was no other way but to wait. Are you hurt?"

Jericho wiped a hand across his swollen lips. "Nothing that can't be cured by finishing off this whole bloody outfit!" he said, grimly. "How did you work it?"

"Arthur and Wu did the job," Saville said. "Divisional Commander Hoffman is no more, I'm afraid. But he served his purpose."

HERMAN SCHRADER lifted his haggard face as he heard the little bell ring over the door of his shop. The man who came in was short and fat, and blue eyes twinkled behind steel-rimmed spectacles.

"Well, Schrader, good news," Hallam said. "Your wife and child are safe."

Schrader stared blankly, as if he couldn't believe what he heard.

"It's all right, old man. They're really safe. I've just had word."

Schrader came forward, clutched the fat man by the coat sleeves. Then sud-

denly he buried his head on Hallam's shoulder, sobbing.

"There, there. Good heavens, man, I mean . . . this is no time to give way. It's all right, I tell you. You'll be closing your shop for awhile, because we need

you, Schrader. Now your family is safe you can help us. There's still a job to do. There's still the Leader, and his friend with the frosted spectacle lens. We're counting on you. Here, now . . . buck up."

Cipher Solvers' Club for December, 1939

(Continued From May 11)

Esteban, Port Arthur, Tex. †Jack Feuerstein, Brooklyn, N. Y. †W. R. G., Maywood, Ill. °Holly, Dallas, Pa. °Uncle Jim, Union Grove, Wis. †F. Llewra, Flushing, N. Y. °Macaw, Massillon, Ohio. †Wear, Brookhaven, N. Y.

Seventeen—°Edna D. Brooks, Attleboro, Mass. †9 A. D., Pittsburgh, Pa. °Mrs. Robert De Noyelles, New York, N. Y. David A. Foulis, Yonkers, N. Y. †Iris Goldthorpe, New York, N. Y. °H. H., Coventry, Ohio. Kerry, Gladewater, Tex. Nomdep, Buffalo, N. Y. Twotwo, Chicago, Ill.

Sixteen—†Ian, Glace Bay, Nova Scotia, Canada

Fifteen—The Butcher Boy, Galveston, Tex. †Cintra, East Elmhurst, N. Y. Cryptonym II, Brooklyn, N. Y. †Denarius, Cleveland, Ohio. Ella P. Sibley, Boston, Mass.

Fourteen—Doyle, Lakewood, Ohio. †John T. Straiger, Brooklyn, N. Y.

Thirteen—Bill Renwick, Detroit, Mich. Zev, International Falls, Minn.

Twelve—The Admiral, Munising, Mich. †Dickie, Yonkers, N. Y. †F. G. E., Duluth, Minn. †Greppe, Meriden, Conn. †Melnam, Roxbury, Mass. †D. Mevoli, Fort Amador, Canal Zone. †James H. Nelson, Providence, R. I. †Norman, Chicago, Ill. Retlaw, Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada. †Alice M. Shott, Oakland, Calif. †Logan Simard, Pasadena, Calif. Taw, Saule Ste Marie, Mich. °Waltraw, Detroit, Mich.

Eleven—†Mrs. Archie Hill, Wausau, Wis.

L. J. Wells, Providence, R. I. °Little Willy, Johnstown, Pa.

Nine—Jorowi, Valdez, Alaska. Larol, Brooklyn, N. Y. †Nightwatch, Westboro, Mass. †Nujack, North Attleboro, Mass. A. G. Tate, Montreal, Quebec, Canada.

Eight—C. E. B., Columbus, Ohio. F. H. D., Jamaica, N. Y. †A. R. E., New York, N. Y. °Pearl Knowler, Wendling, Oreg. †B. I. Lane, Seattle, Wash. †Sirref, Bronx, N. Y.

Seven—Jughaid, West Point, N. Y. J. S. II, Waterbury, Conn.

Six—Joseph G. Brown, Chicago, Ill. Rain-in-the-Face, Los Angeles, Calif. E. H. Field, New York, N. Y. †Mij, Oil City, Pa. †Remdin, San Antonio, Tex. †Frank C. Ringer, Chicago, Ill. †Ruth, Laramie, Wyo. S. Simon, Chicago, Ill. †Mono Verde, Minneapolis, Minn. †Mr. Zip, Mattoon, Ill.

Five—N. Alizer, Bronx, N. Y. Arvilla, Ridgeway, Ill. †e, Atlanta, Ga. †Ges, Philadelphia, Pa. †Hallie Mackintosh, Cleveland, Ohio. Marnel, New York, N. Y. M. W. Meeker, Slidell, La. °Pangram, Kenmore, N. Y. G. S. Whitman, San Francisco, Calif.

Four—R. H. Delude, Roxbury, Mass. Francis Steppe, Bristol, Vt. Wes, Mt. Vernon, N. Y.

Three—Emperor, Elizabeth, N. J. Reddy Kilowatt, Charleston, S. C. †Oregon, Grants Pass, Oreg. Retsel, New York, N. Y.

Two—†Inky, Brooklyn, N. Y. Bill La Perch, Bronx, N. Y. Vag, Harrisburg, Pa.

One—John H. Ward, Brass Castle, N. J.

(Continued on page 105)

Kidneys Must Remove Excess Acids

Help 15 Miles of Kidney Tubes Flush Out Poisonous Waste

If you have an excess of acids in your blood, your 15 miles of kidney tubes may be overworked. These tiny filters and tubes are working day and night to help Nature rid your system of excess acids and poisonous waste.

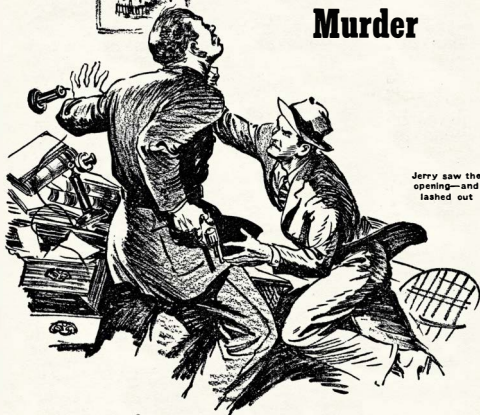
When disorder of kidney function permits poisonous matter to remain in your blood, it may cause nagging backache, rheumatic pains, leg pains, loss of pep and energy, getting up with a swelling, puffiness under the eyes, head-

aches and dizziness. Frequent or scanty passages with smarting and burning sometimes shows there is something wrong with your kidneys or bladder.

Kidneys may need help the same as bowels, so ask your druggist for Doan's Pills, used successfully by millions for over 40 years. They give happy relief and will help the 15 miles of kidney tubes flush out poisonous waste from your blood. Get Doan's Pills.

(ADV.)

Key to Murder



Jerry saw the opening—and lashed out

Merciless wrath the village felt—against an innocent man

By Paul Allenby

THE musical ringing of metal matrices dropping down from their individual slots in the linotype magazine above his head echoed through the half-darkened rear of the printing shop. Eben Sharp ran long-practiced fingers along the keyboard; fingers that seemed barely to move.

Eben was the proprietor of the *Wingville Standard*, an eight-page weekly newspaper whose income was further increased by quite a large amount of

job printing. On this night, a Tuesday, Eben was busy setting up the coming issue's editorials. The regular straight matter he left to his combination pressman-linotypist, Jerry Benton. But editorials were different—they represented the policy of the *Standard*, the opinions of Eben Sharp. Only *he* could set these; it was tradition and engendered also by the fact that Eben composed his editorials on his linotype machine. He had no use for typewriters and he dreaded

putting anything down on paper in his cramped, illegible handwriting.

This week there was to be one editorial. One that was hard to write—for him especially hard. He would have to bare to the public eye certain conditions which had existed in the past in Wingville . . . conditions to which he, in no small measure, had contributed, but which had been covered up, and had never seen the light of day, fortunately for all concerned.

Now, it was time to bring these things out in the open. A crisis had been reached and Eben Sharp was preparing his editorial out of the pangs of conscience and an innate urge to play fair with the one man who had, back on that day twenty years before, made the arrangements by which he, Eben, had been saved the disgrace of public scandal . . . and a prison term.

The tinkle of matrices dropping, the groaning of the motor's fly-wheel, the smooth whirr of moving machinery was a cacophonous, yet pleasant, background music to his boiling thoughts.

Perhaps it was because of these noises, natural to his inured ears, that Eben Sharp failed to hear the slight creak of the door which opened from the casting room in the rear of the shop. Footsteps which moved softly through the door were muffled by the noise of machinery. The staccato breathing of the man who sneaked through the partly opened door and past the shadowy type-case was but a whisper in a larger and louder jumble of mechanical din.

Eben did not hear, nor did he feel, for more than an infinitesimal moment, the blow which swept down upon his unprotected back and head. It came murderously down, smashing through bone and brain with a sickening crunch. Then the staccato breathing faded gradually out of the room; the rear door

closed softly; and a murderer sneaked out into the darkness of the night, while matrices tumbled down in a jumble of unrhymic discord as Eben Sharp's head dropped upon the linotype keyboard.

As the blow fell, the murderer scooped with one hand and the opening paragraph of the editorial Eben Sharp had been composing was scattered on the floor; lines flung in ringing sounds to mingle with other similar slugs on the printing shop floor. It would be a miracle if ever those lines could be fitted together again to show what Eben Sharp's opening paragraph had been.

JERRY BENTON was a little late this morning. Wednesday was always a busy day for him; he had to start setting the straight matter for the paper, twenty galleys of it to get up before the following night when the press would have to roll again after a seven day rest.

The reason Jerry was late was simple. Last night had been something of a celebration for Jerry and Evelyn Sharp, the boss' daughter. They had decided to tell Eben that they wanted to get married. They had stayed up very late, planning . . . and when the alarm had gone off this morning, after only five hours sleep, Jerry had tried to snatch an extra fifteen minutes and been played false by a tired brain and body. He woke up three-quarters of an hour later and rushed through his dressing to make it to the *Standard* office a half hour late.

Jerry approached the front door of the *Standard* office, took his key out of his pocket and fitted it in the lock. He turned and nothing happened . . . the key didn't work. He drew it out, looked at it to confirm the fact that it was the correct one. Then he suddenly realized the reason: the door was not locked.

He walked inside and was further puzzled by the fact that a light burned dimly behind the linotype machine. At seven-thirty in the morning it was still rather dark and he could make out the bulky shadow of the machine and the long shadowy forms of the type cases in the rear of the shop. A burring noise annoyed his thoughts.

As he walked the long length of the printing shop toward the machine he wondered about the light and the door. Eben Sharp was always particular to turn out all lights and lock all doors before he left the office evenings. Jerry knew that his boss worked nights quite often . . . was usually the last one to leave the shop.

Then it suddenly struck Jerry that the noise that jutted into his brain was the labored churning of the linotype motor. Eben Sharp might forget to turn out the lights, might even forget to lock the doors, but he would never leave the motor of the linotype machine running all night!

Jerry took the last few steps at almost a run . . . and then he stopped, saw the slumped form of his boss, the bloody, smashed head on the keyboard, the hands hanging straight down, touching the floor. For a minute, Jerry was too stunned to do more than stare . . . then his reactions became more positive and he moved toward Eben Sharp and the linotype machine. A second glance told him there was nothing he could do for his boss. Eben Sharp was past all help, past all type-setting and editorializing.

Jerry's first instinct was to raise the dead form up, stop the linotype motor, and then go to the telephone and call the sheriff, but he'd read enough to warn him that this was the wrong thing to do. This was murder, and the first thing to do was to call the sheriff. He did.

THE sheriff of Paulton County was a pompous, opinionated official whose one claim to political security and fame was his kinship to the county chairman. Crime in its different forms, as it occurred in Paulton County, was usually handled by his deputies.

Sheriff Blaisdell had never come in contact with murder before, and he tried to hide his confusion beneath a stern, officious and nasty manner.

His questioning of Jerry Benton would have led a casual onlooker to believe that the sheriff had listed Jerry at the top of his murder suspects. And this was true, since Sheriff Blaisdell had not bothered to look beyond the fact that it was Jerry who had found the body, and it was Jerry who wanted to marry the boss' daughter.

He said so. "The way I figure it, Jerry Benton, you wanted to marry Evelyn, and Eben wouldn't stand for it. You got arguing and then you got sore and let him have it. Simple." He turned and looked at the other people gathered in his office.

They included Constable Jeremiah Miller, who was not a little indisposed toward the sheriff because he felt that rightly the murder case was his; Village Trustee John Furman, an elderly, gray-haired man whose kindly eyes were fastened on Jerry and contained no small amount of distaste for the sheriff's implications; and Evelyn Sharp who sat defiantly staring at the sheriff and whose face showed only faint lines of the grief which she felt inwardly.

Undersheriff Abe McArdel looked on his superior with stony eyes; his face seemed to portray the biting scorn which he felt for the sheriff's any idea. Occasionally he gave Jerry a half-smile and a slight shake of the head, as if to say: "Don't worry kid, this big bag of wind is just spouting."

But Jerry realized the danger which hung about him like a shroud. This was an election year. The shrievalty was an important and well-paying office. Blaisdell could make a lot of political capital out of the Sharp murder case. If he could get a conviction, if he could nail Jerry with it, he was practically certain of both nomination and election.

Eben Sharp had been well-known and extremely well-liked throughout Paul-ton County. The public would honor well and freely the man who caught his murderer.

The assurance Jerry should have felt because of the friendliness which all but Blaisdell and Constable Miller seemed to show toward him would have been heartening except for the political elements which obtruded into the case.

His answer to Blaisdell's insinuations was sharp and heated, and he foolishly took a swing at the sheriff. His swing was smothered in its incipency by Undersheriff McArdel, but the mere effort added further proof to the unrelenting mind of Sheriff Blaisdell. It was certain that this attempted attack would reach the public's interested attention through the favorably inclined daily newspapers.

The sheriff's voice boomed in his triumph. "Jerry Benton," he said, "I arrest you for the murder of Eben Sharp!"

Abe McArdel interposed then, drawing the sheriff aside. Jerry could barely hear the words that passed between them.

"You're moving too fast, Sheriff," McArdel said. "Benton won't run away. Why not wait a while, get all your facts together, and then, if the wind blows the way you think now, your case will be that much stronger. It wouldn't be a good thing to make a mistake, at this time."

The sheriff nodded, seemed to be di-

gesting McArdel's implications. Then he walked over to Jerry and said: "We'll take that back, Benton, but I'm holding you as a material witness. I'll parole you in the custody of Mr. Furman."

BECAUSE of a growing suspicion directed against him in the village of Wingville, it was decided by Jerry and Evelyn Sharp that another man should be hired to take over Jerry's job in the printing plant. This served two purposes, as far as Jerry was concerned: it cast no blot of ignominy upon the paper and it left him free to work out a solution to this case as well as a solution for his future.

Jerry felt rightly that Sheriff Blaisdell and even Constable Jeremiah Miller were working on this case with only one end in mind: the solution which would indicate, without question, that Jerry Benton had murdered Eben Sharp. Any assistance would have to come from someone else, possibly Undersheriff McArdel or Village Trustee John Furman.

McArdel, however much his manner was indicative of his personal feelings toward Jerry Benton, could do very little for him officially, except to cast a restraining hand on any of the sheriff's impulses. Furman, on the other hand, was free of any responsibility to the sheriff's office other than as bondsman for Jerry. In the latter direction, Jerry felt he might proceed with the expectation that Furman would help him.

Jerry's ideas about the murder were fairly well defined as he discussed them the night following the murder. "I think, Mr. Furman," he said to the elderly man, "that whoever killed Mr. Sharp was an enemy out of the past. I can think of no one here in town, nor has anybody mentioned anyone else-

where, who hated Eben Sharp enough to kill him. The motive was something that was hidden in the past. I feel that I'm right on that . . . I don't think it was robbery and then murder, or that it was one of those impulse-of-the-moment things."

"What makes you think it could not have been these last two things you mentioned?" Furman asked.

"Well, that isn't hard. Nothing was stolen. The position of the body indicates that Mr. Sharp was struck from behind. There was no struggle. And a burglar would not have entered the shop if he noticed a light in the place. You can see that light from the street, or from the alley that runs alongside the building. The linotype machine is right beside one of the windows. A burglar would have waited until the place was dark and he was sure no one was in the shop.

"As far as the sudden impulse idea, that doesn't hold water, either. Mr. Sharp was at the machine, probably setting, or about to set type. He probably was working on this week's editorials; he usually sets them on Tuesday night . . . and if there had been an argument with someone, he was not so dumb that he wouldn't have gotten up from his chair when the argument got to the point where a fight could occur. A linotyper's chair is a cut-down affair; the legs are about half the length of those of an ordinary chair. You sit low-down, and a sensible man is not going to sit down almost at a level with the floor when there is a chance that he might be attacked by someone standing over him. He's not going to give the other fellow that much advantage."

"Well, that's logical enough, Jerry," Furman said, "but there's always the thought that perhaps the argument, if there was one, never got to the danger-

ous state; that Eben's assailant left peaceably, then returned and sneaked up on Eben sometime afterward."

"Yes, that's true, and that is the way it may have happened, but it does not disprove my main idea . . . that someone who had a very strong motive, more than just ordinary hate, sneaked up on Eben Sharp and killed him from behind. If I can find that motive, somewhere, it won't be hard to find the man."

THE elderly man nodded, lines furrowed his brow as if he were thinking deeply. Jerry hoped that Furman was trying to project his mind into the past and remember something which would help him. But Furman's thoughts were evidently unproductive--or else productive of only a thought which proved distasteful to the older man's mind. He shook his head and made an unpleasant face as though he had tasted something he didn't like.

"It might be interesting to know, at this point, Jerry," he said, finally, "if Jeremiah Miller saw anyone around the print shop at about the time the murder is said to have been committed. Miller is on duty in the square during the night, isn't he? He might have seen someone and it might just need a jolt to his memory to recall it to him."

"That is an idea, but I doubt Miller will help me. He's pretty sure I killed Mr. Sharp," Jerry said sadly.

John Furman smiled, picked up the phone on his desk. "Give me 412, please," he said to the operator. In a minute he spoke again: "Hello, Jeremiah? This is John Furman. Say, I'm trying to help Jerry Benton out. Did you see anybody suspicious, or anybody at all, near the print shop last night? What? Oh, I see . . . thanks." He hung up, a sadly puzzled expression appearing on his face.

"Well, what did he say, Mr. Furman?" Jerry asked.

"Well, son, you're not going to like this. Miller says he saw *you* coming past the printshop at about two-thirty in the morning, and nobody else."

Jerry started to speak, and the import of the words lit him in their fullest extent. His mouth hung open. He suddenly realized that what the constable had said was true. He *had* gone past the printshop at about that time, on his way home. He explained to Furman:

"Yes, that's right, Mr. Furman. I never gave it a thought before. I did go by the shop at about that time. I'd taken Evelyn home—the Sharp house is only about two blocks up the street past the shop—and I was on my way to my room at the hotel. I had to go by the shop to get there. I must have been half-asleep, or thinking about something else, or I might have noticed the light on in the shop. But I didn't stop, Mr. Furman, you've got to believe that! I went on past, took the alley that runs past the building next door to the shop and went straight to my room."

"This alley . . . do you mean the one that runs by the printshop windows?" the older man asked.

"No. The one I usually take when I come home from seeing Evelyn runs along the building next to the alley that goes by the printshop building, past McCarroll's store and building, you know . . ."

"Yes, I know which one you mean. It is a short cut to the hotel. But what probably happened was that Miller saw you coming abreast the printshop, then when he looked again you had disappeared. He thought nothing of it, of course, until the body was found and Sheriff Blaisdell accused you of the murder."

"But why didn't he come out with

that when we were in the sheriff's office?" Jerry asked

Furman smiled. "I should say that Constable Jeremiah Miller has his eye on being sheriff in place of Blaisdell. He probably feels that the sheriff has usurped power which belongs rightly to him . . . that is, the handling of the case of the murder of Eben Sharp. He is withholding this apparent damaging bit of evidence for a later time, probably, when he can spring it and become the hero of the occasion."

"But, he's seen me do that before, Mr. Furman," Jerry said

"Yes, but this time it becomes a significant action, and in the hands of our very clever district attorney, Mr. Lieper, a jury will be impressed with its significance to the exclusion of anything else about it."

"What'll I do, then?"

"Just carry on the way you've been going. I shall have a talk with our ambitious Mr. Miller, and see what more he thinks he knows. Also, don't worry too much, and tell Evelyn to keep her chin up . . . Things are not as black as they seem. I've been around Wingville seventy years. I've seen a lot and I know a lot about the people here . . . I can't say anything right now; I'm not sure . . . but take it easy for a couple of days. John Furman will be in there pitching for you two youngsters."

Jerry sensed for the first time that John Furman was something more than a man who had befriended him. He was a man who carried some sort of a secret beneath his kindly appearing but austere manner. He had been Eben Sharp's closest friend. Eben's past must be rather an open book for John Furman, but he seemed loath, now, to open that book for Jerry's inspection. Why?

Jerry went away from John Furman's office repeating that question over

and over in his mind. His reactions varied from anger at the older man for not revealing what he apparently knew and gratitude for the man's honestly given encouragement. When he reached the hotel, Jerry had decided not to wait for whatever revelation and help John Furman might give him . . . Somehow, and from some place, he'd find out for himself . . .

JERRY did not go to Eben Sharp's funeral. Evelyn and John Furman pointed earlier that it would have been a bad thing to do, in the face of a growing and dangerous feeling present in the public's mind against him.

Jerry knew pretty well what would go on—he'd covered several funerals for the paper in the past, when Evelyn and her father had been busy elsewhere and unable to be present. He knew that Eben Sharp would be praised as a father, as a newspaper publisher, as a public-spirited citizen, and as a former village official. And probably Rev. Amos Burrell would gush and gush *ad infinitum* over the dead body of a man whose liberalism in ecclesiastical matters had brought on heated words between them, many times.

Jerry watched as the funeral procession left the church. From his hotel room window, he watched again as the procession returned, cars dispersing as they reached the intersection of roads at the square. He recognized John Furman's car. Evelyn was sitting next to the older man in his ten-year-old black coupé. Furman waved at Jerry as he went by and Jerry interpreted the gesture as meaning he was to join them. Furman's car took the turn just north of the square and went on out on the road which Jerry knew would take them to the older man's house.

Jerry came downstairs quickly and

stepped out of the hotel entrance. He started walking across the square intent on his thoughts and directing his steps toward the same street down which Furman and Evelyn had just gone.

He noticed the two men who came toward him, but thought nothing of it. He knew who they were, Ira Sanders and Mike Riley. Young fellows with whom he'd been rather friendly in the past. They met him as he reached the corner and started to turn.

Their attack was sudden and wordless and before Jerry realized what was happening he had been knocked to the ground. Sanders was on top of him pummeling his face, and Riley was standing by, giving him an occasional kick in the ribs as the opportunity presented itself.

Jerry snapped out of his surprise and tried to keep Sanders' fists from his face. He brought his knees up, caught his feet in Sanders' middle and then heaved up. Sanders flew back and Jerry quickly scrambled to his feet. His first impulse was to run . . . he had no argument with these men and he realized amid the blows they now rained upon him that this was the result of the Sharp murder. To them he was a murderer allowed, by some quirk of the law, to run loose. They expressed their opinion of this law and this murderer in the only way they knew. What could he gain by fighting them, even if he could last out against their combined power?

He tried to close in with the two men, hoping to render ineffective their blows. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw the constable's green coupé coming down the road toward them. As it drew abreast, Jerry yelled to Miller for help.

Miller sailed on by, his gaze directed to the empty sidewalk on the opposite side of the street. The gesture was an obvious one, Jerry realized. Miller

didn't want to see and had no intention of interfering

Jerry fought then, with a growing anger boiling and burning inside him at the injustice of Miller's attitude and the public opinion which, Jerry knew, was being fanned and whipped up against him by the constable.

He threw caution and conscience to the winds and sailed in to the two men. Ira Sanders was the first to feel the full effect of Jerry's wrath, going down and out in the first flurry of fists. Mike Riley, realizing he was alone now, backed away and as Jerry came at him, turned and ran. Jerry's first impulse was to rush after him, but his sense of proportion returned and he stopped, nursing his bruised knuckles, looking sorrowfully down at the prostrate form of Ira Sanders. He turned in a minute, made his way up the street, in the direction of Furman's house.

As he passed the first corner, he looked down toward the Sharp home. He wondered whether Furman had left Evelyn home or would she be at Furman's now, waiting for him, Jerry? She stood on the porch and waved at him as he went by.

"Stop in on your way back, Jerry," she yelled at him, and he waved back, nodding his head in assent.

THE home of John Furman was a one-story, frame bungalow in which the elderly man lived alone. He had a woman come in once a week to clean up; he ate all his meals at the hotel. It was in the small dining room at the hotel, reserved for regular customers and lodgers, where Jerry had gotten to know and admire John Furman.

Jerry walked slowly down the short, flagstone walk leading to the house slowly, his thoughts a maelstrom of emotional reaction. The fight left him

slightly breathless. He was not a pretty sight, one corner of his lip cut and bleeding, and one eye rapidly assuming the reddish puffiness which precedes blackness. His body ached from Riley's well-placed kicks.

Jerry knocked on the door and waited to hear John Furman's step. He knocked again when there was no answer to his first knock. Then, when that failed to bring a response, he tried the door, found it unlocked. He stepped inside.

He called Furman's name and only an echo answered him. The house was unearthly still and Jerry shuddered. He could see into the living room but not a soul was in sight there. The sliding doors between the living room and dining room were closed, so Jerry walked over to them and knocked. Still no answer. He opened the doors and gasped at the sight which confronted him in the small dining room.

John Furman's body lay on the floor and what had been once a head of heavy, wavy white hair was now a bloody mass of bone and brain.

The room was a shambles. An upturned chair gave evidence of a struggle . . . in which John Furman had been the loser. Only the table gave evidence that this was originally a dining room. It was large and oval. The rest of the furniture was that of an office. A desk over against one wall. File cabinets and a water cooler in another corner.

Papers were strewn on the floor. Ransacked cabinet drawers stood open, as did the drawers of the desk. The place had been searched thoroughly and wantonly . . . for what, Jerry wondered.

His glance took in the scene in its entirety in a second, then he snapped out of his horror and amazement. He could see no weapon laying about, and it was obvious that no ordinary thing

had been used to kill John Furman. Whatever it was, it should be nearby. He started to look, unaware that his prolonged presence here was damning, if anyone should come up that walk and investigate the open door. Jerry had forgotten that he had left it wide open when he came in.

Jerry found the weapon under the desk and a gasp escaped his lips as he realized what it was. Instinctively he started to reach for the familiar object, but his hand did not get very far before a voice behind him broke the eerie stillness of the room.

"Caught red-handed this time, eh Benton?" Constable Jeremiah Miller said as he came into the room. "Now don't try anything. I'd like to use this." He wagged a gun at Jerry.

Jerry was too stunned to say anything. The full implication of what had happened here and the situation in which he had been placed finally broke through the curtain of his numbed brain. When it did, Constable Miller had a hand on the telephone.

Jerry moved fast, took the opportunity that presented itself when Miller's gun hand dropped for a second. He leaped at the officer, managed to get close enough to shoot his fist at the man's jaw. Miller went down. Jerry grabbed the gun, reversed it and clubbed down on Miller's head . . . not hard enough to kill, but enough to send the officer into unconsciousness.

Then Jerry went to John Furman's body. He didn't know what he would find, but there was no sense in looking elsewhere. Whatever the murderer had been looking for, he had perhaps found in the file cabinets or in the desk drawers. The papers littering the floor would be valueless to Jerry. On the hunch that perhaps John Furman had left some sort of a clue on his person . . . possibly

overlooked by the murderer . . . Jerry searched through the dead man's clothes.

HE FOUND something, but the value of it was not clear until he had sneaked out of the house and made his way quickly down the street. What he had found was a thick cameo locket which John Furman had had on a chain around his neck. Jerry almost overlooked it, when it occurred to him to open it. Inside, instead of the picture he had expected to find, Jerry saw a small key.

On one side of the key was a number and on the reverse the words *Wingville National Bank*. It was obviously a safe deposit key. Could John Furman's safe deposit box contain recorded proof of what the elderly man was perhaps going to tell him this afternoon?

Jerry didn't know and as he made his way toward Evelyn Sharp's home, he wondered how he was going to get into that deposit box to find out. He realized that possession of the key itself was damning evidence against him, if he were caught with it.

But greater than that was the evidence which lay underneath the desk in John Furman's dining room. The blood-stained, oblong piece of linotype metal. A pig, it is called, shaped like a small loaf of bread. A weapon that is heavy enough to kill, small enough to be carried in one's pocket without attracting attention, and the sort of thing a printer might have readily at hand.

Jerry's blood went cold within him as he considered the weight of evidence that had been piled up against him in the murder of John Furman. That he had not killed Constable Miller was the only fact in a series of damaging ones which was in his favor. If he were a murderer he would never have let Miller

escape death. But that fact would not overbalance the evidence against him.

JERRY told Evelyn the whole story and the girl's eyes ran the gamut of emotions from horror, amazement to fear and back again as he recounted the events which led up to and after his discovery of John Furman's corpse.

"I've got to hide out somewhere, until I can work out something, Evelyn," he said. "This'll get out as soon as Miller comes to, if not before. When it does, I won't be safe in this town. People loved John Furman even more than they did your dad."

"But where can you go, Jerry?"

"I can't go very far. I've got to be near. I've got to work on this thing close by. I thought maybe the last place they'd look for me would be right here in town. That barn in back of the print-shop building might do. The loft is a good spot."

"But they'd look for you there probably."

Jerry shook his head. "No, they won't. We'll fix it so that they'll be sure I've left town. That is, if you're willing to do some acting."

"I'll do anything, you know that, Jerry."

"I knew you would, Evelyn. Now, look . . . I'm going to tie you up, and gag you. They'll probably come here first. You'll tell them I tied you up, took some money away from you, and said I was leaving town. They'll believe you, seeing you tied up that way. Game?"

"Of course, Jerry."

"Then, after they have gone, I'll try to sneak out and make the barn. Tomorrow, go see Abe McArdele. Tell him everything and ask him to help you. I think he'll do it . . . but you can sound him out first to make sure. Give him

this key"—he handed her the key he had found in the locket—"and have him try to get an order to open that safe deposit box. When he's got that order, bring him to me and I'll give myself up into his custody."

"I hope this key is the solution, Jerry. I'm sure from what poor Mr. Furman said to me today that he was ready to tell you something very important. He hinted at it and he looked worried all during the funeral. He sat next to me and I could see there was something worrying him."

"We haven't much time, darling," Jerry said, "so let's start the drama rolling."

Evelyn nodded her head. Her eyes filled with tears. "But, first . . . this!" She moved into his arms and their lips met in a long, agonized kiss.

JERRY hid in the cellar, down behind the pile of coal in the bin. He heard the rumbling murmur of many voices coming down the street, stopping in front of the Sharp home. He listened to footsteps coming up on the porch and then the insistent ringing of the front door bell broke through the stillness.

He heard Constable Miller's voice. "Open up! Or we'll break down the door!" the officer yelled.

Maddened at the lack of response, Constable Miller's fist beat a tattoo on the glass window of the door. Jerry could hear the hammering, wondered when they would get the door open and find Evelyn the way he had tied her.

"Nobody's in there, Miller," Jerry heard a voice say. "Look's like a body on the floor, or something!"

"The dirty rat! He's probably killed her, too!" Then came the crash of the door being broken open, the rush of feet into the living room. Then a voice said: "She's okay, I guess, just tied up."

Jerry waited painfully cramped behind the coal. He was afraid to stir, afraid that he might cause the coal to move. They might investigate if they heard noise in the cellar . . . even though Jerry could hear the steady voice of Evelyn Sharp recounting the tale they had planned between them.

Soon he heard the men leave, heard their muttering even when they were some distance away down the street. He waited five . . . ten . . . fifteen minutes, and then Evelyn called him softly. He joined her at the head of the cellar stairs. They embraced for a moment and then Jerry let himself out the back door, stealthily crept along the hedge and found the little path which led through a small wooded spot, then a field heavy with underbrush, and then the barn behind the printing plant building.

The barn was a dark, menacing shadow facing him. He could see down the alley, out into one corner of the square. Men stood around in groups on the sidewalk. In one group, Jerry saw Constable Jeremiah Miller, his hands gesticulating wildly, his words evidently meeting with the approval of his listeners, for their heads nodded from time to time.

Jerry gained the barn easily. He climbed the rickety ladder that led into the loft as quietly as he could, not worried because it was doubtful if anyone would be around there. The center of attraction was the constable in the square . . . Jerry would be safe, he was sure, in the loft.

He folded his coat and used it as a pillow for his head. In the darkness, staring up at the moon that peeped through a small, broken-paned rear window, he tried to collect his thoughts, tried to bring a solution out of the thin air for this murder plot, whose pattern spelled out only his name.

Both dead men had been extremely well liked. No hint of enemies, past or present. Nothing. But yet, some enemy had killed both . . . who? And why?

Jerry fell asleep turning these two questions over and over in his mind.

HE AWOKE the next morning with a feeling of surprise that he was still alive. Through his dreams had marched hordes and hordes of grim-faced, relentless men, all screaming his name in strident cadence. Then the picture had changed and he saw himself hanging . . . about his neck an enlarged replica of the locket he had taken from John Furman's body. In his hand was an enlarged replica, also, of the key the locket had contained. As he swung from the gallows, he waved the key, and somehow he kept yelling: "This is it! This is it!" Then he woke up, with a groan.

Evelyn came to him a little later. She managed to sneak out of the back door of the printing shop and make her way unseen to the barn.

They embraced first, before a word was spoken.

"Oh, darling, I have good news!" Evelyn said, finally. "Abe McArdel doesn't believe you're guilty and he is willing to help. I gave him the key and he says he can get Judge Marken to give him an order for opening the safe deposit box."

"That's swell, darling," Jerry said. "I'm sure what we want is in that. It's just got to be. Now you better beat it. When Abe gets here let me know and I'll come down."

They kissed again and Evelyn climbed down the ladder and disappeared from Jerry's view. He watched her go through the rear door of the printing shop, then he started to turn away when he realized a man was stand-

ing off to the side, on the back stoop of the adjoining building. It was Constable Jeremiah Miller and he was staring up at the window in the loft. Jerry ducked back quickly, wondering if the constable had seen him . . . but he *must* have seen Evelyn come out of the barn! Was he suspicious?

The question was answered almost before Jerry had a chance to figure out what he would do if the constable had reasoned correctly that the fugitive Jerry Benton was hiding in the loft of the barn.

A voice boomed below him. "Jerry Benton! Jerry Benton! Better come down from there! We know you're up there. Come down, you dirty murderer, or we'll come up and get you!"

Icy fingers traced fear along Jerry's spine. Trapped! What could he do? He thought fast . . . McArdel would be here soon probably . . . if he could stall Miller, then maybe he had a chance. He looked out the window, and below him he saw a large group of men. They stared up at him, but they couldn't see him because of the dirt and dust that covered the window pane. But he could see them and the sight sent water in his knees, made him feel sick in his stomach.

He knew what it would mean to give himself up now. There would be no trial . . . these men were a mob now and their leader was Constable Jeremiah Miller. There was one chance . . .

"Don't try it, Miller, or any of you," he called down. "I've got a gun and the first one that sticks his head up here is going to get it. I'll give myself up to Abe McArdel when he comes, but not to anyone else."

A shot answered him. He wondered how many had guns below. He looked out through the grimy window. Miller held a smoking gun in his hand.

"Two murders ought to be enough, Benton," the constable yelled. "You'll get a fair shake if you come down now. I can't hold these boys any longer!"

JERRY knew just what sort of a shake he would get with that mob below him. And he knew how far he could trust Constable Miller.

"I'm staying, Miller," he yelled. "Don't try to take me, I warn you. I haven't killed anybody yet, but, by God, I will if you try anything."

Hoots and jeers greeted his words. Then there was a silence, prolonged and menacing. Jerry looked down and saw the constable talking in whispers to a small group of men gathered around him. This group dispersed and the individuals went off down the alley.

What was the constable planning now? Jerry wished he actually had a gun, now. He was probably going to need one any minute.

The men returned and Jerry saw with horror that they each carried an armful of hay. He couldn't see straight down, but he knew what they were doing . . . they were placing the hay next to the building. They were going to burn him out!

He heard the crackle of fire getting underway. The building was old, its timbers would go up like paper. Jerry looked frantically around him. He went over to the rear window . . . there were men on this side, too. There was no escape, except down the ladder, and would that be really an escape . . . ? Not the way the men down below felt.

"Better give up, Benton," Miller's voice rose above the crackling of the fire. "You haven't much time."

Curls of smoke filtered up through the hatch opening. More smoke ran past the front and back windows, obscuring his view of the men below. In

one corner, flame broke through the flooring. Jerry began to cough. He grabbed a stick and broke what little glass was left in the rear window.

He tried to save his tortured lungs by laying on the floor, but the boards were already warm from the fire below. It was only a question of minutes now, before the entire building would be a roaring inferno.

He might better go down that ladder, take his chance with the mob . . . if there was still time to get out alive. A shot of flame flicked up through the hatchway. Jerry knew that there was no longer a chance—only the window and that could mean death, too. It was a long, two-story jump.

"I'm coming down, Miller," he said, putting one leg out the window.

A shot blasted out at him through the smoke, plowed into the framework beside him. He drew his leg in, realizing that Constable Miller didn't want him to come down. He preferred him dead.

But, Jerry decided, he was not going to be burned alive. He swung his legs over the window sill and let go immediately. He heard the twang of a bullet sail past his ear and then he landed . . . and everything went black.

HE FOUGHT in his returning, painful consciousness against hands that grabbed at him, against feet that seemed to kick him . . . and suddenly the hands stopped their grabbing, the feet their kicking and far off he seemed to hear new voices . . . above the yelling of the mob.

Then he passed out again.

When he awakened again, he was in a hospital room. He could see very little for the bandages that swathed him and he knew that every bone and every muscle in his frame ached with great, throbbing pains.

But, he was still alive.

Through the haze he saw two familiar faces. Gradually his eyes focussed on their features and he found himself staring into the smiling eyes of Abe McArdel and Evelyn Sharp.

"What—wha . . ." he started to say, but Evelyn managed to find a spot where the bandages failed to cover his face and she stopped him with a kiss.

"Let Abe talk," she said. "He got to you just in time, last week."

"Last week? How long have I been here? That long? My God, what happened?"

"Well," McArdel began, "at the fire, I got there just in time. That mob was trying to tear you to pieces and Jeremiah Miller was doing his best to shoot you. I stopped that quickly enough."

Jerry nodded. "What did you find out? At the bank, I mean."

"Plenty. Enough to put the *real* murderer on ice. John Furman had some very interesting reading in that safety deposit box. One bit told about the story of three men who comprised the Village Board of Wingville twenty years ago. John Furman was one of those. He was Mayor at the time. Eben Sharp was a Trustee and the murderer was the other Trustee.

"It seems Mr. Sharp and this other man pulled a bit of fancy misappropriation of funds. They were young men then and ambitious and foolish. Mayor Furman caught them but John was not like most men. He made a deal with them."

"You mean he took a cut?" Jerry asked.

"No, John Furman wasn't like that. He told the two men he would reimburse the village with his own money. He would cover up the defalcations, and they in turn would pay him back over a period of years. He extracted, also,

a promise from Sharp and the other man that they would never run for any high public office again as long as they lived."

"I can't believe Eben Sharp did anything like that," Jerry said, looking at Evelyn.

"I knew about it, Jerry," Evelyn said, "but I never connected it with Dad's death, or the death of poor Mr. Furman. Dad paid back every cent, didn't he, Mr. McArdel?"

The undersheriff nodded. "Yes, he did, and he stuck to his promise. He never ran for any public office, and he could have had any one of them for the asking. But the other man was a different sort of man. He never paid back a cent. He didn't hold to the rest of the promise either. And after a number of years went by, he felt secure in his belief that Furman would never make a public revelation of the facts in the case. If he did that, Furman left himself open to serious consequences even though all this happened long ago. Merely putting back the money wouldn't save him . . . and there was an added consideration. The other man knew that Eben Sharp and John Furman had grown to be very close friends and Furman would not reveal what had happened twenty years ago, because it would ruin the life of his best friend, Eben Sharp, and Eben's daughter. The other man felt very secure."

"**B**UT, why the murder?" Jerry asked.

"The murder . . . both murders were necessary," McArdel continued, "because these twenty-year old facts were about to be disclosed."

"You mean . . .?"

"Yes, I mean that Eben Sharp was about to reveal what had happened twenty years before because this other

man was planning to run for Sheriff of Paulton County and thus flaunt the rest of the promise he had made and . . ."

"It was . . . Sheriff Blaisdell . . ." Jerry began.

McArdel shook his head. "No, Jerry, it was Jeremiah Miller. He was the other trustee. He was planning to run for sheriff, that's why he acted so sore when Blaisdell was all set to arrest you in the beginning. Miller saw a chance to be a big hero in capturing you. But, to go on. Beside ignoring all the promises he had made twenty years before, Miller was blackmailing Furman for money for his forthcoming campaign."

"But why did he pick on me?" Jerry asked.

"You were the perfect fall guy, provided nobody probed too deeply into the thing, and with Miller in charge as he planned to be, if possible, nobody would. He had public opinion whipped up a high fury and the fire was a sweet, sure way to get rid of you without trial. He could claim he couldn't handle the mob, no matter how hard he tried . . . and who was going to say he didn't try? You'd be dead by that time."

"Why did he kill Furman?"

"I can only guess at that, and he may confess. But the way I figure it, Furman had a talk with him, was suspicious of him after the death of Sharp, but he wasn't absolutely sure, and with the innate fairness of the man, he voiced his suspicions to Miller to get his reaction. He got a bloody reaction . . . death. Then Miller ransacked the place with the idea in mind that maybe Furman had left some written evidence of what had happened twenty years ago. He found none. Fortunately it never occurred to him to look where you did . . . in the locket around Furman's neck."

"I suspected Miller," Jerry said, "because he was so all-fired anxious to make

me out the murderer, but I had nothing to go on, only the hope held out by the key. But, I could have suspected Sheriff Blaisdell as well, with politics the way they are. Well, I'm good for months, I suppose, here in the hospital but I can certainly use the rest. Which reminds me, by the time I get out, election will probably be over. I suppose you'll be the candidate, Abe?"

The undersheriff shook his head, but he was smiling. "Oh, no, Jerry. Blaisdell managed to hog the glory. After all, he is my superior and he let it get around that I was acting on his orders. I don't mind . . . undersheriff isn't a bad way to make a living, and I've been in there long enough not to have to worry about elections . . . I'm practically sure of re-appointment. Well, I suppose I got to be going . . ."

Jerry tried to lift his arm but the effort pained him. He smiled instead, by way of a handshake, and said: "Thanks a lot, Abe, you saved my life and I won't forget it."

"All in the job, kid," McArdel said. "And by the way, I took a sneak at Furman's will that was in with the stuff about Miller and I think maybe you'll be able to buy your way into a partnership in the *Wingville Standard*. It would seem that John Furman liked you well enough to leave you ten thousand dollars. Of course, maybe you got other ideas . . .?"

"If he has," Evelyn said, laughing. "I'll never let him out of the hospital. I'm going to need a partner . . . money or no money. Right?" She turned to Jerry then.

"Right!"

Coming Soon

Murder is Where You Find it

By B. B. FOWLER

<p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold; transform: rotate(-15deg);">A SKEPTIC IS CONVERTED</p>		
<p>ANN: I dread taking this awful-tasting medicine. It leaves me weak as a kitten.</p>	<p>RUTH: You're foolish to take a cathartic like that. Try my stand-by . . . Ex-Lax.</p>	<p>ANN: Why, this tastes just like fine chocolate! But will it really work?</p>
<p>RUTH: Yes, indeed! Ex-Lax is effective—yet it doesn't upset you.</p>	<p>LATER</p> 	
<p>ANN: Thanks to you and Ex-Lax, I feel wonderful this morning.</p>	<p>RUTH: I know you would! In our family we all use Ex-Lax. It's so dependable.</p>	

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

10¢ and 25¢



Some Won't Die

By Frederick C. Pinton

I

HE WORE a Klamykut suit, \$14.95, F.O.B. Kalamazoo, and it was a long distance telephone call between the bottom of his vest and the top of his pants. These pants were tight, and stopped two inches short of his polished bulldog-toed shoes. On top of a crop of sorrel hair reposed a Snears & Roarback Nifty hat, \$1.95.

Sure, he was a hick, and was spotted as such by the elevator boy of the *Morning Sphere* office, and also by that clever young lady who wards off unwanted visitors from the city room of the great New York daily. She took one look at him, and prepared to send him on his way.

But she reckoned without his grin. It was a honey. It started in his twinkling blue eyes, wrinkled his sun-burned nose, widened out a full, good-



Except for a raw-boned hay-shaker, who was curious about a missing girl, the diabolical killings might have gone on indefinitely

humored mouth until finally his ears were involved—they had to back out of the way of the corners of his lips. He had big, strong teeth, and when he grinned you had to grin with him.

Miss Waters found her own well-rouged lips curling upward.

"I'd like to see Mr. William Shakespeare Bland, if you don't mind, Miss," he said through this grin.

His grin vanished as suddenly as it had come, and his big-boned sun-darkened face became boyish, and troubled, and had an appeal that stronger people than Miss Waters might have surrendered to. She was torn by conflicting emotions. All sorts of people, rats and men, and female mice, too, tried to see Bill Bland, because Bill ran the famous crime column of the *Sphere* which was the widest syndicated feature not only in New York but on the Eastern seaboard.

Still hesitant, she glanced up at him. The grin came on like an electric light. She sighed resignedly.

"I'll see," she said.

In the cubbyhole where William Shakespeare Bland did his heavy thinking, the telephone jangled sharply.

Bill bestirred himself from adoring contemplation of a handsome brunette who stared back out of the photograph with such marvelous eyes that Bill's heart did nip-ups. He took the receiver off the hook and said, "I'm busy, my pet. I think I'm falling in love."

"Mr. Bland," said Miss Waters, "there's the darlinest hick out here, and he wants to see you, and I'll be sad if he doesn't."

"A darling hick," said Bill. He suddenly grinned. "Well, far be it from me to water your evening soup with tears. Send in this phenomenon."

"Look out for his grin," warned the girl. "It's terrific."

Presently Bill had a chance to find out himself. An office boy led the sorrel-topped young man to Bill's office, took one gander at the Klassykut and fled. Bill frowned. This kid looked so much like a hick it was almost a make-up.

But Bill was always polite and considerate; that's why everybody was his friend, from yeggs and stool pigeons to Park Avenue glamor gals.

"Hi," he said, "grab a chair and sit."

THE young man turned on the grin. Bill stared delightedly. "Marvelous," he said. "A guy with a grin like that doesn't need a course in how to make friends and influence people."

The young man sat down, took off his rather too small Nifty hat, and placed it in his lap.

"My name's Sabin, Luke Sabin," he said.

"I figured it would be Luke, or John or Matthew or Paul," said Bill, "and in any case, Luke, I'm glad to see you." He held out his hand and received a bone-breaking grip that would paralyze his typewriter fingers for hours.

"Glad you called me Luke," said Luke. "I took to you even before I saw you. Read your column and figured you were the man for me."

Bill nodded, being busy at the moment repairing his hand.

"You see," said Luke, "Maude ain't writ in weeks and we're worried."

"Maude?" said Bill.

"Yes, sir. Maude Dexter. She's from Big Flats, same as me." He looked down at his hat. "I work on her pa's farm, got an interest in it now. Only . . . well, Maude and me kept company. I figured once like maybe we'd get married. Her pa wanted it that way, and Maude is sure a nice girl. I got her picture here."

He reached into the Klassykut and

pulled out a photograph that showed a plump, pleasant-faced girl of twenty-three or so, holding a great clump of roses and wearing a white dress that Bill would have bet fifty dollars was two-thirds hand-made lace.

"She's got brown hair, smooth brown hair," said Luke softly, "and her eyes is dark blue like . . . well, maybe like violets. Good healthy girl. Weighs around a hundred and thirty-five, I think. She didn't like to be heavy, and was allus dietin', and not eatin' her victuals. Got mad at me because I said I liked 'em plump."

He stared soberly at Bill. "I was only funnin', but Maude had ambitions, she did. Allus wanted to be a singer. Had a right nice voice, too, when we was settin' on the porch and the moon was over the corn. . . ."

"I see," said Bill gently. "What you're trying to tell me is that she's disappeared."

"She sure has." Luke looked dismal. "Yuh see, Mr. Bland, like I said, she was allus ambitious. She wanted to be a radio star. She said she wasn't goin' to marry me and be a farm drudge." His full mouth drooped. "I don't know nothin' but farmin', and she never took to it."

Bill knew what was coming, and he felt a little sick. It happened so often, and there was so little you could do about it.

"Go on, Luke," he said.

"Well, she met a feller at the state fair. She loved him and he writ her letters—from New York. Never let me or her pa see 'em, and she took 'em with her when she went. But this feller was going to marry her, and put her on the radio. She told me that much the night before she caught ol' Number Four east."

"I see," said Bill gently, "and she

promised to write and send you some of the wedding cake, and to sing a song for you over the radio when she was a great star."

"Why, Mr. Bland, how'd you know that?" cried Luke, surprised.

"Intuition, Luke," said Bill. "Did she say anything about an audition on an amateur hour, or was she to step right in some star's shoes?"

"Audition," said Luke. "I 'member that word. She'd sing and when they heard her sing *Moon Over Mesa*, they would just about keel over, she said. That was ten weeks ago tomorrow, Mr Bland, and we're worried."

BILL took a cigarette, offered the pack. Luke shook his head, said, "No thanky," and bit a corner off a practically new cake of Farm Plug. He sat patiently. Bill sighed and wondered what, after all, he could do.

This happened so often. Country girl meets city slicker, 1940 style, runs away. Disillusioned, robbed, perhaps worse, she goes home. Or if she does not go home, shame keeps her from writing, and then heaven only knew what happens to her.

"How much money did she have when she left, Luke?" Bill asked.

"Around twelve, fifteen hundred dollar, her pa says," Luke replied.

Bill swore softly under his breath.

"And you've heard no word?"

"Only to say she was married. That letter came three days after she was in New York. I brung it along, if you'd like to see it."

Bill took the letter. It was a scrawl in vertical school-girlish writing and it said:

Dear Pa and Luke, I'm all right and happier than I've ever been. I'm married to Michael, and soon

you will hear me on the air. Lovingly, Maude.

Bill's mouth twisted bitterly. A fake marriage, of course. She'd been robbed by now and deserted. She was hiding somewhere, picking up food and lodging somehow, but where?

Suddenly Bill's jaw snapped hard. For a long time he had had it in the back of his mind to blast publicly these oily smears who lured girls from home, robbed them and left them flat. These rats who yelled for female talent, advertised: Get in the Movies. Get on the Radio. Be Famous.

He suddenly desperately wanted to find Maude Dexter as an object lesson. And, besides, he wanted to help this lad with the engaging grin.

He smiled cheerily at Luke. "If she's in New York I'll find her, Luke. I'll just keep this picture and use it in my column, and by this time tomorrow we'll have news."

Luke beamed. "Thanky, Mr. Bland. I sure knew you'd do it. Kind of sensed you was real from the way you writ." He stood up, prepared to go.

Bill said, "Where are you staying?"

"No place, yet. Thought I'd kind of find myself a boarding house where they eat good. Got money," he pulled out a thick roll, "but figgered I might need that to find Maudey."

Bill bethought himself of his own boarding house run by Aunt Clara Miller. She wasn't his aunt; she was an old maid who had taken him in when he had come to New York, bewildered and ambitious, and had mothered him, and loaned him money, and carried him on the cuff when the going was tough. He gave Luke the address.

"You go there," he said, "and tell Aunt Clara I said she was to give you the best. She will."

After Luke had gone, Bill sat down

at his typewriter, thought a while, and began pecking at the keys. At the end of an hour he had finished and took the yarn to "Czar" Macpherson. "Page one, column one," he said. "This will throw our readers into a snit."

"The front page is no place for a snit," said Macpherson, but he read, at first casually, then intently. "Man!" he muttered, "there won't be a dry eye in the house." And then, grinning shamefacedly, "I hope you find her, Bill."

Neither realized the terrible events that lay ahead.

II

BUT Bill's great story did not produce Maude Dexter. Nor did his next day's column, nor the subsequent appeals. Day after day he printed her picture over this caption:

Where Is This Girl?

He talked to his friends—from racketeers to East Side bums. He dug as he had never dug before. But there was no word or clue of Maude Dexter.

He became tired of saying every night to the patient Luke, "No news—not a thing."

He tried to get stubborn about it in his column. But the only thing that came from that was a lot of reader squawks. We're tired of reading about Maude Dexter, Bill's readers wrote. Give us some hot, bloody murder.

Even Macpherson said, "You're riding that thing into the ground, Bill Lay, off."

"But where could she have vanished to?" cried Bill. The thought of murder crossed his mind, but he dismissed it. The smoothies who preyed on country girls seldom killed. He was positive that she was around. Yet he was forced at last to say to Luke that he had failed, and would have to abandon the publicized search.

Luke nodded sadly. "I guess she's dead," he said quietly.

"No, she'll turn up," Bill protested.

"I know you done your best," said Luke, ignoring this, "but I'll just keep pokin' around." He paused. Then: "I ain't got nothin' to pay you with."

Bill growled that he didn't want any pay.

"Well a present then," said Luke.

He reached into his rear pocket and brought out a huge Colt, Frontier model, .45 caliber six-gun whose slug would knock over a horse.

"I think kind of highly of this on account it was my pa's," he said shyly. "That's why I'd like for you to have it. Only be careful. The trigger's been filed, and mostly we shoot it by holding back the trigger like this."

He held out the huge cannon, trigger pulled, strong thumb holding back the trigger. He pointed the gun down and let go of the trigger. The gun roared like a thunderbolt, and a whole brick in Bill's private fireplace was dislodged, splintered.

Aunt Clara called from below stairs, "Shakespeare, what in the world are you doing? What was that awful explosion?"

"We just shot Jesse James, Aunt Clara," said Bill.

He took the gun, because to have refused it would have hurt Luke's feelings. He said gently, "Thanks, Luke, I'll keep it because it'll help me remember a pretty swell guy."

"I'm gonna stay on here with Aunt Clara," said Luke after an awkward silence. "If I get onto anything I'll sure let you know."

Bill didn't forget Maude Dexter. He intended, when time permitted, to write a huge Sunday feature story on her case and other queer disappearances. But days slid by.

AND then, suddenly, the baffling mystery of Maude Dexter was brought back to him, but not in the way he had hoped.

On this particular evening Bill was taking the magnificent brunette to see a show.

So he was not at Aunt Clara's when a young, slim, dark-eyed girl dashed up the brownstone steps and, when Aunt Clara answered the door, cried breathlessly, "I must see Mr. Bland at once. Immediately."

Aunt Clara regarded the soft, olive skin, the big, thoughtful eyes, the soft sensitive mouth, in approval. Aunt Clara liked pretty girls.

"Ducky," she said, "he's not here. He—"

"But I just came from the office, and he's not there," the girl cried. "Oh, I must see him—talk to him."

"Ducky," said Aunt Clara, "you just go around to the theater"—she named it—"and have them page Shakespeare and he'll come on the run. He likes to help girls in trouble."

"Oh, thank you," the girl breathed and dashed off. She did not take a taxi. She ran.

Bill was just cupping a light for the brunette's between-the-act cigarette when a small hand tugged at him, a breathless voice said, "Oh, Mr. Bland! I've found you."

Bill looked down into her pale face, and saw the trouble, the heart-break there. "I guess you have," he said gently. "What is it?"

The words poured out; she was Marina Pollek, and she lived on East Eighth Street, and her fiance, whom she was to marry the very next day, was dead and being buried that very night.

"I went away three days ago," she wailed. "I had to go to Atlantic City on account of my aunt. And I come back

and he is dead. They say he had a stroke or something. But he didn't. They've killed him. They have, they have!"

Bill looked at the brunette who had been listening. She knew Bill—she ought to since she'd been trying to marry him for three years.

She said, "I know, go ahead. I can get home alone. I have before."

Bill said gratefully, "Kay, you're marvelous! Remind me to tell you I love you tomorrow."

He helped Marina into a waiting cab and they sped south. Bill started her talking and listened; you never knew what details might be important later. Yet, offhand, it did not seem too much of a story for his column. He dealt in glamor kills and sensational murder. To be swell reading, the victim had to have money, beauty, position, and this seemed merely the death of Anton Ross-off, a skilled mechanic of twenty-six who had saved a thousand dollars and had intended to get married with it.

"His stepmother hated me," the girl said. "Always Anton was good to her, and when he married me he would not support her any longer. So she wanted him not to marry."

Bill's eyebrows went up. "Who gets the thousand dollars?" he asked.

Her mouth drooped. "Elissa, the stepmother. She gets everything—and of that thousand dollars I had saved two hundred toward our wedding."

Bill wondered. The East Side, with its little colonies of unassimilated South Europeans developed great loves, terrible hatreds, and violence for money was not unusual.

As they drew up in front of the house she designated, he saw a few motor cars with signs on the windshields saying *Funeral*, and up front a hearse not yet filled. Swarthy people in dark clothes and hard hats stood around out-

side. Within he could hear the chant of the Greek-Orthodox service. Bill looked glum. How could you go into the middle of a funeral and search for evidence of murder?

Then he saw Luke Sabin, standing near the curb, rolling his chew and idly watching.

"Luke!" exclaimed Bill, "what are you doing here?"

Luke grinned, then his eyes grew cloudy.

"Maudey lived in that house when she fust came to New York," he said.

Bill was startled, then curious.

"How did you discover that?"

"Me," said Luke, "I ain't got nothin' to do but find out what become of Maudey. So I walk up and down streets askin' kids if they'd seen her, and show-in' them her picture." He tapped his pockets. "Kids notice the way folks talk. Maudey didn't talk like a New Yorker. They remembered a girl who talked like me and looked like the picture. She lived in there, only them people lied and said she didn't. I was meanin' to come and tell you."

Bill took a big breath. He had a sudden hunch that he had a terrific story by the tail, if he didn't let it throw him. He said to Luke, "Stay out here and wait." To Marina, "Come on inside."

A chant of death that might have come out of the bleak Russian steppes swelled to meet him as he went inside.

III

ANTON ROSSOFF was dead all right, with candles mounted at the four corners of his body, and lying in state as the custom is in Middle Europe. Looking at the figure in the coffin, Bill saw that Anton had been a brawny, powerful man who ordinarily could have survived a collision with a Mack truck. Why had he died so suddenly—

and while Marina was away? He could see no sign of violence except a little scar tissue on the throat. And that was old. A woman came menacingly toward him.

"Why are you here?" she asked.

Elissa Rossoff was a big, powerful woman who could have pulled a plough. Her hawk-like face, dark though it was, was not unhandsome for one of forty-five. She dominated all in that room.

"He was too young and healthy to die the day before he was to be married," Bill said.

"It was God's will to strike him down because he would have left me for this puny thing who could not even have borne him a son," she said, and glared at Marina.

"What doctor did you summon?" asked Bill.

"Who are you to ask?" she flared. "Who are you to enter my house in time of sorrow and speak of evil?"

She tried to dominate Bill and crush him with her will. She failed. He said quietly, "Tell me who the doctor was, or I shall call the police and stop the funeral."

His steady blue eyes clashed with her dark, flashing gaze, and it was finally her eyes that turned away.

"We want no trouble," she muttered. "It was Doctor James Phillips. He is down the street . . ." She gave the number.

"How did Anton die?" Bill asked.

Reluctantly she said that she had asked Anton to lift a big trunk of her belongings because she would move rather than live in a house where Marina was mistress. He had lifted, cried out and fallen down. When Dr. Phillips arrived he was dead.

Bill weighed this, standing in the anteroom while the funeral services were being concluded. Suddenly he was

startled by an outcry from Elissa Rossoff. He whirled. Moving with a speed amazing in such a big woman, she had darted into the hall where a stairway led upward. Bill was in time to see her seize Luke Sabin in an infuriated grasp.

"You . . . you . . ." she panted, "again you are in my house."

She cursed in a foreign tongue and tried to choke Luke.

Bill saw a display of strength then that amazed him. Luke did not appear to tug hard, but suddenly the big, powerful woman staggered back, looking first at Luke, then at her reddened wrists. Luke passed by her to where Bill stood.

His face was gray, his voice queerly choked. "Maudey was up there. Look!"

He held out for Bill's inspection a woman's watch, small and square, of German silver, the kind you hang around your neck on a black cord.

"Her pa guv her that when she graduated from Big Flats High," said Luke.

"How did you get it?" Bill demanded.

"All them folks were at the funeral services," said Luke. "I figgered they wouldn't notice. I had it planned afore you come. I searched and found this in her room . . ." He pointed to Elissa Rossoff as he finished.

Bill took charge. "How did you come by that watch, Mrs. Rossoff?" he asked sternly.

Her eyes glared at him venomously.

"A woman—a girl—gave it to me for her room rent," Mrs. Rossoff said sullenly. "For two weeks she owed and had no money. Her husband, she said, had deserted her. I could not keep her always without money. So I took that."

"And where is she now?" Bill asked.

Mrs. Rossoff shrugged. "She went away. Who am I to know where she went—or to care?"

IT WAS a reasonable explanation. But Elissa Rossoff's attitude was suspicious. Bill debated what to do.

Within the parlor, the funeral services had ended; the coffin had been closed, and the big foreign-born pallbearers were preparing to carry it out. The *metropolitan*, the priest, was chanting a new prayer. Incense filled the nostrils. Bill wondered if he should stop the funeral? Call his friend Lieutenant Alec Billings of Homicide?

But how could he? Stopping a funeral, the last rites paid to the dead, is a serious step unless you know well what you're doing. And Bill knew very little. Suppose Marina was wrong and Anton had died of a stroke. And even if he had been murdered, what was there to connect this with Maude Dexter's disappearance?

As if sensing his defeat Elissa Rossoff cried passionately, "You have brought discord into the sorrow of us. You have no right more to stay here. Get out."

She turned a venomous gaze on Marina. "And you, get out and never come in here again. This is all mine now."

"You are a wicked woman," Marina said. "You killed him to keep all this." She began to weep.

"Hush," said Bill gently, "we can do no more here."

"Then go," cried Elissa Rossoff harshly.

Silently Bill and Luke helped the sobbing Marina to the street.

It was only half a block to the office of Doctor Phillips. Bill led the way, silent and perplexed. He got no help there.

One look at the doctor's tired, oldish face with its quiet dignity, told Bill that here was a man of integrity and worth. Doctor Phillips was a general practi-

tioner, and he might make mistakes. But he wouldn't be party to murder.

"There was evidently," he said, after Bill had explained the purpose of their coming, "a sclerotic condition of the arteries. This is not too unusual in South Europeans. The sudden exertion to lift a heavy weight broke an artery, probably in the brain. Death was practically instantaneous."

"Did you do a post-mortem?"

"Of course not. Why should I? The symptoms were plain, the cyanosis . . . everything pointed to the fact, even to a hemorrhaging at the nostrils."

"In other words," said Bill carefully, "a young man of twenty-six suffers a stroke of apoplexy such as old men only usually have."

"Yes," nodded Doctor Phillips, "but remember, there can be a sclerosis of the arteries in the young as a result of disease."

"I saw a mark on his throat, scar tissue. Could he have been poisoned thus?"

Doctor Phillips smiled contemptuously. "Your imagination, young man, is outlandish."

Bill shrugged and took his departure.

Everything appeared so regular, he reflected gloomily, yet if it was regular, then Luke was a liar and so was Marina. And he didn't believe that—not for a minute.

"We're stymied," he confessed to them at the next street intersection. "There's something phony but I can't stop that funeral, and we can't do anything more tonight."

"He was murdered," said Marina, "and now that he is buried you can never prove it."

She had no place to go, so at the corner drugstore Bill called Aunt Clara. "Another waif to put up—how's the front room?"

"Shakespeare," said Aunt Clara, "if it's another drunken zither player . . ."

"It isn't," said Bill and told her who it was. Immediately Aunt Clara agreed, and Bill told Luke to take Marnia there in a taxicab.

"But wait up, Luke. You've been playing detective on me—and doing too damned well. I want to know things."

OVER on Centre Street not two blocks north of New York's Police Headquarters is a two-room apartment only occupied one night a week. There two inspectors, a detective first-grade and a deputy police commissioner get together and play stud poker. The club is called The Beggars Operatic and Inside Straight Fraternal Association. Here, just trying to make a pair of treys look like aces, sat Alexander Billings, commonly known as Alec the Great, for his feat of following a murderer two years through twelve countries before he clapped the cuffs on him.

Bill Bland said, "Alec, stop kidding the shock troops and throw in that hand. I've got something to curl your hair."

Alec Billings was as bald as an egg. He sighed, and threw in his hand. They sat down on the other side of the room and Bill went back to the beginning and worked down to the present with a brilliant assemblage of detail that made even Alec murmur approval.

"Was the guy murdered, or wasn't he?" Bill concluded. "Is Maude Dexter dead or alive?"

During the outline Alec's pale, blue eyes began to glow. Now he thought a moment and said, "Bill, maybe you've got something. That Eighth Street address interests me strangely."

"Why?"

"A private detective named Storme went over in that neighborhood two

weeks ago, and vanished. We'd like to know what happened to him, too."

Bill whistled, "My God, that makes three. What was he after?"

"I don't know. Except for his wife and nephew, Storme worked alone. A pretty reliable man, too . . . a few accounts . . . and he was honest."

Bill nodded "Alec, there's something hellish going on and it's nothing trivial. It's bigger than a plain girl-gyp racket."

"Yeah," said Alec, "but what? Well, I'll begin on the Rossoffs. I can dig on a suspected homicide."

"Watch Elissa Rossoff," warned Bill. "She's Mrs. Dracula."

"But a decent doc, a regular death certificate," growled Alec. "What have I to work on? If this Anton Rossoff was murdered, how was he killed?"

Bill explained about the mark on the throat.

"A poison . . ." he started to say.

Alec looked shocked. "Good lord, Bill, don't pull that one on me. Not a South American blow-dart, daubed with *curare*, that marvelous story book killer."

Bill flushed. "Damn it, that was the only mark on him."

"And, anyway," grinned Alec, "*curare* doesn't leave apoplexy symptoms."

"Oh, go jump in the lake," growled Bill. "The guy is dead. You figure it."

"To make it your kind of a story," laughed Alec, "I'll look for cyanide or potassium in the eye."

Half angry and aware that he had made a fool of himself with his *curare* theory, Bill stalked out.

IV

HE FOUND Luke in the parlor with Marina. The country boy was showing more animation than Bill had ever seen.

"Marina here," said Luke, "has been tellin' me how they used to farm in the old country. Her mother was a farmer."

Marina nodded. "I love the soil, the land," she said, and she, too, seemed momentarily to have shaken off her despair. "It is splendid to make things grow, to watch the good sun and the rain, and the hand of God produce the miracle of new life."

Bill cleared his throat. "Yes, I know," he said gently, "but let's leave the soil and come back to Maude and Anton."

They looked a little self-conscious. Then Bill, taking out his notebook, started with Marina and took her over every detail of her life. He did not learn a great deal more except about the character of Anton. And Anton, it seemed, was a fine gentleman who had always given away to his step-mother except when it came to marrying Marina.

"Why, he even took out insurance for her," said Marina, "spending money we could ill afford."

"I see," said Bill, "and he . . ." he broke off, his mouth suddenly agape ". . . insurance did you say? How much?"

"Ten thousand dollars," she told him. "It was too much but he said he would change it after we were married."

"Ah," said Bill, and turned to Luke. "Did Maude have insurance?"

"Not that I know of."

Bill sighed. "Well, I've got one motive and the other will show later."

The next morning, after he had written his story, Bill telephoned Doctor Phillips and found out that Anton Rossoff had been insured by Pan-American Indemnity through John Lathrop. John Lathrop had an office on Fourth Avenue just off Madison Square. Bill took off in a cab.

Lathrop proved to be an extraordinarily handsome man of thirty-five with a quick, aggressive step and clear eyes.

"Anton Rossoff?" he repeated. "Sure, I had a policy on him—six months' premium paid in advance. And we're stuck."

"Did he show any signs of sclerosis at the time?" Bill asked.

"Well," grinned Lathrop, "if he had, we damned well wouldn't have insured him."

"Can you protest the payment?" and Bill explained the suspicion of murder.

Lathrop interrupted suddenly to telephone Phillips. He asked a few questions and then started to laugh.

"Doc Phillips says you're a screwball who has an idea Rossoff was mysteriously poisoned like in stories."

Bill flushed angrily. "But a big, strong man dying overnight . . ."

"Phillips swears it was an apoplexy," cut in John Lathrop. "And listen, I do a big business on the East Side, mostly in small policies, and the reason I get the business is because Pan-American pays off on the spot. I can't hold up this check because you've got a goofy suspicion."

His jaw snapped hard. "I'm paying that claim this afternoon."

"Suppose it is murder?" said Bill softly.

"You show me a single iota of evidence and my company will fight until hell freezes over. But I can't do it just on your hunch."

Bill nodded. Every way he turned this thing was air-tight. He said, "Are you paying any unusual amounts of death claims?"

"I was just going to tell you that we haven't," said Lathrop. "If we had I could talk turkey to our underwriters. As it is"—he shrugged—"I can't ruin my business on a mysterious poison."

BILL went out. He tried to get Alec but the homicide dick wasn't in. When he reached his office, Miss Waters said, "A lawyer named Asa B. Hedges, with ambulance-chaser printed on his rat-like countenance, desires speech with thee."

"Send him in and be ready with the cheese," grinned Bill.

His heart was thumping. Maybe this was the break he must have. Then Mr. Asa B. Hedges walked in.

"I'm about to sue you for five million dollars," he announced.

He had a pouter-pigeon breast, short, thin legs on which his torso hung like a half-filled bag of grain. But his long, moist face with its pendulous lips had plenty of cunning.

"Why not fifty million?" Bill said.

"I represent Mrs. Elissa Rossoff. That story you printed about her stepson's suspicious death—it defames her. It casts suspicion. Criminal libel and slander laws still exist."

"Hear, hear!" murmured Bill. "When do I start cringing?"

"Make jokes as much as you like," said Hedges haughtily, "but unless you print an apology and stop talking about the possibilities of what might have happened to this Maude Dexter, and casting suspicion on the death of Anton Rossoff, I will bring suit."

Bill said thoughtfully, "Are you in the insurance business?"

Hedges was startled. "What? Why—er—yes, I write a little . . . to eke out office expenses."

"Good," said Bill. "How big is your East Side trade?"

"I am known," said Hedges loftily, "as the friend of the poor from the Battery to the Bronx."

Bill stared hard at the lawyer. "Did you marry Maude Dexter and insure her?"

"By Heaven!" cried Hedges, "you're mad."

Bill stood up and thrust the man out the door. "See the front office about your suit," he said grimly. "Maybe you'll have to bring one on your own account before I'm done."

As soon as the fox-like lawyer was gone, Bill called Alec Billings.

"He came here to blackmail me to silence," he cried. "Why? Because too much publicity, get it? They're afraid. This is more than one death or three deaths. I'm hunching, Alec, my pet, that we'll uncover a murder syndicate."

"Stop hunching and turn up a clue," growled Alec. "I've got nothing on the Rossoffs."

"But there'll be something. Wait until I talk to Marina."

MACPHERSON had a special job for Bill so he didn't get home until ten o'clock. As he was coming up the steps he met Luke just going out.

Luke's face was grim, pale.

"Something's happened to Marina," he said tautly.

"Happened to Marina?" repeated Bill. "My God, I just came home to talk to her."

"A note came from somebody. I was upstairs. She left word she'd be back . . . and she ain't come. That was around six o'clock."

Bill groaned. "Then she did know something . . . and they've got her." He wheeled. "Let's go, Luke."

Riding downtown he spoke only once. "They followed her to Aunt Clara's that night."

"Just like Maudey," sighed Luke.

They reached the Rossoff house. Bill darted into the hallway. He met John Lathrop coming out. The insurance man said, "Hi!" and grinned ruefully. "I just paid off."

"You'd better stop payment on the check," said Bill grimly.

"You've got something?" Lathrop was startled.

"They've just snatched a girl."

"The devil you say." Lathrop looked bewildered. "But what has that to do with Anton's death?"

Bill had not waited. He tore into Mrs. Rossoff's sitting room. Behind him followed Luke. Mrs. Rossoff was sitting in a rocker, her big body moving back and forth, back and forth. She reminded Bill of a deadly, black widow spider. Standing near the window was a short, pudgy man, and another, younger, with flashing, black eyes and a curling, bitter mouth, stood behind the woman.

Bill looked at the woman. Her eyes glazed with hatred.

"This is him who comes into my house and disturbs God's work," she said. "He makes trouble and even the insurance company does not pay willingly."

Her low voice broke the silence malignantly. And for no reason Bill suddenly felt a sense of terror, of horror. The room seemed charged with evil.

Yet his voice as he spoke was grim and purposeful.

"You have one minute to produce Marina Pollek. If you fail I call the police and charge you with kidnaping."

She did not reply, but rocked back and forth, back and forth. A big Swiss clock ticked in rhythm to her movements.

Suddenly she said, "Maxim! It is time."

The pudgy man turned and then Bill saw the big gun in his hand. Bill lunged for the protection of the door. Even this was a mistake. The woman cried, "Gregor!"

Luke yelled, "Look out, Bill," and sprang.

What happened then, occurred with such swift deadliness that Bill never entirely had it straight in his mind. As Luke sprang to intercept the lunging man called Gregor, the latter's gun spoke quietly. Luke halted in mid-air, one leg up and out, balanced for an instant like a stork on one alone, his face supremely astonished. Then he took the other step and the leg went out from under him and he rolled in a pile on the floor. Bill came forward, slashing out to knock up the gun and sock the pudgy Maxim. A blow from the fist of the younger man scraped his jaw, whirled him and sent him staggering to his knees. The pudgy Maxim cried, "Get out of the way, Gregor, so I can . . ."

Bill heard no more. He knew what he must do. He dove for the door to the hall. He reached it and jerked himself up and dove outward just as the gun spoke. The bullet spat into the wall to his left. He tripped, fell with a crash, and rose half-stunned to stagger on.

He was through the door before the pudgy man could fire again. But they were after him like a flash. He heard Elissa Rossoff say, "Finish him."

Then Bill was in the street, running.

V

BILL never forgot that run through the darkness of the East Side. Every time he paused for a gasping breath he heard the thud of feet pursuing him. Every time he twisted and angled he could see blobs of darkness running after him. He felt as if Elissa Rossoff pursued him on vampire wings.

He could have screamed with joy when he came to the brilliant neon sign lighting of Union Square. To see peo-

ple, thousands of them, to hear noises he had once cursed, now was welcome. He plunged into a taxicab and croaked with dry throat and thick tongue, "Police Headquarters."

And even then he looked back, and every time a pair of lights swung in behind the cab he crouched down, expecting a sudden burst of gunfire.

He came into the police library where Alec met him. Alec stared in amazement at Bill the merry, Bill the wise-cracker, Bill the smoothie. Bill was none of these now.

"It was like being chased in your sleep by ghouls," he said to Alec. "They've killed Luke. They'll kill Marina. It's a murder syndicate and they've got the answer to a killer's prayer . . . they've got ways of getting rid of corpses."

Alec gave Bill a drink of Scotch whiskey. "Sit here," he said. "I'll be right back."

He strode out, barking orders for squad cars.

The whiskey hit Bill's stomach and exploded warmly. It vanquished his fear, and he got hold of himself. For a while he sat there, cursing his stupidity that had cost him every trick. But, as sometimes happens, the very experience set his brain spinning swiftly, and presently he rose, went to the section of the library marked "Toxicology," and began sorting through the volumes.

When Alec came back three-quarters of an hour later, Bill was making notes from a chapter that was two-thirds Latin.

"They flew the coop," Alec said angrily. "I've got the blast out, and we've thrown out a cordon of prowlers. But they're gone now."

"Luke's body," said Bill. "Did you get it? I . . ."

"It wasn't there," cut in Alec. "They took him, too."

Bill whistled softly. "One of two things, Alec"—he muttered—"either Luke wasn't dead and they took him away to kill him later, or he was dead and they're going to use their special system of disposing of corpses."

"Bill," said Alec, "do you know what you're talking about?"

"Listen," said Bill, thrusting forward the toxicological tome, "if I'd had the sense of a louse and not let you and the others laugh me out of it, I might have saved Marina and Luke. Look at this."

He pointed with his finger. Alec read swiftly.

"*Tetalus terrificus*," he muttered, puzzled, "rattlesnake venom . . . found in Georgia . . . what the hell is this, Bill?"

"The way Anton Rossoff died," snapped Bill. "Call Dr. Waite, the medical examiner. Ask him the symptoms of *tetalus terrificus* venom, if you don't believe this."

Alec read, then went to the telephone, dialed a number and talked five minutes with Dr. Horatio Waite. Then, without turning to Bill, he dialed a new number, said, "D.A.'s office. Billings speaking. I want an exhumation order on the body of Anton Rossoff." He gave the details.

Presently he turned to Bill. "Doc Waite will meet us at the cemetery. We'll dig up that corpse and perform a P.M., if I go back to pounding beats for it."

"I know what you'll find," said Bill sadly. "but it isn't going to help Luke Sabin or Marina Pollek."

IT WAS an eternally long trip to Long Island and an equally miserable delay while Doc Waite did his grisly work.

Bill roamed around the cemetery mortuary where the task was being completed. Each trip brought him back to the casket. And each time he glared from the casket to the body on the table where he was struck by an irrela-tion that puzzled him.

Finally he delved into the casket. It was lined with white silk with a velvet and silk pad at the bottom, now covered with decayed flowers.

"Listen," Bill suddenly said to the superintendent of the cemetery, "get a saw and go down through this pad."

"Hey," said the superintendent, "you can't do that."

Alec came over. "What goes on?"

Bill said, "Look! The width of that pad should be about two or three inches. This casket is nearly a foot thick from here down. There's something underneath."

"You're crazy," said Alec, but he didn't speak convincingly.

Bill said harshly, "Get something to bust through here. If I'm wrong I'll buy Anton a real casket—a solid gold job with diamonds."

The saw and an axe came, and presently when the interior was a wreck of splintered cedar and silk, an opening was revealed.

"Look!" said Bill, hanging on with difficulty to his leaping diaphragm.

There was no body there, but it had once been a body. The bones were charred, burned clean of flesh, but all the bones were there from the grinning skull to the tiny bones of the feet.

"For God's sake," said Alec. And then, "It's a female skeleton . . . look at the hair."

Bill forced himself to look closely. In the grinning teeth of the skull were two gold crowns. Bill remembered.

"It's Maude Dexter," he said sadly.

Alec made a closer examination.

"You're right. The measurements fit."

"Double burial," muttered Bill. "Use one corpse on top of another and you never have a body to come up in court and seat you in the chair. The old *corpus delicti* problem licked by a woman named Elissa Rossoff."

BEFORE Alec could comment Doc Waite said cheerily, "This is a nifty, my pets. This laddy was jabbed in the jugular vein with some sharp instrument smeared with *tetalus terrificus* venom. And he died as if pole-axed. The puncture was hidden by old scar tissue."

He went on about paralysis of lung muscles, of heart action which would produce the congested appearance indicating apoplexy, but Bill wasn't listening.

He was trying to think of something very important—when and how this murder gang would try to get rid of the bodies of Marina and Luke.

Alec was swearing, "Can you tie it? A story book murder that only a screw-ball writer would use, comes out and bites us in real life. I tell you I won't believe it."

Bill turned, a strange, queer expression on his face. "You're right, Alec, it's too goofy. So goofy it would only be used once." His eyes were shining now with an idea.

Alec said, "But how did they get rid of Storme's body? What's on your mind?"

"I don't know," confessed Bill. "But I have an idea so big it's throwing me." He grabbed Alec's arm. "Let's go."

"Where?" demanded Alec, as he suffered himself to be led along.

"The morgue," said Bill.

The New York morgue is on Avenue A, brooding over the East River, and what with its brick chimneys and all,

it looks like a factory. And inside it is composed of an ice plant and a series of white, chill, grisly rooms lined with little doors inside of which you can find all the poor unknowns who die daily in New York, unsung and unmourned.

"Now, come on, Bill," said Alec as they stood in the drear chamber, "what's eating you?"

Bill rubbed his forehead and eyes. "Listen to this," he said. "This is a murder ring to get insurance. They take some poor devil on the East Side and slap a good insurance policy on him, and pay six months or maybe a year's premium."

"I get it," said Alec. "I forgot to tell you that Storme was working for the Pan-American Indemnity."

"A hell of a time to remember," said Bill. "Anyway, immediate plans are laid to kill the policy holder. But smartly. Nothing crude—and believe it or not, using *tetalus terrificus* venom was crude. Only in the case of Anton there was no time to wait, no time to prepare. You see, he was going to be married too quickly. So that was crude . . . and that is how we get them."

"I'm all ears," said Alec, "give!"

"I think," said Bill quietly, "that the murder gang comes to the morgue here, claims some unclaimed corpse as a pretended relative, and gives it a bang-up funeral. Only they're giving the policy holder a funeral, also. His or her bones are underneath."

Alec turned quietly to the superintendent. "Let's check some dates. Storme disappeared September 8th."

The superintendent consulted his files. Finally he said, "The body of a man of thirty-one, found dead of malnutrition, was claimed on September 9th."

"Who claimed it?" asked Bill.

"Mrs. Noka Potsuka of twenty-four-nine Eighth Street. Said he was her uncle."

Bill looked at Alec. The homicide dick's eyes shone. "Eighth Street again."

VI

BUT this trail, as Bill learned next day, was colder than an Antarctic spoor. Alec called him and said, "A Mrs. Potsuka did live there, but she moved a few days after the funeral. Nobody knows where she went."

"She went back to the Rossoff house," grunted Bill, "because it was Elissa Rossoff."

"Well," growled Alec, "I can't find her either so that makes it just ducky." He paused, then added, "But I've given orders that whoever claims a body at the morgue will be thoroughly investigated."

"They won't come back there," said Bill. "There are other morgues." He thought a minute. "Did you pick up that ambulance chaser, Asa B. Hedges?"

"On suspicion," assented Alec. "And we haven't got a thing on him. He says he merely read your column and figured maybe he could shake down the *Sphere* to stop a nuisance suit. He called on Mrs. Rossoff and promised fifty-fifty. We're letting him go, but keeping him tailed."

"Good," said Bill. "Because, believe me, Elissa Rossoff may be Mrs. Dracula but this scheme smacks of more brains than I think she's got. She's just a neat and simple murderess. Somebody else planned it."

Alec was not convinced, but agreed Hedges was the only lead now.

Bill said exasperatedly, "But, Alec, you just can't sit around to wait for things to bust. My God, maybe Marina is alive. And it's possible that Luke

didn't die then. In fact, I'm sure of it, because they'd have had a corpse out of the morgue to bury him with before we finally found out the trick."

"Well, we're combing New York for Mrs. Rossoff," said Alec. "But cripes, guy, there are eight million people around, and better known people than she have hid on Broadway for years."

Bill went home, and it didn't make him feel any better to have Aunt Clara say wistfully, "Shakespeare, what has happened to Marina and Luke? They were such sweet people . . ."

Bill patted her arm. "It's a time for prayer, I guess, darling," he muttered and swung out of the house.

He went over to Fourth Avenue to see Lathrop. The handsome insurance solicitor greeted him dolefully.

"Boy, am I being taken to the woodshed? You'd think it was my fault the Pan-American was being rooked. But who'd think it was murder? And that kind of a murder. It's one you read in the magazines."

"Check your files and let's see if there are others," said Bill.

Lathrop did so willingly, and gave Bill a list of death benefits paid in the last four years. There might be something here, but it would take weeks, perhaps months, to run down each case. And for Bill now, even minutes counted.

"Well," said he as if to himself, "there's only one thing to do—I'll blast in the paper. I know who did this, and I'm going to write a column that will set New York on its ear."

IT WAS six o'clock and early autumn darkness had fallen when he emerged. And as he took a taxicab to go back to Aunt Clara's to change his clothes, he was thrilled to see another car fall in behind his cab.

He was being followed.

It was then that the big idea hit him.

"Of course," he muttered, "I'm just as dangerous as Marina or Luke—more so, because the power of the press will eventually blast them out."

He had the driver stop at a drugstore on a well-lighted street. He called Alec and was lucky enough to catch him at Centre Street.

"I'm being tailed," he said. "They want me, and I'm going to let them have me. But if you fail to come in like the old Seventh Cavalry and pull me out, I'll never speak to you again."

He smiled wryly at his grisly joke.

Alec protested. "You fool! Dawdle along. I'll put a prowler car after you in five minutes and pick up your tail."

"No can do," said Bill quietly. "You'd pick up this guy on the tail— whoever it is—and by the time you broke him down Marina and Luke would be lost."

"And you think by letting them slit your throat you'll crack the case?" Alec sounded sore.

"It's the only way I see to do it," said Bill. "My dumbness got two swell kids into a jam, and if this chance will get them out safely, why, then, I've got to take it."

Alec growled, "What's the idea?"

Bill told him. "And if you do it right, you ought to be in time," he concluded.

"Okay," said Alec reluctantly, "but I'll lose ten pounds waiting."

Bill went on home. The pursuing car followed him. Aunt Clara had supper ready and Bill ate quietly. And Aunt Clara, sensing his mood, just patted his cheek and said, "Eat it all up, it will do you good."

After dinner Bill got out the big Frontier Colt .45 that Luke had given him. He saw that it was loaded, put it in his pocket, and smiled gently as he

remembered how Luke had given it to him. He had also a small French deringer which he had picked up one time at police headquarters out of the mess of weapons which the police later sunk in New York Bay. It was a two-shot, .32 caliber, but it packed a soft-nosed slug that made a small hole going in and left a gap you couldn't plug with a dinner plate going out. This he fastened to a leg holster.

Then he said to Aunt Clara, "Lock up tightly, and don't wait up. I may be late."

Her cherubic cheeks paled. Her hands came up fluttering and then dropped.

"You're going after Luke and Marina?"

Bill nodded.

She said, "Shakespeare, I think I'll pray like you said."

Bill went out quietly and, turning right, began to walk toward Lexington Avenue along the darkest part of the street.

His spine was tingling. There was always the chance that he would be shot down by a blast instead of being captured. But he was gambling against it. This scheme had such finesse that he still believed smartness would predominate. These people left no bodies around.

And he won that gamble with death. Two blocks east a car came up alongside him at the curb and said, "Taxi?"

Bill turned. "Why . . ." he began.

Behind him two figures who had followed on foot closed in. The pudgy Maxim and the tall, slim Gregor. A gun rammed in his back.

"Get in," said Maxim

The slim youth frisked him and took the old forty-five. Prodded from behind, Bill got in. As he sat down he bent forward, ready to make a fast draw as soon

as the car stopped at its destination. But he hadn't counted on Maxim. He must have swung a pair of knuckledusters because Bill's head suddenly rang like a crash of cymbals and the world blew up in his face.

VII

HE WOKE up with the cymbals still crashing in his skull. It was dark when he opened his eyes and he didn't mind it because his head ached so. His hands and feet were numb, so he figured they were too tightly tied. Consciousness came gradually and with it more pain and a sense of failure.

He hadn't planned it this way and now, doubtless, Alec would be too late. He certainly had played this the dumbest way possible for a guy supposed to be so smart.

A grumpy clearing of somebody's throat broke in on his thoughts.

"Hey," he said softly.

"You wouldn't by chance have any eatin' tobacco, would you?"

Bill thrilled warmly. "Luke!"

Luke said, "My cricky, Bill, did they get you, too?"

"Well," said Bill, trying still to make it cheerful, "I didn't come here to sing. Where's Marina?"

Luke's voice was grave. "They got her some place, Bill, and I don't know where. Only they're gonna finish us. They just been waitin' a chance."

"But she's still alive?"

"She was yestiday because I heard her voice." He paused a moment and then added quietly, "Bill—about Maudey—did you . . .?"

Bill cut in, "Luke, she's—well, you'll have to take it, fellah. I'm sorry. I was dumb."

There was a moment's silence.

"You couldn't have saved her, Bill, nobody could."

Before Bill could reply to this the door opened and Elissa Rossoff stood there. In black clothes, she glided noiselessly, like some bat. Light flowed in with her. Behind her stood Maxim and Gregor.

She pointed to Luke. "Him now," she said.

Once again Bill felt a shudder go through him as if the night wind had struck his naked back.

The two men seized Luke and lifted him clear of the army cot on which he had lain. Elissa Rossoff walked to Bill and with a sudden snake-like smash of her hand, bashed his lips against his teeth.

"You, you!" she cried in passionate anger, and cursed in a foreign tongue. "You alone ruined everything. And how you shall pay! I shall see to that."

Bill stared back at her. "Well," he said calmly, "you can only die once."

"You think so?" she husked. She laughed evilly. "You will find out."

"Like all South Europeans," said Bill, "you're too damned melodramatic. You've been reading too many books."

She slapped him again and the blow had the force of a man's. Bill quivered, said nothing. And then she picked him up in her arms. Bill was a big-boned man and he weighed one hundred and seventy-five pounds. But she carried him as if he were a baby.

One fact during that trip from the room and down a pair of stairs gave Bill comfort. The derringer in its holster thumped against his dangling leg. But what chance would he get to use it?

THE room into which she carried him was brightly lit. There were flowers and the heavy odor of them. To Bill's amazement there were three coffins.

"This," he said, "is ridiculous."

From behind some potted palms appeared John Lathrop. He was scowling, somehow evil.

"Ridiculous, perhaps, but effective," he growled.

Bill looked at the insurance agent. "I knew it," he said softly. "I had a hunch in your office when you pretended to kid about Anton Rossoff dying from a thorn prick of poison."

"Yeah, I slipped," said Lathrop, "but you were dumb . . . damn you for butting in," he cried passionately furious. "I had the perfect set-up . . . we had cashed two hundred thousand, and there was at least a million in it."

He ranted on and in the ranting Bill heard enough details to give him a picture of utter horror.

"It was fool-proof," he cried. "We didn't over-insure—just enough for a fat profit and plenty dopes to die. For the first time since I quit playing the hick circuit I had a chance for big dough."

Bill's eyes popped wide. "Then you met Maude Dexter and brought her to New York and married her?"

"Sure," said Lathrop. "That corn-fed doll had a twenty thousand policy on her . . . and her own dough paid the premium."

A strangled cry came from Luke, and the sound of straining bonds.

"He's mine, Bill, if they's a chance," said Luke hoarsely. "All mine."

Lathrop glared contemptuously. "Shut up. If we had time we'd burn you like the others—as it is you'll go the way you are."

Lathrop was the type who bragged to keep up his courage. And listening, Bill was aghast to know this was a nation-wide ring. Heaven only knew how many poor devils had died for one, two or three thousand dollars worth of death insurance.

Bill looked at the three coffins and the utter incredulity struck him forcibly.

"This is insane," he said. "You can't get away with any part of it. The police know this set-up."

"The New York police, perhaps," said Lathrop harshly, "but you're in South Jersey now. And a couple of days ago in the poor section there was a fire and eleven people died. That's what we're waiting for. We claimed four for burial."

Bill looked at the caskets. They were of the same unusual depth as had held Anton Rossoff.

"It's still ridiculous," he said finally.

"Probably," said Lathrop coldly, "but we've been getting away with it for some time."

Bill was now convinced he had a ruthless madman to deal with.

"What have you to gain by killing us three? We're not insured."

"You're the key witnesses," said Lathrop. "After you're gone, the hulla-balloo will die down. We go somewhere else and start again. Like my friend Mrs. Hartzel who went to Philadelphia." He grinned savagely. "She uses arsenic"

Elissa Rossoff spoke vehemently. And Lathrop said, "Okay."

To Bill's unbelieving horror, Maxim and Lathrop picked him up and plumped him in the casket.

THE fake bottom had folded back at the center, leaving an orifice into which he could flatly lie. He smelled chloroform and saw Elissa Rossoff smiling savagely at him. Then Bill knew that this was reality.

He knew these caskets would be delivered elsewhere to receive the bodies of three of those dead in the fire. And underneath he, Bill, would be slowly dying from chloroform fumes. That was

what Elissa Rossoff had meant. Bill's flesh crawled, a cold sweat sprang out on him like dew. It was impossible, incredible; it simply couldn't happen. And yet it was happening—to him.

Lathrop reached in and slashed the bonds on his arms and ankles. "In case you're ever found," he grinned savagely, "they'll think it was a double funeral for economy's sake."

Elissa Rossoff came forward with a chloroform-saturated cloth.

As she did so Marina—it must have been Marina—screamed horribly, and the sound was like a shock of electricity in that room.

Lathrop turned sharply, cursing Maxim for not keeping the wench quiet. Even Elissa swung and cried something in a foreign tongue.

Bill's ankles had been bound so tightly his feet had no sensation. His hands were almost as bad. But that didn't matter now. From somewhere within him horror and fear gave him unnatural strength. Desperation gave lightning swiftness to his reflexes. For one seemingly endless instant he fumbled under his trouser leg and came up with the derringer. Elissa Rossoff cried out sharply and hurled the chloroform rag in his face.

He didn't breathe then, nor, it seemed, for ages later. He flung it off and that cost him a divided second that was nearly fatal. Maxim had lunged forward, the big Frontier model leveled. He pulled the trigger. But a fraction of a second after Bill had fired.

Maxim's mouth was open, teeth shining wolfishly. And the derringer slug hit him in the roof of the mouth and kept on going upward. It made a mess out of him.

Elissa Rossoff shrank back cat-like before the menace of the little weapon. "Gregor!" she screamed.

"Hold it, all of you," shouted Bill.

Lathrop stood frozen. The youth, Gregor, crouched cat-like. Bill's deringer commanded the situation. He awkwardly got out of the casket took Lathrop's knife and threw it to Marina. "Release Luke," he ordered, and to Lathrop, "We'll do it my way now."

Then his numbed feet made him lurch and he nearly fell. He recovered but by then it was too late. Lathrop, with a sudden yell, galvanized into action. His sweeping right hook ticked Bill on the jaw and Bill went down. Lathrop dove toward Maxim's dead body. He came up with the Frontier model .45 and he swung savagely at bay.

The youth, Gregor, charged, yelling, throwing down an automatic pistol to fire.

Bill had one shot and it had to be good. This one was perfect. The deringer roared and Gregor poised in mid-air both feet off the ground. He screamed and clapped a hand to his stomach. He came down with a crash, almost knocking Lathrop over.

This saved Bill's life, for as Lathrop staggered the old Frontier .45 roared. The slug went wild. Bill hurled the deringer into the mass murderer's face and charged in behind it, desperately striving to get hold of the .45.

Lathrop swung the weapon around and cracked it against Bill's skull. Half-stunned, he still instinctively grappled. He rolled twice, got a knee in the stomach that made him gag. Then Lathrop screamed and blood poured off his face.

Luke's voice yelled, "Get the woman. This one is mine."

BILL rolled clear, shaking his head groggily, wiping the blood from his eyes. He started groping for the horse-pistol.

He heard Luke cry, "Maudey, if you can see anything, watch this."

Bill opened his eyes. As he did so Marina shrieked, "Bill, oh, my God—look out!"

Bill pivoted on his haunches. He saw Elissa Rossoff, a green blaze in her eyes, leveling the automatic pistol that had dropped from Gregor's dead hand.

There was nothing Bill could do; no chance for her to miss at this distance. He strove to rise and lunge at her. But he knew he would be too late.

Instinctively, like a little boy warding off a snowball or a rock, he raised his right arm, elbow crooked, across his face. A pistol explosion thundered in the room.

But Bill felt no lead go into him. He dropped his arm and saw Alec Billings, backed up by a flood of blue-coated cops, coming across the room with a smoking pistol in his right hand.

Bill collapsed again to the floor. He said wearily, "Alec, you'll be the death of me yet."

He had a memory then of listening hazily to Alec explain how they had lost the trail in Plainville, and would not have been here yet if they had not heard about the fire in the tenement section and decided on a hunch to canvass house by house.

Somebody gave Bill a drink of Scotch that burned away the haze of pain. Presently he got to his feet and found a mirror and stared hard into it. "Not a gray hair?" he marveled. "I thought it would all be white."

Turning away, he saw Lathrop's body sprawled on the floor. The man's torso was bent almost at right angles, at the hips, as if he had almost been twisted in two. Bill's glance shifted to Luke. The latter caught his eye.

"I guess maybe Maudey's satisfied now," he said.

Bill looked at Luke's big hands.

He shuddered. "I don't believe it. I never will. It isn't real."

THE whole affair became newspaper history after that. Spurred on by Bill's sensational daily columns, the police of the nation began to look into supposedly natural deaths of insured young and middle-aged persons.

And a queer change came over Bill. Kay, his beautiful brunette, found him restrained and more quiet.

They sat on the Park Plaza Terrace one night months later and Kay said, "Bill, snap out of it. The moon is as big as the universe, the stars are bright as cheerful hearts, and here am I with what it takes and you look into space and not at me."

Bill shrugged. "Darling, I've had a blow. I've always believed in the in-

herent goodness, fineness of people. Maybe that's why I've been such a cheerful dope. When you strike something like this cold-blooded horror, and go through the experience I went through, you lose your faith in human kind. You wonder if the world is good."

Before he could go on a waiter handed him a telegram. He said, "Please, darling," and opened it and read. His eyes widened.

"Listen," he said and read:

DEAR BILL: THIS IS FROM ME AND MARINA TO SAY WE GOT MARRIED TODAY AND I BOUGHT SOME EXTRA WHEATLAND ON ACCOUNT OF THIS WAR MAKES WHEAT A GOOD BET STOP SHE LIKES FARMING AND I GUESS AFTER ALL THIS WAS THE WAY THINGS WERE MEANT TO BE BECAUSE WE SURE ARE HAPPY AND THINKING OF YOU. LUKE SABIN.

Bill reached out his hand and pulled the lovely brunette to him. "Darling," he grinned, "I feel better now."

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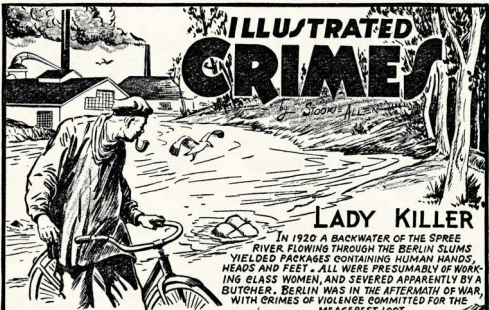
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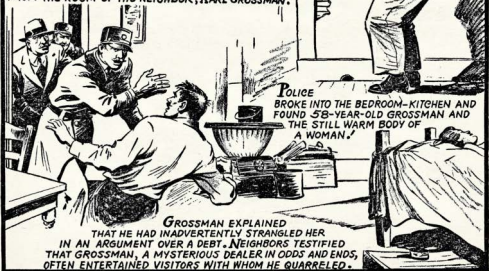


LADY KILLER

IN 1920 A BACKWATER OF THE SPREE RIVER FLOWING THROUGH THE BERLIN SLUMS YIELDED PACKAGES CONTAINING HUMAN HANDS, HEADS AND FEET. ALL WERE PRESUMABLY OF WORKING CLASS WOMEN, AND SEVERED APPARENTLY BY A BUTCHER. BERLIN WAS IN THE AFTERMATH OF WAR, WITH CRIMES OF VIOLENCE COMMITTED FOR THE MEAGEREST LOOT.

THAT FALL MORE PACKAGES WERE FOUND IN SOME WOODS. POLICE SUSPECTED MEDICAL STUDENTS, BUT NO CADAVERS WERE MISSING. IN OCTOBER, A RESTORATION OF ONE OF THE HEADS WAS IDENTIFIED AS THAT OF FRIEDA SCHUBERT, AN EX-SERVANT GIRL.

IN AUGUST, 1921, THE SPREE RIVER YIELDED ANOTHER PACKAGE. TWO DAYS LATER, A NEARBY TENEMENT-DWELLER REPORTED FEMININE SCREAMS ISSUING FROM THE ROOM OF HIS NEIGHBOR, KARL GROSSMAN.



POLICE BROKE INTO THE BEDROOM-KITCHEN AND FOUND 58-YEAR-OLD GROSSMAN AND THE STILL WARM BODY OF A WOMAN.

GROSSMAN EXPLAINED THAT HE HAD INADVERTENTLY STRANGLERED HER IN AN ARGUMENT OVER A DEBT. NEIGHBORS TESTIFIED THAT GROSSMAN, A MYSTERIOUS DEALER IN ODDS AND ENDS, OFTEN ENTERTAINED VISITORS WITH WHOM HE QUARRELED.



IN THE ROOM WAS CONSIDERABLE MONEY TIED IN NEAT PACKAGES; ALSO NUMEROUS FEMININE GARMENTS. ON THE BED WERE TRACES OF OLD BLOODSTAINS AND, IN A REFUSE HEAP, SCRAPS OF BURNED HUMAN FLESH!



IT WAS ESTABLISHED THAT GROSSMAN HAD GIVEN A FRIEND A HANDBAG BELONGING TO FRIEDA SCHUBERT.

GROSSMAN, FORMER BUTCHER AND EX-CONVICT, WITHSTOOD SEVERE GRILLING; THEN CONFESSED TWO OTHER MURDERS, ALTHOUGH FROM THE MASS OF EVIDENCE POLICE ESTIMATED HIS VICTIMS AT AT LEAST 30! THE NIGHT BEFORE HIS TRIAL IN 1922, GROSSMAN MADE A ROPE FROM A SHEET AND HUNG HIMSELF FROM A NAIL ON HIS CELL DOOR.

*A True
Story*



Alibi Alibi

By Robert Sneddon

GIVEN a good alibi, a criminal can go into court with a complacent and hopeful smirk on his crooked face. He has only to pronounce the word "Alibi," like some magic spell out of the Arabian Nights, and prison doors will fly open.

Accused of a crime, he can solemnly affirm: "Why, Judge, I was a hundred miles away at the time" or "Honest, I was sitting in on a poker game twenty blocks away when Snick was bumped off, and here are my witnesses."

Of course, should the bottom fall out of his "out" he's in a bad way. The law is swift to assume he is guilty.

On the other hand, the alibi often has saved the innocent caught in the meshes of a net of circumstantial evidence from the extreme penalty of the law.

One of the neatest examples of the deceptive alibi was that worked by the English highwayman, John Nevison, though the exploit has somehow become attached to the name of another ma-

rauder, Dick Turpin, under the title of Turpin's ride to York.

Nevison, who had escaped prison a number of times, was carrying on his holdup trade on roads leading from London. He stopped a merchant with a fat purse and was recognized by him. So, knowing that if he were caught he would dangle on the gallows, he made up his mind instantly to establish an alibi. He went to Gravesend which he reached at four A.M. and while waiting for the ferry over the Thames fed his black mare, Bess.

After waiting an hour, he crossed the river and rode north. With only a few brief stops he reached York at seven-thirty P.M. He had ridden 190 miles in 15 hours.

When he was captured in York three days later, he set up an alibi which was unanswerable. He was able to produce in court a number of reputable citizens of the city who swore they had seen him on the bowling green between seven-thirty and eight-thirty P.M. the very evening of the day on which the robbery was committed in London.

The jury wisely shook their heads and acquitted the prisoner. Needless to say Bonnie Black Bess was not brought into court to testify to the incredible feat she had performed to save her master's neck.

The defence of an alibi could not save the Frenchman Lesurques who went to the guillotine, though innocent. In fact a detail of the alibi went far to prejudice the judges against him, a trivial accident. His story is kept alive in the old play *The Lyons Mail*.

Five highway robbers held up the Lyons mail coach, carrying mail and specie from Paris to the city of Lyons. They killed the driver.

Lesurques, who was a prosperous merchant, retired from business and liv-

ing with his family in Paris, one morning while out strolling met an old friend from his native town and talked to him. The friend said he was on his way to get back his identification papers from the magistrate in charge of the investigation of the mail robbery. He had been staying in the same house as one of the arrested suspects and had been asked to give an account of himself. However, nothing had been uncovered to his discredit, and he had been told to return for his papers.

Lesurques went along with his friend to the magistrate's office without the slightest inkling or premonition of any possible danger. But as he waited in the outer office for his friend he was suddenly identified by two women witnesses in the mail robbery case, also waiting there, as one of the five notorious highway robbers. They made such an outcry that Lesurques was arrested. To his horror, witness after witness came forward and swore he was one of the mounted robbers.

Fortunately Lesurques had what seemed to him a foolproof alibi for the day on which he was alleged to have been seen riding up and down the highway waiting for the coming of the mail. He had been with friends, had dinner with them, walked with them, been seen by the workmen hired to decorate an apartment into which he was moving, and had made a purchase in the store of a silversmith. He had the smith's books brought to court to show the entry of the sale.

This testimony might have saved him, in spite of the "positive" identification made by a number of state witnesses, had not the judge examining the silversmith's sales book suddenly discovered that the entry in the book showed an erasure and correction of the date.

The silversmith swore that he had made the mistake in the date when writing the entry, and that the correction had been made there and then. The error was construed as an attempt to deceive justice.

Lesurques' alibi was shattered, and he was condemned to the guillotine. Yet this alibi was genuine as was revealed many years later when the actual robber confessed. The Lesurques family battled for years to clear the family name of criminal taint.

THE alibi that depends on a single witness is not so good. James Rush, charged with the murder of a family of three persons in an English country house, confidently stated that his housekeeper could clear him.

The housekeeper swore that Rush came home at six o'clock. About nine o'clock he left the room for ten minutes. After that he was in the room with her until he went to bed. Her testimony seemed likely to save him.

But a last minute witness was brought from the hospital—a maid in the house of murder. She said she had seen the killer, that he had shot and wounded her, and that Rush was the man.

Challenged, the housekeeper broke down and admitted she had lied. Rush had promised her marriage, if she saved him. He had taken his gun and been out of the house between eight and nine o'clock when the crime was committed.

Many a time the fate of a man has lain in the hands of a clock.

There is the case of the sentry accused of leaving his post. He swore he had not, and as evidence said he had heard the clock of the palace strike thirteen at midnight. The court disputed the statement as fantastic, but, fortunately for the wretched guard, a number of

others had heard the eccentric clock add an extra stroke.

The testimony of a maid servant saved the life of a murderer named Hardy. His guilt was revealed later by a deathbed confession. Here is what happened. After the crime the murderer hastened home and stole into the house, unheard by the servant, only other person there. As he passed the tall grandfather clock in the hall he set the hands back two hours.

After getting in bed he called to the servant to go downstairs and see what time it was. She did so, and went back to bed. No sooner was Hardy sure that she was back in bed and asleep, than he slipped downstairs and put the hands forward to the correct time.

The girl swore in court that her master was in bed at the time of the murder. The court accepted her testimony as true and acquitted Hardy.

Some years ago an elderly Englishman died in Baltimore, Maryland, under an assumed name. He had been the central figure in a famous English murder trial.

Thornton was charged with the murder of a village beauty, Mary Ashford, found drowned in a pond, and showing signs of violence. He advanced a time alibi in his defence.

He had met the girl at a rustic dance. They left at midnight, and were seen standing by a stile, talking, at three o'clock. At four the girl called at a friend's house to get her day clothes, changed some of her garments and in fifteen minutes set off for home. A witness saw her going towards home at four-thirty o'clock.

Thornton was seen making for his home in the opposite direction at this very time, and four witnesses so testified. Another man met and talked with him a mile nearer home. And at 5:25

o'clock he was seen within half a mile of home.

It was worked out that the girl must have reached the scene of her murder at 4:35 o'clock, at which time Thornton was two and a half miles away. So that to have committed the crime, Thornton must have traveled three and a half miles, attacked and drowned the girl, set the scene to look like suicide, all within twenty-five minutes at most.

There was blood upon Thornton's clothes, blood upon the girl. Yet the evidence of witnesses supported by various watches and clocks, all carefully examined for accuracy, saved Thornton from the gallows.

Public opinion however was against him and he had to leave England.

WHEN Herbert Bennett strangled his wife at an English seaside resort, he made a bad error. A tintype of his wife taken the morning of the murder showed her wearing an old-fashioned gold chain around her neck. When the body was discovered the chain was gone. Bennett swore he had not seen his wife the day of the murder, but the chain turned up to damn him. It was found among his possessions.

Yet he had an alibi, and one that seemed sound. A man came forward in all sincerity, and it may be stated here there was never any question as to his veracity, with the testimony that he had talked with Bennett, given him a light for a cigar, and been with him face to face at a time when, to commit the murder, Bennett would have had to have been in Yarmouth.

The jury, however, refused to accept the alibi. They decided that the witness was making an error in identification.

Theater programs have been used to provide alibis. In a famous Scotland Yard case, a foreigner named Beron

was discovered dead in a park with strange cuts on his face. An acquaintance, Morrison, was arrested on charge of murder.

Morrison swore that during the time he was supposed to have been with Beron, he was sitting in a vaudeville house, The Shoreditch Empire Theatre, and he called as witnesses two girls with whom he had been flirting.

That was his story and it seemed a good one. But unfortunately what he said he saw on the bill, and what the girls said they saw did not match. Also there was some confusion as to the price of admission.

A jury came to the conclusion that the alibi was faked, but in consideration of other points, asked for mercy. Life sentence was the verdict.

One of the quaintest alibi stories came to light in the trial of William MacDonald for burglary, in a New York court, July 8, 1896.

Several witnesses swore that they had found the accused in a house on Second Avenue in the act of committing a theft. Although he had slipped through their fingers, they had got a good look at the man. When the police arrested MacDonald on suspicion, they were unanimous in identifying him as the burglar.

For the defence there appeared as principal witness, Professor Wein, a noted vaudeville artist and a man of standing in every way.

Under oath the professor stated that on the day and at the very hour when MacDonald was supposed to be attempting burglary in the Second Avenue house, he was in reality on the stage of a vaudeville house in Brooklyn, five miles away, before an audience of many hundreds, in a state of hypnotic trance. The professor, known for his mesmeric feats, said that MacDonald was one of his best subjects.

A number of respectable citizens of Brooklyn who had been on the stage as a committee, and others, identified MacDonald, and confirmed the professor's statement of time and place.

The prosecuting attorney asked Wein if it were possible for MacDonald's spirit to go wandering while his body was in the theatre.

"Yes," said the professor briskly. "Quite possible. There have been numerous reported instances of people seen hundreds of miles away from where they actually were. That is called an astral appearance."

"Tell me, professor," continued the attorney. "When you hypnotized the prisoner, did you suggest anything to his mind—that he might make a trip to New York, for instance?"

"No, I was not thinking of New York. I never mentioned it."

"Did you suggest he should commit a crime?"

"No."

"A theft?"

"No, indeed."

"This man is a good subject, you say. Does he execute all the suggestions you make to him?"

"Within certain limits, yes. In his cataleptic state he is deprived of all sensations other than those I impose on him for the time being, but I certainly would not make him commit a crime."

The jury acquitted the prisoner—body and spirit.

EVEN the weather has been called into court to bear witness.

A man was being tried at Old Bailey Criminal Court for highway robbery. The man prosecuting positively identified the prisoner. He had seen his face clearly, for it was a bright moonlight night, he said.

The prisoner's counsel cross-exam-

ined the witness, making him repeat his statement and insist on it. He then pointed out that the night on which the robbery was said to have been committed there had been no moon at all. In proof of this he handed an almanac to the bench and jury. The prisoner was set free.

But sometime after the prisoner had left both the court and the country, it was discovered that the victim had spoken the truth. The almanac had been faked, printed especially for the occasion.

Another almanac story is attributed to Lincoln. It is given in Lamon's life of the great man.

"Lincoln was defending a man, named Armstrong, charged with murder. The evidence against Armstrong was very strong. The chief witness for the prosecution said the crime was committed at eleven o'clock at night, and he saw blows struck by light of an almost full moon.

"Mr. Lincoln gave the officer of the court an almanac and told him to give it back to him when he should call for it in the presence of the jury. It was an almanac for the year previous to the murder. In due time, Mr. Lincoln called for the almanac and easily proved by it that at the time the main witness declared the moon was shining in great splendor, there was in fact no moon at all, but black darkness over the whole scene.

"In the roar of laughter and undisguised astonishment succeeding the apparent demonstration, court, jury and counsel forgot to examine the seemingly conclusive almanac and let it pass without question of its genuineness."

Another version was that the witness was lying, and that Lincoln refuted his statement with the production of a current almanac.

Baron Platt, an eminent legal authority, said that the worst false alibi to demolish was one in which the witnesses all testified to actual facts, but facts which had happened on some other date than the one in question.

Two men were on trial for house-breaking in the night of a certain Sunday. They were positively identified by three witnesses who said they saw the prisoners going to and coming from the house which was robbed.

The defence produced numerous witnesses who swore that the prisoners were home on the night in question and stayed home all night. All of these witnesses agreed on the smallest details of what happened that evening. Counsel for the prosecution was unable to shake the evidence, until the question of weather arose. The witnesses said the night was dark, nasty and wet.

Unfortunately the almanac said there was a full moon, and finally the court learned that the witnesses for the defence were mistakenly describing the events of the Sunday before the one in question.

Even the best coached witnesses are liable to fall down on some detail.

In a murder not so many years ago a witness maintained under oath that the prisoner charged with the crime had been in his company at the very time of the killing.

"Are you absolutely certain in your mind of the exact hour?" asked the prosecution.

"I am."

"Will you kindly tell me how you are so sure of it."

"We were in the Bear Tavern, and I saw the time by the clock over the bar."

"And that time was—exactly?"

"It was twenty-seven minutes past nine."

"You saw that time yourself?"

"Yes."

One of the detectives on the case whispered to the attorney who, staring hard at the witness, an illiterate farm laborer, pointed to the clock on the wall.

"You see that clock there. Now kindly tell the court what time it says."

The witness turned ghastly pale, gaped at the clock, scratched his head and was silent. He was finally made to acknowledge that he could not tell the time. And there and then the prisoner's alibi crashed.

WHEN mistakes occur in identification, an alibi which can be sustained is a mighty useful thing. So concluded a gentleman with the peculiar name of Diligence Kerry. In his youth he went to India, amassed a fortune there and returned to Ireland to spend his days. He decided to make a trip to England and landed in Liverpool. He had been there only two days when a lady stopped him in the street and asked if he were not the long missing husband of a friend of hers.

Kerry amusedly protested he was not, but the lady followed him. She learned where he was staying and turned up there with the supposed wife who fell on his neck, with mingled rejoicing and blame. Only she called him Mr. Spass, a name Kerry indignantly rejected.

The story reached the papers, and before Kerry knew what was going on, five other women appeared from various parts of England and claimed him as their lawful husband. Each of them declared Kerry to be a separate and distinct individual.

Luck was with Kerry, however. He could prove in every instance that at the time when the marriage of each deserted bride was supposed to have taken place, he was in far off India. He

had a narrow squeak of it, nevertheless.

An American case was more serious. One July 26, some girls were gathering berries near Medford, Massachusetts. A young man strolled by and induced one of the girls to take a walk with him. He made an attempt to assault her but failed.

Two days later there was a similar attempt with another girl. A young man told the girl a child was crying in the bushes and would she go and see what was the matter. He threatened her with a knife. A man Houghton and his wife saw the incident but could not catch him.

On August 14 a young man was taking a drink from the Houghton well, and Houghton recognized him as the man he had seen, now wanted for assault. He had him arrested. The prisoner swore indignantly that at the time of the crime he was in New Hampshire.

Taken to Watertown, he was identified as the assailant by both girls. And witnesses to the number of ten said he was the young man seen in the vicinity of the crime.

But the defence produced a Mr. Ames who swore he had seen the prisoner in Keene, New Hampshire, every day from July 22 to 28. Furthermore he had sold him a trunk. The bartender at the Eagle Hotel, Keene, stated he had eaten his meals every day with the prisoner, and both witnesses said they had been with the young man to a circus July 26. They could not mistake the date.

A tailor said he had measured the prisoner for a pair of pants the morning of the 28th, day of the second crime. And the rest of the day was accounted for by a driver who said he had carried the prisoner as a passenger from Keene to Concord, nearly an all day trip.

The jury set the prisoner free.

Not so lucky was the unfortunate Adolph Beck, identified by numbers of women as an unprincipled rogue who was swindling them under promise of marriage. In spite of his alibis, he was found guilty and sent twice to prison. When finally the double who was undoing him, a man who did not even look like him on close inspection, was run to earth, Beck was a sick man. He did not long live to enjoy the compensation which the British government reluctantly awarded him.

SOME alibi tricks are clever in their way. An Oxford judge was trying a highway robber. Things looked black for the robber, for on the stand the victim had absolutely identified him. The jury were just rising to their feet, about to retire, when there was a commotion. A horseman had just ridden up to the court doors, leapt off, and was forcing his way through the crowd, shouting he had ridden fifty miles to save the life of the innocent man on trial.

When he was brought into court, he called on all, and especially the man pressing the charge, to take a good look at him. They did, and saw he was a perfect double for the prisoner. He was even dressed the same.

Pressed to reply, the victim spluttered and gaped at the startling resemblance. It was possible that the newcomer and not the prisoner was the man who had held him up, he admitted.

The jury was so at odds then, that they acquitted the prisoner. The case of the other man had to be dealt with, but the defence was simple and effective.

The prosecutor had made a mistake in the first case, he said. Was he to be allowed to swear away the life of the second man and repeat his mistake. Called on to identify the second prisoner, the victim was unable to say he

was sure. The court had no other recourse than to set free both men, who thereupon returned to their business on the highway, in which they had been accomplices for years.

Another variant on the trick was played by a clever rogue also in stage-coach days.

One day a gentleman arrived at an inn in the English town of York and languidly inquired what entertainment could be found. The landlord scratched his head. There were no plays, but if his honor cared to see a trial for highway robbery, there was a case on at the court. So the gentleman strolled over to the court and took a seat in full view of the bench and the dock, where he sat listening to the evidence against the prisoner.

All at once the prisoner gave an obnoxious start, leaned forward, staring at the gentleman, and cried out excitedly:

"May it please your Lordship and gentleman, Heaven has answered my prayers. Thank God, here is a gentleman that can speak to my innocence."

The gentleman raised his handled eyeglass and stared at the prisoner.

"I don't know what the fellow means," he retorted. "I never saw him before."

The prisoner went on eagerly, however. "But you must remember, your honor . . . at Dover, the twenty-third day of June . . . the very day they say I did this robbery . . . I saw you. I carried your baggage in a wheelbarrow from the Ship and Anchor Inn to the packet for Calais. I remember your honor gave me a shilling to drink your health."

The gentleman shook his head.

"You must mistake me for someone else, my man."

"Oh for God's sake, try and remember, your honor, try! They'll hang me,

if you don't. Maybe you made a note of where you were that day."

The judge now took a hand. He questioned the gentleman who said he was a London banker, a man of good credit. Asked if he kept any account of his business, he said he kept a diary. It was at present locked up in his trunk at the hotel, but he was willing to give his key to an officer of the court to go and get the book from the trunk.

While the messenger was gone, the prisoner was allowed to question the gentleman, to recall to his memory various things which had happened that twenty-third of June, and finally the gentleman said:

"'Pon my word, your Lordship and gentleman, I do confess the rascal speaks the truth. How otherwise could he know?"

The officer came back with the *diary* for examination by the judge, and there, under date of June 23, was an entry of a hotel bill paid at the Ship and Anchor, and of the payment of a shilling to a man for carriage of baggage to the quay.

The jury accepted this evidence as conclusive of the prisoner's innocence, and he was discharged.

But alas, within a couple of weeks he was caught at the old game, pistols in his hands, holding up a coach. And with him, also armed and masked, was his accomplice, the languid gentleman, the London banker, who had so fortunately happened on the scene of the trial with a manufactured diary.

It is a good thing to have some idea of where you were at certain times, but don't carry the idea too far.

A mild Frenchman in Paris who read avidly the stories of all the crimes of the day determined to make sure he would be ready to have a proper answer for the police in case they should ever

suspect him of a crime. So day by day he made notes of his comings and goings—a complete time sheet. It was an innocent enough hobby.

But, alas, a man was murdered in his apartment house. All the tenants were questioned, and of the lot, our friend was the only one with a good alibi. In fact it was so good, every minute ac-

counted for so accurately and carefully, that the police concluded the alibi had been planned deliberately. They stopped looking further and took the little man to prison, from which he would certainly have gone to the guillotine had not a lady friend of the actual killer squealed. It was a close call for the innocent man.

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Death—Across the Board

By Borden Chase

IV

THE Hotel Cromwell was a hold-over from the nineties. It had been built when Aqueduct Race Track was considered to be far out in the country and could only be reached by train or over long dusty roads. As the years brought the track closer to the city, the Hotel Cromwell tried valiantly to keep pace. Parts of it had been rebuilt, new fixtures had been installed, and now it was neither new nor old, but a combination of both. Owners of important stables usually rented a suite of rooms on the day of a big race, and

the hotel dining room was crowded at luncheon. Later, the oak-paneled bar would be a meeting place for three distinct groups. Owners and trainers and the aristocracy of the racing world would gather at one end of the low ceilinged room. Near the bar would be a collection of men whose only interest in racing was centered in the payoffs—bookmakers, touts and gamblers. On the outer fringes would be the people who had come to "see or be seen"—Broadway celebrities and those who liked to look at celebrities. But now, at ten in the morning, the Cromwell was almost deserted.



"Come on, Estereld!"
the sergeant shouted

This story began in May 11 issue of Detective Fiction Weekly

Connie Dee and Fay Leith were waiting in the wide lobby when Sergeant Smith and his group arrived. Fay Leith got quickly from a chair near a potted palm and hurried toward young Bill Taunton. There was bewilderment in her eyes.

"What are they going to do, dear?" she asked. "Have they found who killed him?"

Bill put an arm about her shoulders. "Not yet," he said. "The Sergeant wants to ask a few questions. While I'm here, you go to the stables and keep an eye on things. See that the boys breeze Tatter and Larkone. Tell Johnson to see that Willowack's shoes are right. I'll be with you as soon as I can get away." He turned to the doctor. "You don't mind if Connie stays with Fay this morning, do you, Doc?"

"I think it would be a great idea," said Tim absently.

He was watching Connie as she straightened the Sergeant's necktie and rearranged the handkerchief in his coat pocket. Smith was patiently trying to explain to Connie why she should go back to New York, but was getting exactly nowhere. At the hotel desk, Sam Gordon was leaning on one elbow, twisting a cigar in his mouth as he waited. He looked at Tim steadily for a time, and when the doctor turned to face him, the bookmaker grinned.

"Got everything under control, Doc?" he asked sarcastically.

"Not quite, Sam," said Tim. "The Sergeant wants to ask you a few questions. When he's finished, maybe we'll have the right answer."

"Not from me," said Gordon. "I don't know a thing."

"Is that why you advised me to leave Aqueduct?"

"Me—advise you?" said Gordon. "That's a laugh, Doc. I make a liv-

ing off suckers like you. Stick around and I'll get rich."

Arthur Taunton had been told his suite was in readiness and a bell boy waited to conduct the group to the rooms on the second floor. Smith motioned to the others and walked toward the rickety old elevator. Connie Dee walked with him.

"But you're supposed to go with Miss Leith!" said Smith. "Look, Connie—be a good kid and let me handle this case my way for a change. Murder is serious stuff. For all you know, you might be walking right alongside the guy who killed Lou Comigo."

"Why, Sergeant!" said Connie in pretended surprise. "How could you possibly have done it? You were home and asleep!"

"Ah, be nice, Connie. Go ride a horse, or something."

Connie winked at Fay. "It's only because he loves," she said. "Don't pay any attention to him, Fay. We'll go up and powder our noses, then when Sergeant Smith gets things completely befuddled, I'll solve his case for him."

She stepped onto the elevator with Fay. Smith groaned. He motioned to the others and crooked a quick finger at Gordon. "You, too, Sam," he said.

The elevator stopped at the second floor where a wide hall formed the base and arms of a long U. The bell boy hurried along the hall, opening the doors of the Taunton suite that occupied one entire wing. There were two large sitting rooms connected by a series of short halls with the adjoining bedrooms on the outer side. Across the main hall was the other half of the suite—a second pair of sitting rooms facing on the central court and in turn connected with the adjoining bedrooms.

Sergeant Smith nodded approval. "We'll use this inside sitting room,"

he said. "I'll talk to Gordon first. The rest of you can wait across the hall."

"Sure you don't want me to help you, Sergeant?" asked Connie.

"Very sure!" said Smith. He nodded to Tim and Gordon. "Let's get started."

ARTHUR TAUNTON had ordered drinks sent up and waiters were arriving as Tim followed Gordon and Smith into the sitting room. He closed the door and watched Gordon take a chair near one of the windows. The bookmaker was amused and wasn't trying to hide it. Smith dipped into his pocket, took out a cigar and bit through the top. When he blew the tobacco from his lips, it went dangerously close to Gordon's ear. The bookmaker's smile grew wider.

"Let's have it," said Smith.

"I don't know a thing," said Gordon.

"Why were you in the stable?"

"I was waiting for a ferry boat."

"Wise, eh? How much does Bill Taunton owe you?"

"Plenty," said Gordon. "You goin' to pay off for him?"

"Yeah—with a punch on the nose if you don't talk nice," said Smith slowly. He opened the buttons of his coat. "I got up early and fell out the wrong side, Sam. Be smart or you collect lumps!"

Tim crossed the room and rested a leg on the corner of a center table. "Just one question, if you don't mind, Sergeant. I'd like Sam to do some guessing for me." He grinned at the bookmaker. "How much money do you think Arthur Taunton has?"

Gordon looked at the doctor steadily. "What's that got to do with Lou Comigo gettin' killed?"

"Nothing, perhaps. I simply asked you to guess."

"Oh, we play games, eh?" said Gordon. He rolled his cigar in his mouth. "All right, Doc—my guess is over a million. Maybe twice that much."

"Would you take his note for fifty thousand?"

"But fast," laughed Gordon.

"That's all, Sam," said Tim. "Ask Win McGarry to come in next."

"Wait a minute!" cried Smith as Gordon got up from his chair. He turned toward the doctor. "This guy ain't told us nothing, Doc! I want information—and plenty!"

"He's told us more than enough," said the doctor quietly.

Smith shrugged and opened the door. "Beat it, Sam. But don't leave Aque duct until I tell you to."

"Wouldn't think of leaving, Sergeant," said the bookmaker.

He looked again at the doctor and walked into the hall. A moment later Win McGarry came into the room. The old trainer was nervous and seated himself on the arm of a chair. He glanced at his watch and then at the Sergeant.

"I hope you'll be makin' it fast," he said. "'Tis lots of work I've got waitin' fer me at the track."

"Fast enough," said Smith. "Suppose you tell me whatever you can about Comigo. Did he have any enemies—any guys he owed money?"

"Not a one!" said Win firmly. "Lou was a good boy—the best! I've known him since he came to the tracks—taught him all he knew. Do you think I'd have him as a first string boy if he was the sort to owe money to anyone?"

"Was there any chance he would sell out?" asked the doctor. "Could a gambler buy him?"

"Buy him?" snapped McGarry. "Sure, 'tis kill him, he'd have to. The dollar was never minted that would buy Lou Comigo!"

"How was he with his fists?"

"A beauty," said McGarry. "With me own eyes I've seen him take on three boys in the tack room. A fighter, that lad."

"Do you think young Bill might have killed the boy in a fit of temper?"

"Young Bill?" said McGarry slowly. "'Tis not a fair question, Doctor. I've known the lad since he was knee high to a pup. Like me own boy, he is. And now you ask me if I think he could kill?"

"But he has got a bad temper, Win."

"Aye—I grant that."

"I thought you would," said the doctor. He put a friendly hand on the trainer's shoulder. "That's all, Win. Go on to the track and do your work. We'll see you before the Brooklyn Handicap."

McGarry looked questioningly toward the Sergeant. Smith shrugged and lifted both hands. "It's okay with me, pal," he said. "I wanted to ask questions but it seems Doc knows the answers."

"Only a few of them," said Tim. "And unfortunately they don't add up."

He waited until the trainer had left the room and then walked to the window. For a time he stood looking down into the landscape court that was used during these summer months as an extension of the restaurant. Varicolored umbrellas slanted over the small green and white tables that were set in grass plots bordered by gravel walks. The yard was deserted except for a handman who worked about the gardens. Across the court two rows of wide windows faced the yard. Only a few of these rooms were occupied and the windows of the others were closed. Tim turned his back to the court and faced the Sergeant.

"I was talking to Arthur Taunton

this morning," he said thoughtfully, "and much to my surprise, I learned he was almost broke."

"Taunton broke?" said Smith in astonishment. "Say, Doc, are you trying to kid me? That guy is big business—even Sam Gordon says he's worth over a million. And Sam don't make mistakes about money!"

"You're right about that," said Tim. "Sam doesn't make mistakes about money, and he knows the truth about Arthur Taunton. But for some reason he is trying to cover up—just as Arthur is doing."

Smith studied the tip of his cigar. "Did Taunton admit he was broke?"

"PRACTICALLY," said the doctor.

"Men of his type don't boast about the money they are making. It's old stuff to them. The Taunton family have always had money. Therefore, there was no reason for Arthur to tell me about the cleanup he had made in Wall Street. He's told Win McGarry the same thing in other words—asked him about buying a group of expensive horses."

"But ain't that natural?" asked Smith. "The Taunton Stables always buy horses."

"Only yearlings and an occasional two-year-old. McGarry likes to get them fresh from the training farms and raise them himself."

"All right," said Smith, and he waved his cigar impatiently. "So Arthur Taunton is broke—and so what? He stands to win twenty grand this afternoon, and a little more on bets. Not much for a Taunton, but it puts him back in the money again."

"That's one of the answers that doesn't add up," said Tim. "Another one is Arthur's quarrel with young Bill about Fay Leith. A third, is Win McGarry's admission that young Bill has

a bad temper. He knew that helped to put Bill on the spot for this killing—and Win McGarry likes Bill as much as he would like his own son."

"Maybe Win goes with me," said Smith. He nodded his head in self agreement. "The way I see it, young Bill tries to dope the favorite so his own horse can win. Lou Comigo catches him at it and they fight. Bill kills the boy just as Arthur arrives. Bill slugs Arthur and starts to run. Then he sees McGarry coming and pretends he just found Comigo."

"How did Arthur get into Daybell's stall?" asked Tim. "And why was it Daybell's stall, rather than one of the other horses?"

"All right—why?"

"I don't know," said the doctor. "But I do know Daybell is gentle—less apt to trample a man than any other racer in the stable."

Smith walked to an easy chair, dropped into it and swung one leg over the arm. "I still figure it was Bill Taunton," he said stubbornly. "You let me handle him when he comes in here and I'll have a confession in ten minutes—"

"I doubt it, but you—" Tim stopped abruptly.

A square of plaster split from the wall near the doctor's shoulder and the flat report of a gun echoed across the court yard. Tim turned, looked in bewilderment toward the open window at his shoulder and hit the floor solidly as Sergeant Smith's heavy shoulder slammed into his legs. For a moment he lay quiet, then he shook his head and tried to sit erect.

"Stay put!" said Smith. One of his large hands held the doctor against the rug. "Keep out of range, Doc. Some guy across the court is using you as a clay pigeon." He pulled his gun free and crawled toward the door. "Follow

me but keep clear of that window. When you get in the hall, go to the other room and keep everyone from leaving. I'll see you later."

"Where are you going?"

"To get that guy, of course!"

Smith turned and sprinted toward the bend of the hall. For a man of his bulk, the sergeant could move with surprising speed. He had reached the corner and swung past it before Tim arrived at the door of the Taunton suite. There was no excitement in the hotel and apparently no one had heard the shot, or if they had, they thought it to be the backfire of a car. A waiter had just left the elevator, and ahead of him was a bell boy who stared after Sergeant Smith in amazement.

V

TIM opened the door and stepped inside. Arthur Taunton was seated at a small desk, busily writing on a sheet of hotel stationery. At the opposite side of the room sat young Bill, one leg crossed above the other and his arms folded. He was staring at Arthur but turned quickly to look at Tim as the doctor entered.

"Learn anything new?" he asked quickly.

"Very little," said Tim. "The Sergeant wants to speak with you later. Answer his questions truthfully, Bill. Tell him everything you know."

"That won't be much," said the trainer. "Willowack's hoof seemed to have a slight bruise. I told Johnston to pull the shoes and then I waited for one of the boys to come in with a filly I expect to run Monday. It was late and I thought you and the girls might have come back to the stables. I went to look for you and found Lou Comigo with a fork in his chest."

"Did you see any one else in the shed?"

"Sam Gordon came through just as I got there. I think Bender February was in the tack room, but I'm not sure. No one was in the shed when I looked into Estereld's stall."

"Was the mare excited?"

"No—hardly at all."

"And that's all you know?"

"Every bit of it," said Bill. "I realize it's not a good story, but it's the truth. I had no reason to kill Lou Comigo."

The doctor nodded and walked to the desk where Arthur Taunton was sitting. The owner lifted a glass of Scotch and soda and gestured toward the bottle and siphon on the nearby table.

"Help yourself, Doctor," he said. "And if there is any way you can straighten out this mess, I'd be greatly obliged to you."

"I think Sergeant Smith will clear it up quickly," said Tim. "Unfortunately, he's rather prejudiced against Bill just now. As things look, he only needs one more piece of evidence to make this case stand up in court."

"Ridiculous!" said Taunton. "Why should Bill want to kill one of my jockeys?"

"He didn't *want to*," said Tim quietly. "He needed money to pay off Sam Gordon. If Willowack should win the Brooklyn, Bill could make plenty at the odds he'd get. Smith claims he was going to dope Estereld and Lou Comigo caught him. Bill *had* to kill him."

Arthur Taunton laughed. "That theory isn't worth a nickel unless Smith can prove Bill was trying to dope Estereld, and if he was—where is the needle?"

Tim nodded in agreement. "That's the one thing that will keep Bill in the clear."

He turned as the door opened and

Connie Dee came into the room. Her eyes were angry and she slammed the door behind her.

"A nice hotel, I'd call it," she said sharply. "A girl can't turn her back without having some two-bit crook steal her purse." She crossed to Tim and shook her finger at him. "Where's that master mind of the Homicide Squad? Maybe he can do a little detecting between cigars."

"Slow it down, Connie," laughed Tim. "What happened and why?"

"My purse!" said Connie. "Fay and I went into one of the other rooms to freshen up. I left my purse on the table. We went into the wash room and when I came out to get my purse, it was gone."

"Where is Fay?"

"She went back to the track," said Connie. "But where is my purse?"

The door opened again and Sergeant Smith came into the room. One of his large hands was clamped firmly on the collar of a faded green overcoat that wrapped the thin form of a protesting man. Smith pushed him clear and Tim caught the man's shoulder to keep him from falling.

"Unprovoked and unnecessary force, my dear Sergeant," said old Rags. He steadied himself and dusted an imaginary speck for his green coat. "It is a sad day and a sad world in which a man of gentle habits may be so foully handled." He saw the Scotch and soda smiled pleasantly and lifted a glass. "My heart went hop, my heart went thump—I filled the kettle at the pump." He tilted a generous portion of liquor into the glass, added soda and dropped in an ice cube. "And when I found the door was shut, I tried to turn the handle, but—"

"But what?" asked Connie. She laughed.

"I never did find out," said Rags. He lifted the glass gravely toward the Sergeant and downed the drink.

"Never mind that stuff about your heart," said Smith shortly. "What's the idea of takin' a shot at the doctor, eh? And where did you hide the gun?"

Tim smiled and stepped forward. "Surely you're not accusing Rags of shooting at me, Sergeant," he said. "He and I are old friends. I'm afraid you've made a mistake."

"Mistake, nothing!" said Smith. "I caught this scarecrow at the door of an empty room opposite to ours. The window was open and I found this on the floor." He held up the empty shell of a thirty-eight caliber bullet. "I ask him what he's doin' there and he riddles me in rhyme." He turned to Rags again and lifted a threatening hand. "Come on! Let's have it!"

"But there is nothing for me to tell, my fine feathered friend," said Rags. "I had heard the good Doctor Broadway was at the hotel, and I came to give him a few winners. I heard a shot. I ran to the door. The room was empty as my pockets. Merely that and nothing more."

"Nothin' more, eh?" said Smith. He was running his hands over the immaculate but threadbare clothes of the old man. From one of the inner pockets of the green coat, he took a small cardboard box. He opened it and grinned. "Just what I been looking for—just the thing!"

HE HANDED the box to Tim and the doctor frowned as he looked at the hypodermic syringe that rested on a pad of cotton beside a small blue bottle. Tim pulled the cork and held the bottle to his nose.

"A laudanum compound, I think," he said slowly. He looked inquiringly at

Rags. "What are you doing with this?"

"Oh, merely carrying it about," said Rags. "It's been in the family for many years and I've become attached to it, Doctor."

Smith reached for the collar of the old green coat. "You and I are goin' into the next room and have a nice little chat," he said. There was a threat in his manner and also in his tone. "When we come out, I'll have you talking English. First you're going to tell me how you and Bill Taunton tried to dope Estereld. Then you're going to tell me why you pegged a shot at the Doc—see?"

"I doubt if he will," said Tim. "You see, Sergeant—Rags was with us at the lunch wagon when Lou Comigo was killed. We left before he did, and he hasn't seen or talked with young Bill since."

Connie had seated herself on one end of the table. She swung her feet slowly back and forth and squinted at the detective. At length she reached into the bowl of ice, picked up a cube and tossed it at Smith.

"Give up, Sergeant," she said. "The further you go, the worse it gets. I've got a real job for you—something far more important than murder. Someone stole my purse."

"Fine," said Smith. "Glad to hear it. I told you to go ride a horse and leave me alone!"

"But I can't leave you alone, Angel," said Connie. "As soon as I turn my back, you let people shoot at Tim."

Smith lifted his eyes and looked disparagingly at the ceiling. There was a light knock on the door and Arthur Taunton called: "Come in!" A bell boy stepped into the room and held up a purse.

"I found this near the elevator," he said. "Does it belong to anyone here?"

"It's mine," said Connie, and held out her hand. She took the purse and tossed another ice cube at the detective. "Tip the boy, Sergeant. He's just solved an important case for you."

Smith growled and Tim handed the boy a bill. He watched Connie open the purse and check through the belongings. At length she snapped it closed and nodded.

"Just as I thought," she said. "The place is haunted!"

"Anything missing?" asked Tim.

"A box of brown eye-shadow, of all things," said Connie. "Not a cent gone and they didn't even take my vanity with the emerald case."

"What's the eye-shadow?" asked Smith.

"Part of the stuff that makes me beautiful, Angel," said Connie. She fluttered her eyelids at him. "In fact, it's just about half of my schoolgirl complexion."

"All right—all right!" said the detective. "Now be a nice girl and go ride a horse. The Doc and I are busy! You got your purse and I got a headache. Goodbye, Connie."

Tim was watching Rags. The old man was smiling as he stared at the floor. One hand was deep in the pocket of his green coat and the other gripped his chin firmly. At times he nodded his white head and his smile grew broader. Soon he felt the doctor's eyes on him and turned.

"It seems a shame, the Walrus said, to play them such a trick," he quoted. "After we've brought them out so far and—and—and—" He looked at Tim questioningly. "Would you by any chance know the next line, my good Doctor Broadway?"

"It's a long while since I've read Through the Looking Glass," said Tim. "But I think I recall the line."

"How nice!" said Rags.

Smith slammed one large hand against the table top. "Either I'm crazy or everyone else is!" he cried. "This old coot may be just a harmless nut, but I want to know what he's doing with that needle!"

"Perhaps he's going to stitch up a doily," said Connie. "I'm hungry, gentlemen. When do we eat?"

Arthur Taunton stood up. "I agree with you, Connie," he said. "If the Sergeant has no objections, I'd suggest we go down to the dining room."

"Suits me," said Smith. "Long as none of you leave."

"But I've told you I have work at the track," said Bill. He uncrossed his legs and stood up. "You may not realize it, but the Leith Stables have to win races to keep going. I'm sorry about Lou Comigo, but I've got work to do!"

"Well, now isn't that just too bad," said Smith. He turned and rested his fists on his hips as he looked down at Bill. "There's—"

"Sergeant dear." Connie interrupted.

"What?"

"I'm hungry."

"Are you now?"

"Yes, Sergeant, dear. And you are too."

The Sergeant eyed her warily.

"And people shouldn't make up their minds to put people in jail before lunch."

"He's—" The Sergeant started.

"Tchik!" Connie cut in. "Sergeant! There you go making up your mind before lunch again."

"Comigo is still dead. I've got to lock up somebody for the job. I can't just let everyone go!"

"They won't go far," said Tim. "String along with me for a while and I'll have a real suspect for you after the Brooklyn Handicap is run."

THE sergeant closed his eyes as though he were tired and walked with Tim to the elevator. Connie protested when Tim refused to have lunch with the group, but he was insistent. He left the hotel and walked to the Owner's Gate. Guineas and exercise boys were seated under the small trees near the stables, and beside two of the barns, boys were cooling out the horses that had come in from late workouts. There was an indolent air about the place, but through it ran a tension that is always present before an important race.

Tim went into the Taunton shed and asked where he could find Win McGarry. The boy pointed to the track.

"Up at the stable turn, Doc," he said. "I think he's workin' a horse."

"Thanks," said the doctor. "Could you tell me how far it is to the nearest drug store?"

"Just outside the gate. One block over, on the corner."

Tim took a prescription pad from his pocket and wrote a few words. "Would you mind getting this for me? I'll be at the track with your boss."

The boy shook his head. "Sorry, Doc. I got orders to stay here. I shouldn't really let you in, but I figured Mr. McGarry wouldn't mind. He said no one was to come in."

"Oh, I see," said Tim thoughtfully. "Well, that makes a difference. I wouldn't want you to disobey orders. Is there one of the other boys who could run this errand?"

"A dozen of 'em," he said. "Ask any of the bunch outside."

"Thank you," said Tim.

He found a short, red-headed youngster in worn riding breeches and white shirt near the stable. A few words and the boy was hurrying toward the gate. The doctor followed the path past the

stables and at length saw Win McGarry leaning against the rail. A few late horses were going past at the canter but the trainer was watching a chestnut in the backstretch. He nodded to Tim.

"What news of the killing, Doctor?" he asked. "Have you found the man who did the thing?"

"Not yet," said Tim. He too, watched the brown horse come around the bend. "Sergeant Smith is convinced Bill did it. I hope he's wrong, of course, but the evidence is piling up against him."

"What evidence?"

Tim told of the needle and bottle that had been found on Rags. He watched the trainer's eyes as he spoke and then looked sharply at the hand that held the pipe. It was rock steady. McGarry took the news without so much as a tremble. In fact, his interest seemed centered on the racer that was rounding the stable turn. Tim looked at the chestnut, a big mare without a spot of color. Dark legs and barrel, with true chestnut shading. Her stride was long but it lacked the snap and ease of a Taunton horse. Riding the stirrups was Bender February, his back in a bow and his old arms hard on the lines. He turned and shook his head as he passed and Win McGarry nodded.

"Which one is that?" asked Tim quietly.

"One I bought from the Cloverbend Farms," said McGarry. "Not a bad mare but she don't like to run. Her name is Dody."

"Dody?" said Tim absently. "I don't remember the name but her stride is familiar—long and easy. Offhand I'd say her action is like one of the stake horses I've seen recently."

"Like a dozen, no doubt."

"If she had white stockings and a blaze on her forehead, I might even mistake her for Estereld."

"With that stride?" asked McGarry. He laughed. "Sure, such words are an insult to the lady. That lazy devil out there is hardly fit to stand in the same stable with Estereld. Even though they're half-sisters."

Tim said nothing. He watched the racer follow the rail and disappear around the far turn. McGarry still looked at the track. His pipe was going steadily and at times he lifted his eyes to look at the bright blue sky. At such times he would breathe deeply, and then drop his gaze again to the brown earth. Dody went twice around and a third time. Then the exercise boy who had run Tim's errand came to the rail. He handed the doctor the prescription slip and a twenty-dollar bill.

"Sorry, Doc," he said. "The guy in the drug store says he's all out of that stuff. Laughed and wanted t'know if he was runnin' a beauty parade or somethin'."

"Thanks, son," said Tim.

He tossed the boy a dollar. The boy thanked him and after an inquisitive glance at the trainer, trotted back to the stables. Tim tore the prescription slip into small pieces and dropped them. He looked again toward the racer, then turned to McGarry.

"I've often wondered," he said slowly, "which of the two is more important in racing—the breed or the training."

McGarry sniffed, "Shame on ye, Doc. 'Tis a child's question. All the trainin' in the world couldn't make a racer out of a nag. 'Tis the blood that counts—put a well-bred horse on the track and he'll win in spite of the trainin', no less."

"Still, there's many a Thoroughbred that can't run and win."

"True enough—there's many a poor one. They soon find their way to the scrap pile, though."

"And the same is true of men?"

"No doubt it is," said McGarry gravely.

"Do you think the breed is all important in men?"

"I do."

"You're proud of the Taunton colors, aren't you, Win?" said the doctor.

"They're the finest in racing. Why shouldn't I be proud of them?"

The doctor smiled. "You should be very proud. You've helped to put them at the top, and I hope you keep them there." He rested a hand on the old trainer's shoulder for a moment. "You're a good man, McGarry, but you're playing a dangerous game. If I may, I'd like to watch the Brooklyn handicap with you from the infield."

"Glad to have you with me," said McGarry, "even though I don't know what it is you're drivin' at, Doctor. What's dangerous about the game I'm playin'?"

"Too many things to talk about now," said Tim. He motioned toward a tattered figure that was coming across the lawn. "Rags seems to be interested in your new mare. I think I'll take him back to the hotel with me so he doesn't annoy you."

"I'd take it kindly if ye did," said McGarry slowly. His old eyes held to the doctor's for a time, then he turned away. "About the hundred you've bet on Willowack, Doc, I wouldn't spend the winnings of that bet until after the race is in, if I were you."

"Thanks, Win—I'll remember that."

VI

THE doctor left the rail as the mare came around again, urged on by the hands of Bender February. Again the old guinea looked at the trainer and shook his head. And again McGarry waved him on. Tim walked toward Rags

and found the whimsical one chuckling as he watched the racer go by. He winked when he saw the doctor.

"I see you recalled the next line of my rhyme," he said. "Or did you just happen to come to the track by chance?"

"Your rhyme sent me here," said Tim. "I think it goes— It seems a shame, the Walrus said, to play them such a trick, after we've brought them out so far and—made them trot so quick."

"Precisely!" said Rags.

"In other words, you think it was a shame to dope Estereld after the mare ran so well in her workout this morning—is that it?"

"Nobody knows what I think," said Rags gravely. "Not even I. Besides, McGarry claims Estereld wasn't doped—that the mare will run this afternoon and win."

"And you claim?"

"I claim you were a very wise man, Doctor, when you sent to the drug store for a dozen boxes of brown eye shadow."

"How did you know I did that?"

"The clerk told me when I asked for the same thing. He also told me some one at the track had bought out the supply. Someone, no doubt, who first borrowed Connie's eye shadow and found it would change the color of a mare's legs from white to brown. When he also found it could be quickly and easily removed, he laid in a big supply."

"It seems," said the doctor slowly, "that you know a good many things, Rags. It would be a shame if the Racing Stewards learned those things and undid the work of an honest man. I hope you understand."

"To be sure I do, my good Doctor," said the old man. "And may I again advise you to leave Aqueduct immediately."

"Is that a threat?"

"Merely advice."

Tim smiled again and shook his head. "Sorry, but I can't afford to miss the Brooklyn Handicap. I've bet a hundred on Willowack, you know."

Rags nodded. He wrapped the folds of his ancient green coat about his thin legs and walked toward the stables. Tim left him and went back to the hotel.

AT FOUR o'clock the bugle blew for the Brooklyn Handicap and an attendant cried: "Lead out your horses!" A half dozen trainers gave a last word of advice to the jockeys, held out their hands and gave the boys a knee-up to the saddle. Win McGarry stood by the second stall and looked at Bo Levine who was up on Estereld. The boy was a good jockey and had already ridden one winner in an earlier race.

"You mind what I've told ye," said McGarry. "If there's doubt in yer mind, remember 'tis me who does the thinkin' for the Taunton Stables."

"Yes, sir" said the jockey. His eyes were troubled.

Doctor Broadway was standing near the fourth stall in the saddling paddock. Young Bill had given a knee-up to the Leith jockey and was talking quietly with Fay as the racers stepped from their stalls and formed the line that would take them past the stands. He was nervous but tried not to show it. After all, anything could happen in a race, and Willowack had only one horse to beat. Twenty thousand dollars would go a long way toward making the Leith Stables a success. And, like most trainers with an entry in the Brooklyn, Bill had backed his horse with a few dollars.

Connie Dee was with Tim, and one of her arms was linked through that of Sergeant Smith. The husky detective

was ill at ease. He had asked Tim a thousand questions during the afternoon and had learned less than nothing. Always the doctors had promised he would have a suspect for him after the race. And now it was post time.

"I ain't so sure about that guy Bender February," said Smith. He pointed to the guinea who walked to the left of Estereld's head as the Thoroughbred left the paddock. "He's high as a kite about something. I talked to him just after he came from the track this morning. He told me a lot of stuff that didn't add up."

"And you think Bender killed Lou Comigo?" asked Tim.

"Look, Doc!" said Smith patiently. "I don't know what to think any more I practically find that old monkey Rags takin' a shot at you, but you make me turn him loose. I practically pin the job on Bill Taunton, and you make me turn him loose. I practically know Arthur Taunton saw Bill do the job, and you make me turn *him* loose! Now you got me watchin' a race that's practically in the bag—and why?"

"For the good of your soul," said Connie lightly. She pointed toward the opening at the track rail. "Come on! If we're going to watch this from the infield, we'd better hurry."

The racers had paraded past the stands and were turning to follow the Redcoat to the starting gate. Thousands of excited race-goers were standing, pointing to Estereld and calling the mare's name. Below the stands the bookmakers were busy, and countless dollars were pouring in on the favorite. The odds were ridiculous—one to four and no price for place or show. Each moment the odds on the other entries went longer, but the crowd wanted no part of Willowack or the others. Their money was on Estereld and they howled

the name of the Taunton racer as Bo Levine took her to the gate.

As usual, the trainers and stable attendants went to the wide infield to watch the race. A few owners joined them, and the procession straggled out onto the grass to take points of vantage. Arthur Taunton walked alone. Behind him came Win McGarry and Bender February. Fay Leith walked beside Bill Taunton, one arm through his and an anxious expression in her eyes. At the rear of the group came Connie Dee, Tim and Sergeant Smith. As they reached a small hillock midway across the infield, a shout rolled across the lawn like a breaking wave—"They're off!"

Tim lifted his glasses. Bo Levine had sent the mare out of the gate in a monstrous leap. She was head and head with Willowack, covering the ground in long swinging strides that had made her the outstanding favorite. Others were trying but the mare took the rail. Then Tim saw Bo Levine go to the whip in earnest. The boy leaned well forward and swung his bat in rhythmic strokes, matching the lash to the mare's action.

Others in the stand saw him. A cry of protest rolled over the infield. Shouts. Protestations. Why was Levine whipping the mare so soon? Was he trying to burn her out? Trying to ruin that beautiful stride and lose the race? Was he a thief?

Young Bill turned to look at McGarry. "What is it, Win?" he cried. "Why is Levine going to the bat?"

"Because I told him to," said McGarry slowly.

Arthur Taunton was running toward the trainer. He was pointing at the chestnut mare whose white stocking legs had carried her well ahead of Willowack. "Win!" he cried. "Did you tell

that boy to use a whip on Estereld?"

"I did," said McGarry and his eyes met with Taunton's.

"You're crazy, man! You're mad—utterly mad! Are you trying to throw the race?" Arthur Taunton's voice was loud. It drew the stares of those about him. "You'll burn out the mare before she's gone five furlongs! You're mad!"

"Perhaps," said McGarry. "But madness seems to be in the air, sure it does."

Young Bill had run to the trainer's side now. He shook the old man's arm and his face was white. "It was wrong, Win!" he cried. "I don't want to win a race that way—not *that way!* Why did you do it? Why did you tell Levine to use the whip so soon!"

OTHER trainers and their men had gathered about Win McGarry. Some laughed. Most were puzzled. The orders he had given the jockey might well lose the race for the Taunton Stables. They were glad of the break—glad their own horses might win. But they were horsemen. Thoroughbreds, like the horses they trained. Crookedness, thievery, double-dealing and filth might live beneath the grandstand where the bets were made, but these men were gentlemen! These were the aristocracy of the turf—and to them a thief was lower than dirt.

Fay Leith was trying to quiet Bill. She had caught his arm and drawn him away from the old trainer. Bender February stood close to Arthur Taunton, threatening him with his eyes as the owner howled curses at McGarry. The horses had reached the half way mark and the stands were in an uproar. Bo Levine was swinging his bat and Estereld was slowing.

The mare had opened a full two lengths between her flank and the nose

of Willowack. Another two lengths separated the Leith horse from the pack. And now Willowack had started to move up. Inch after inch, his rubbery nose crept up on Estereld. The mare was game—a Thoroughbred that was born to run and keep on running until the breath and life went out of her body. But now her head lifted. Just a mite but enough to show the strain was telling. Bo Levine slashed with his bat and the crowd in the stand cried: "Thief!"

"God forgive you for what you've done!" yelled Bill Taunton. "I never will, Win. You've let me win a race that will be a disgrace to the Leith Stables!"

"You've trained your last horse for me!" cried Arthur Taunton. "You're through, McGarry—kicked out!"

"So be it," said the old trainer. "Let's see who wins the Brooklyn."

A monstrous black was making its bid, a Glendening horse that was a rank outsider in the betting. He leveled off and went after the leaders, cutting the distance as his boy went to the bat. The rest made their try as they entered the stretch but Estereld and Willowack were far and away beyond. Bo Levine had his lips drawn back. The dark faced jockey was high in the stirrups, bending forward and he swung his bat. And now Willowack's rider was doing the same. Forcing his horse. Driving it on. Guiding it close and closer to the rail as Estereld swerved in protest at the whip.

"Now, boy!" whispered McGarry. "Now lay it in! Now!"

Almost as though he had heard the order, Bo Levine made his final bid. The whip lashed hard and the tired mare dipped down in her heart to find the answer. One leap and another. The stands were a seething mass of screaming maniacs. Big money was riding out there on the track. But it was little

men's money. Money that shouldn't have been wagered and mustn't be lost. There was still a chance—just a ghost of a chance. Willowack was tiring under the strain.

"'Tis for the name!" cried McGarry. He stared at the two racers as they swept on toward the finish. "Bring her in, boy! For the name!"

Tim felt Connie's hand on his arm. Her fingers were pushing dents in the flesh and she howled and yelled and called to Willowack. No doubt where her sympathy stood. Sergeant Smith had bitten through his cigar so often it was less than an inch from his nose. He, too, was yelling. But he begged Estereld to keep on—keep on. Sergeant Smith had risked ten dollars on the favorite.

And then it was over. The roar of the crowd reached a wild pitch, then hushed as the Taunton mare went under the wire the winner. Only for a breath, then the noise started again. No longer was Bo Levine a thief. Oh, no! Now Levine was smart! He knew his stuff! He knew Estereld was off form—that only the whip could bring her in! Good old Bo Levine! That was the kind of boys that were needed in racing. Good old Win McGarry—he knew how to get his horses home first!

The infield was silent. Doubt and bewilderment fought for predominance in the faces of the other trainers. Some came toward McGarry to congratulate him. The old trainer didn't see them. He had turned and was walking toward the opening in the track rail. Beside him went Bill Taunton and Fay Leith. All were silent.

Arthur Taunton hadn't moved. His hands were deep in his pockets and he still stared at the finish wire. The doctor watched him for a time. Then he walked beside him.

"It seems you owe Win McGarry an apology," he said quietly. "He won with that horse in the only way it could be done."

"Yes," said Taunton slowly. "He won—he won the Brooklyn." Almost, it was as though the man were in a dream. At length he smiled and shook his head. "Well—that's that! Suppose we all go to the hotel and celebrate? I'll try to square myself with Win there."

"Not meaning to take the edge off the party," said Sergeant Smith casually, "but there's a little matter of a murder that needs squaring before we adjourn for the day."

"You're just the type!" said Connie. "Don't you ever think of the finer things in life—like apples, for instance?"

"What's apples got to do with this?" asked Smith.

"Nothing. But wouldn't you rather think of apples than murder?"

Smith looked hopelessly at the doctor. "Can't she go home now, Doc?" he asked. "How can I set my mind on a killing when she's around?"

Tim smiled. "Don't let her worry you, Sergeant. Better collect your bet and come along to the hotel. I promised you a suspect and I'd like to deliver."

HE QUICKENED his stride and caught up to Win McGarry and Bender February. Both men were walking with their hands in their pockets. Tim caught Bender's wrist and lifted it. He glanced at the man's fingernails and nodded.

"Easier to put on than it is to take off, eh, Bender?" he said.

"What's easier?" asked the guinea. "Brown eye shadow."

Bender laughed. "You must be nuts, Doc," he said. He turned to Win McGarry. "What's he talkin' about, boss?"

"The truth," said McGarry quietly.

He looked at the doctor. "So you knew I was trying to work the dope out of Estereld this morning, did you?"

"I did," said Tim. "It was a long chance, Win. If the mare had gotten a full shot of that laudanum compound, nothing could have helped her."

"She didn't get much," said the trainer. "Just enough to slow her down. Bender worked it out of her, but we had to win with the whip."

Bender February glanced quickly at the doctor. "You ain't goin' to spill that to the Stewards, are you?" he asked. "Not after we win with Estereld—you ain't goin' to spill it, Doc?"

"I wouldn't think of such a thing," said Tim. He put a hand on McGarry's shoulder. "Meet us in the hotel bar—bring Bender along. Arthur Taunton owes you an apology and he'd like to make it there."

The trainer kept walking and Tim dropped back to join Connie and Sergeant Smith.

VII

TWO tables had been set aside for the Taunton party in the bar of the Hotel Cromwell. They were at the far end of the crowded room, and to get to them, Tim and his group had to pass the long bar. Four men were standing at the near end—bookmakers who handled most of the big money that was bet in the east. One nodded to the doctor and lifted his glass.

"Care to join us, Doc?" he said.

"Later, perhaps," said Tim. He showed his surprise. "I expected you fellows to be in mourning after the favorite came through. That must have cost you plenty."

"It should have," said Tom Garfield, "but it didn't. Someone flooded me with Willowack money and it helped plenty."

"Same here," said Ace Tomlin, another of the bookmakers. "I picked up fifty grand that was laid on Willowack. It made me even for the day."

"Fifty grand?" said Hendricks, the third of the group. "Say, feller, you were asleep. I grabbed a hundred before post time. Sucker dough, but mighty welcome."

Tim paused with the group while the others of the party went to the tables. He ordered a drink and rested one elbow on the bar.

"At that," he said, "you almost lost. I thought Willowack was going to win, right up to the end."

"So did I," said Garfield. He was a round stomached man with a heavy laugh. "When I saw Levine go to the bat in the back stretch, I figured Sam Gordon had put one over on the rest of us."

"Gordon?" said the doctor questioningly. "Was he taking much on the favorite?"

"Plenty!" said Garfield. He turned to Hendricks, a thin, sharp-faced man. "What would you guess Sam lost today?"

"Who knows?" said Hendricks. "I checked up to see if he was getting any Willowack money—even tried to lay a small bet with him. He didn't want it."

"Yeah," said Tomlin. "Gordon heard Estereld was off—way off."

Doctor Broadway sipped his drink. "Strange, isn't it?" he said. "Estereld's time was perfect this morning in the workout. Sam Gordon knew that. In fact, he was at the track then."

"Very strange," said Garfield. He winked at the others. "It looks as though Sam got the old runaround from someone—but big!"

Tim finished his drink and left the men at the bar. He stopped to exchange a few words with other friends from

Broadway and invariably asked if they had seen Sam Gordon. None had seen the bookmaker after the Brooklyn Handicap. His assistants had been busy paying off, and most of the money that was going across the bar had once belonged to Sam Gordon.

Connie was rearranging Sergeant Smith's handkerchief in his pocket when Tim dropped into a chair next to her. Young Bill and Fay Leith were in the corner, their arms resting on the table as they looked quietly about. Both were worried, and at times the young trainer looked across at the husky detective who was trying to get Connie out of his hair. Bender February had come in and was standing at the bar. He seemed ill at ease when Tim called to him and insisted he join the group at the table. Win McGarry was not in the group. Neither was Arthur Taunton. Tim waited for a time and then asked about the owner.

"He'll be along," said Bill. "He got a phone call just a few minutes ago. I think he's gone up to the suite."

"Who called him?" asked Tim quickly.

"He didn't say—just said it was important."

Tim turned to Bender February. "And what happened to McGarry?" he asked. "Why didn't he come along?"

"The boss said he'd be here later," said Bender. "He's back at the barn, seein' that Estereld's cooled out and watered off the way he wants. He's partic'lar about that, Doc."

A waiter came toward the tables and leaned close to Bill Taunton. He whispered a few words in his ear. Bill looked at Sergeant Smith. "Do you mind if I leave the party for a moment?" he asked. "I'll be right here in the hotel."

"Where are you going?" asked Smith.

"Upstairs to see my brother. He wants to talk with me, then he'll be down to join you."

Smith looked at Tim and the doctor nodded. When Fay Leith stood, as though to go with Bill, the doctor lifted a hand in protest.

"Stay with us, Fay," he said. "I'm sure Arthur wants to be with Bill alone for a while."

"Yes, Fay," said Bill. "I think he does."

Fay sat down again and the young trainer left the table. As he passed the doctor's chair, he paused. Tim's smile was sympathetic. He looked at Bill for a moment and then turned back to the group at the table. When Bill left the room, Tim faced the detective.

"I promised you a suspect, Sergeant," he said quietly. "Now I think I can do even better. In about five minutes you should have a confession from the man who killed Lou Comigo."

"A confession?" said Smith. "I ain't so sure I want a confession, Doc. This ain't a murder rap—only manslaughter. If young Bill takes a plea he might get off with ten to twenty years. With good behavior he could be out in hardly no time. It ain't fair to the kid that got killed."

Fay Leith set down her glass. "Bill didn't kill Lou Comigo!" she cried. "He couldn't! Bill told me he didn't!"

Smith sighed. "Lady—I know you like the guy, but Lou Comigo's girl liked Lou, too."

"I agree with Fay," said Connie. She shook one finger under Smith's nose. "Bill didn't do it, and if you keep that big mouth of yours closed, I'll tell you who did."

"Connie, be nice!" said Smith. "If you know something—say it. If you don't—please let me lock up Bill Taunton and call it a day."

"NOT Bill Taunton," said the doctor. "Arthur Taunton is the man you want. He killed Lou Comigo because the boy caught him doping Estereld. The jockey was honest and threatened to turn his boss in to the Racing Stewards. In a moment of anger, Arthur grabbed the fork and killed him. Instantly, he was sorry. More than sorry. He made no attempt to get away. In fact, I expect him to make a confession after he's talked with Bill."

"But why has he waited?" asked Connie. "Why didn't he confess this morning?"

"That would have put Estereld out of the race," said Tim. "Arthur wanted the mare to run and lose. Even now he won't admit to doping Estereld, but Bender February and Win McGarry can tell you he did."

Smith turned quickly toward the guinea. "Is that right, feller?"

"About the dope—yes," said Bender slowly. "I'm hopin' that don't go in the record, though."

"It doesn't make sense!" said Smith finally. "Arthur Taunton owns Estereld—if he runs the mare to win he collects twenty grand for the purse. Why should he want to lose?"

"Twenty thousand dollars was peanuts to Arthur Taunton," said Tim. "His losses in Wall Street have wiped out his fortune. He's lost Bill's money—wanted to get it back for the boy. That's why he pretended to be angry when Bill started to train the Leith horses."

"But how did he figure to collect?" asked Smith.

"Through Sam Gordon," said the doctor. "Gordon went to his office—but not to complain about Bill's debt. Gordon knew he would collect from Bill eventually. He would have waited. But Arthur sent for him to make a deal.

When it was set, they pretended to quarrel."

"What sort of a deal?" asked the detective.

"The usual deal Gordon makes with a crooked owner who has a favorite. Estereld was to lose, and Gordon would take every dollar that was bet on the mare. He'd take bets other bookmakers wanted to lay off. At the same time, he would advance money to Arthur and place bets for him on Willowack."

Connie Dee pushed back her chair. She grabbed Smith by the collar and pulled. "Get going, Angel!" she cried. "If Tim has the right guess on this deal—you're needed upstairs!"

The doctor looked at her in surprise. "Why the hurry, Connie?" he asked. "I know Arthur won't run away."

"Of course he won't run away!" said Connie impatiently.

"Good lord!" cried Tim. He jumped to his feet. "You're right, Connie!" He motioned to Smith. "Come on, Sergeant! Follow me!"

"Follow you—where?" said Smith. He got to his feet and ran with Tim and Connie toward the lobby. "Yeah, I'll follow you—but while I'm doing it, would you mind telling me how Arthur got into Daybell's stall?"

"Save it!" said Connie. She pointed to the wide stairs. "This way is faster than the elevator!"

Tim was already headed toward the stairs. Connie chased after him and Smith ran with her. Like those of most hotels of the period, the stairs in the Cromwell rounded to a broad landing that overlooked the lobby. Smith ran them three at a step. Connie stumbled, put her knee through her dress and said, "Damn!" The Sergeant told her to stay put, leaped after Tim and ran along the landing behind him. The second section of the stairs opened onto the hall beyond

the elevator. Tim pointed to the left.

"Be careful when you take that turn, Sergeant!" he called. "If anyone is coming this way with a gun in his hand, he'll get you as you pass the corner."

"Not unless he's good!" said Smith. He crouched and ran toward the bend of the hall. At the corner, he bent low and stepped forward. His gun was up and he stood flatfooted, looking ahead. "Nothin' here, Doc! You watch the stairs and elevator. I'll try the rooms!" Suddenly he lowered his gun. "Hey—who the hell am I chasing?"

Connie had come up to the second floor. "What difference does it make?" she said and started around the bend of the hall.

Tim grabbed her arm. "Easy does it, Connie! You'd better let us handle this!"

"A fine time to argue!" said Connie. She pointed toward Smith who had pushed open the first door and was looking into the room doubtfully. "Anyone could get out of a window and be in Alaska before Angel found them!"

She ran along the hall and twisted the knob of a door that led to an inner sitting room. Then she screamed. Tim caught her shoulders and swung her aside. He looked into the room and saw Win McGarry standing over the still form of Arthur Taunton. There was an automatic in McGarry's hand, and the old trainer was smiling a tired smile. He tossed the gun onto the table as Sergeant Smith came into the room. Then he held out his wrists.

"All right, Sergeant," he said. "Ye've got the man who killed Lou Comigo. 'Twas I that did it—just as I've killed Arthur Taunton."

"You killed Comigo?" said Smith. He turned in bewilderment toward the doctor. "You hear that, Doc? Looks as though you've guessed wrong this time

—your first real mistake!" He grinned and picked up the gun. "Well—we all make 'em sometimes. Don't let it worry you. I had this guy pegged right from the start—right from the start!"

DOCTOR BROADWAY tried for a smile but it didn't come. He started toward the door. Then he paused. Across the court came an old, high voice. It said: "'Twas brillig and the slithy toves!" And then it was stilled. Sergeant Smith blinked. He turned for a moment toward the window. Then he looked at the doctor who was grinning broadly. Tim pointed to the automatic in the detective's hand.

"I wish you'd handle that more carefully, Sergeant," he said. "Some dusting powder and a glass might bring up a finger print. And I still insist Arthur Taunton killed Lou Comigo."

"Ah, be smart, Doc," said Smith. "I know how you feel. Even I get goaty when I pull a bad one. But there's no use sticking to it. Why look for anyone else when McGarry says he killed Taunton? That fingerprint stuff is a washout. Fingerprints only stick to a gun barrel in movies and radio stories. Actually, Doc—in all my time on the force, I never saw a gun with a good print on it."

"Perhaps you looked in the wrong place," said Tim. "The gun that fired the shot at me was a thirty-eight. So is this. Whoever loaded it is probably the man who shot it. Why not pull the clip and look at that?"

"Fingerprints on the clip?" said Smith slowly.

"Certainly," said Tim. "The most natural way to put a clip into the handle of an automatic is to grab it with a thumb and knuckle of the first finger. Usually the clip has been oiled. Try this one and I think you'll find a print."

"Always something new," said Smith slowly. He looked at Connie and shook a warning finger. "And no remarks from you, Connie!"

"Oh, pull the clip!" said Connie.

The detective snapped the catch at the base of the gun handle and carefully extracted the thin clip that was built to hold eight cartridges. This had but six, and on the flat surface was a definite thumb print. Smith put the clip on the table. He studied it for a time and then shook his head.

"Can you imagine that?" he said in surprise. Then he turned to Connie. "How's about lending me your powder puff?"

"Oh, Sergeant, at your age!" said Connie. "And to think I always considered you my hero!"

"Be nice!" said Smith. "I want to dust this print and nail it down!"

He grabbed her purse, opened a small compact that was in it and dusted some powder over the print. He blew away the particles that were free and motioned to Win McGarry. "Run your hand through your hair and stick it on the case of this compact!"

"'Tis a waste of time," said the old trainer. "De ye doubt me word? Would I be confessin' to a murder for the fun of it?"

"Do like I said!" ordered Smith.

McGarry ran a hand through his hair and Smith looked at the thumb to see it was oily. He then pressed it against the bright lid of the compact, dusted the print and compared it with the one on the clip.

"A mile apart!" he said in disgust. "Even without a glass—they're a mile apart!" He turned quickly to McGarry. "Where did you get that gun?"

"'Tis one I've had for ages," said the trainer. "If the print on the clip isn't mine, it's simply because one of the boys

loaded the gun for me. Come on, man! Put on the bracelets and let's go!"

Tim stepped forward. He put a hand on McGarry's shoulder. "No use, Win," he said. "Young Bill wouldn't let you get away with it."

"And what has young Bill to do with it?" demanded McGarry. His eyes were pleading as he looked at the doctor. "Please now, let's be goin'. Sure, I'll give a full confession—how I bet on Willowack and doublecrossed me owner. Faith, 'twas Arthur Taunton who caught me when I had to kill Lou Comigo. The boy came to the stall and saw me with the needle. I stuck the fork into him, and then hid the needle in the tack room where that devil Rags found it to plague me with!"

"And you put Arthur Taunton in the stall?" asked Smith.

"I did that," said McGarry. "Daybell is gentle as a lamb. She wouldn't trample Arthur, and I knew it."

"You hear that, Doc?" asked Smith.

"Oh, he's telling the truth about Arthur," said Tim. "I knew he had dragged Arthur into Daybell's stall. But Arthur didn't catch McGarry doping Estereld. It was—"

"Please, Doctor!" cried McGarry. "I'm askin' ye to keep what ye know to yourself! Let the man take me and—"

The door across the hall opened and Bill Taunton stepped into the hall. He was dazed and he held one hand to his head as he looked about him. McGarry groaned and turned away. Tim went into the hall and put his arm through Bill's. He led him into the room.

"He hits hard for an old man, doesn't he?" said Tim.

"Hits hard?" said Bill. He looked stupidly about and then stared down at Arthur. "Dead—I saw him that way just before—"

"Just before Win McGarry came into

the room behind you and hung one on your ear," said the doctor. "Probably, you'd picked up the gun a moment before. Win figured you'd killed Arthur, so he knocked you out, dragged you across the hall and tried to take the rap himself."

"Sure, the man is a devil!" said McGarry in a low tone. He stared at the doctor. "An' how would you be knowin' such things—even if they was true?" The last was added quickly.

"An old story," said Tim patiently. "Repetition is the first of many things we learn as a child. Just as nature makes a leaf, likes it, and then repeats the process indefinitely—so does a child do something that pleases it, and then repeats it over and again."

"You mean like a kid doin' the same stuff until you're near crazy?" asked Smith.

"That's it," said Tim. "And in times of excitement, a mind has a tendency to repeat an action that once pleased it."

"Wonderful!" said the Sergeant. He looked quizzically at the doctor. "But what t'hell has that got to do with McGarry killin' Arthur Taunton—if he did kill him?"

"Nothing," said Tim. "It means Win McGarry came to Estereld's stall this morning and found Arthur Taunton standing over the body of Lou Comigo. McGarry worships breeding—the Taunton name means more to him than life. He slugged Arthur, put him into Daybell's stall and was hiding the needle in the tack room when Bill discovered the body."

"Wanted to let Arthur get away with murder?" said Smith.

"**H**ARDLY that," said the doctor. "McGarry knew Arthur was a murderer, and what was worse in his eyes—a man who would dope a horse.

He wanted him to be punished. But he didn't want the world to know of the shame that had come to the Taunton colors. He realized Arthur must have placed heavy bets on Willowack, so he set out deliberately to break him and so to take the Brown and Gold off the tracks forever. That was why he worked Estereld in the morning and ran the mare to win."

"But that repetition stuff," said the detective, "how does it add up with this?"

"Very easily," said Tim. "When McGarry walked into a somewhat similar situation here, he repeated the thing that had helped him this morning. He saw Bill with the gun, slugged him, and dragged him to the opposite room. Then, like the Thoroughbred he is, he tried to take the blame for both killings."

"So young Bill really killed his brother," said Smith. "Just as I thought—exactly! It's just a case of murder running in the family! A fine thing, I'd call it! A disgrace, that's what!"

Tim pointed to the automatic clip on the table. "When you match that print with young Bill's, I'm afraid you're going to be disappointed, Sergeant."

Connie held out her compact. "Try again, Angel," she said to the Sergeant. "And while you're studying to be a detective, just remember that the real killer is on his way to China!"

Smith took Bill's print, none too gently, and compared it with the print on the clip. "I give up!" he cried. He turned and pointed a finger at Connie. "I told you to go ride a horse, or something! Only for you, I'd have solved this case long ago!" He turned again and looked at the doctor. "All right—you win. The prints don't match. So who killed Taunton?"

"The same man who warned me to

leave Aqueduct and later fired a shot at me to prove he meant it," said Tim. "He's the man who met Arthur here in this room and made him send for Bill. As soon as Arthur did this, he was shot."

"But *who* shot him?"

"Sam Gordon, of course." The doctor pointed to the clip. "Save that and it will help to send Gordon to the chair. He shot Arthur, dropped the gun and stepped out of the room before Bill arrived. While Bill was finding his brother, Gordon was heading for the back stairs and an alibi on Broadway."

"Gordon, eh?" said Smith. "I'll have him picked up in an hour. Maybe less!" He started toward the door and then stopped. "I got it! I see the whole thing! Gordon hired that screwball Rags to find the needle Taunton was using. Blackmail, that's what! Gordon and the old coot were going to run a fast one on Taunton, but Sam got tough when he was crossed and rubbed Arthur out instead. First I find Rags—then I'll have Gordon right where I want him!"

There was a chuckle in the hall. "Quite right—quite right," said an old voice.

Smith ran toward the door, gun in his hand. He stepped outside, jerked up his gun and stopped. Tim followed and found Rags standing behind Sam Gordon, prodding him gently with the muzzle of an old single-action revolver. The bookmaker's face was whiter than usual but he still twisted the stump of a cigar between his teeth and tried for a grin.

"Everything under control, Doc?" he asked casually.

"Just about," said Tim. "I was worried for a time, but when Rags told me he was on the job, I felt better."

"Rags told you what?" said Smith. "And while we're at it, just who is this guy Rags?"

"A gentleman and a good judge of horses," said Tim. He winked at the tattered old man. "In his spare moments he works for the Racing Stewards—sort of keeps an eye on the horses that are entered. And I'm told it is a very good eye, too."

"Good enough for this foul world, my dear Doctor," said Rags. He bowed and jabbed Gordon's ribs again with the revolver. "One, two! One, two! And through and through, the vorpal blade went snicker-snack!"

Smith rested one hand against the wall to steady himself. He looked first at Tim and then at Connie. "Maybe I'm crazy," he said mournfully. "But is this guy talking English?"

"The best," said Connie. "Even if I don't understand it."

"You should catch up with your reading," laughed Tim. "You, too, Sergeant. Then you would know how Rags told me he was on the job when he called to me across the court yard."

"Just to keep me from going nuts completely," said Smith, "would you mind telling me now? I ain't got much time for reading."

"Why, I knew Rags was after Sam Gordon when he recited the poem of the Jabberwock," said the doctor. "He told me this morning to beware of the Jabberwock—that is, he hinted Gordon was pulling a crooked deal and wanted to get rid of me." He winked at Rags and smiled. "Why not repeat it for the Sergeant?"

"Verily—why not?" said Rags. He jabbed Gordon again with the old pistol and struck a pose, one hand in the folds of his old green coat. "'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves, did gyre and gimble in the wabe. All mimsy were the borogoves, and the mome raths outgrabe."

Smith nodded his head wisely. "Great stuff, old timer," he said. "But the boys

on Broadway beat you to it. They started double-talk over two years ago." He turned and motioned to Sam Gordon. "C'mon, Toots. You got a date

with a cell—and don't you try any of that mimsey on the borowaves! I had you pegged for a Jabberwock, right from the start!"

THE END

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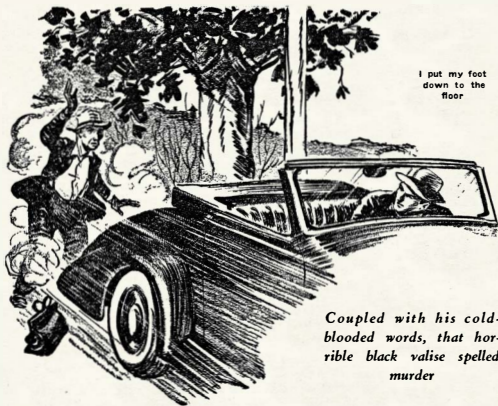
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I put my foot
down to the
floor

*Coupled with his cold-
blooded words, that hor-
rible black valise spelled
murder*

Hitch-Hiker

By James A. Kirch

IT WAS one of those dead July afternoons when the best you can do is choose your method of being burned to a crisp. You can shut yourself up inside the roadster, keeping the sun out, or you can throw the convertible top back and let the blaze beat down on you, whipping up your own breeze with the speed of the car. I was going along around fifty, with the top down and the dried air fanning though the open windshield, when I hit a narrow bridge and slowed up to let another car cross.

That's when I first saw him, standing

on the railing of the bridge, to give himself height, and jerking his hand in the direction I was headed. He was dressed in a cheap blue suit, of some lightweight material, and he was standing on the bridge rail, jerking his right hand and holding a small, black bag in his left. I let the car idle to a stop and held the door open, waving to him, and he bounced down off the railing and trotted over to me. I realized then that if he hadn't been standing on the rail I might have missed him completely; he was that short.

He slid into the seat beside me,

balancing the little bag on the roll of fat just under his belt. He was built so he could do that; straight, narrow shoulders, and then this roll of fat around his hips, and short, stubby legs.

I said, "You could stow that down on the floor some place . . . must be pretty hot hanging on to it," but he shook his head, not answering, so I let him hold it that way, and shot the car forward. I could see his face in the mirror, a tight little face, with narrow, green eyes and a long, sensitive mouth. There was a ring of water around the sweat band of his dirty panama, as if he'd been standing out there in the hot sun for a good spell before I picked him up. He slipped the panama off his head now, drying the inside with a clean handkerchief, and the sudden shock of the cream-white hair made me realize he was older than I'd placed him at first guess. I'd figured him as a country doctor, maybe, when I first saw him perched there, with his bag, but I decided I could be wrong.

"Pretty hot," I offered. "Sort of weather we'd all like to stay home in. I could go for a nice, cool Collins, right now."

He let his eyes turn toward me a minute and opened his mouth as if he were going to say something, but his lips came together with a snap before he'd said a word, like a fish who'd decided to pass up the hook. Sometimes you draw them that way. There's the hitch-hiker who insists on telling you his life history before you have the car in gear again, and then there's the other kind, the one who clams up on you. This old man was group two.

I was curious, though. I'd picked him up for company, and I wanted some conversation. "I'm in hardware," I told him. "Smith & Cremons. Just transferred to this territory from up North."

That was usually enough to throw a Southerner into a long spiel about the beauties of the country, but it didn't go over. "It's sort of a new experience for me, getting used to it down here," I went on, trying to draw him out. "Sort of hard to adjust myself, at first."

His eyes lit up a little at that, and he swiveled around in the seat so he was half facing me. He had a curious way of speaking, as if he tested the words first in the back of his throat and then let them out slowly.

"How would you adjust yourself to a complete change in your life?" he said, speaking that peculiar way.

WE WERE getting started. "Oh, I don't know," I said, thinking it over. "I guess the best thing is to just go along as if nothing had happened. Pretty soon you get used to the change, and finally you forget it ever took place. That's how I usually do it when they shift my territory. In six months I'm right at home in the new stretch."

He shook his head impatiently, letting the white locks spill out over his brow. He reached up and swirled them back and then slipped the panama on, with the handkerchief folded under the inner band, to keep it dry. "That's not what I meant," he said in his careful voice. "I meant an important change in your life . . . a new act. For instance, if you'd just killed your wife . . ." The last part came out swiftly, as though it were something he'd known he was going to say and hadn't had to think about. It wasn't a bad question, when you came right down to it.

"Oh, I don't know about that," I told him. "I guess it would be pretty hard. I read just the other day about a man who did it, driving along about eighty. The car turned over three times, but he came out without a scratch. The

wife was dead, though . . . neck broken. I guess he'll be a long time getting over that."

"That isn't what I meant," the old man said again. He seemed hurt, in a way, because I'd misunderstood him. "I wasn't referring to an accidental death. I meant, what would you do if you'd just murdered your wife?"

I felt the sun blazing down on me before I realized I'd taken my foot off the accelerator. I stepped on it, hard, catching the breeze again, and turned my head so I could see the old man's eyes. He wasn't kidding about it. He was dead serious.

"That's a little out of my line," I said, trying to make a joke of it. "I'd need a pretty good reason before I'd kill anyone. There'd have to be a pretty good cause, I guess."

"There might be," he said, calmly. "There might be a good reason. If she'd let herself grow into a sloppy, fat pig. If every time you looked across the table at her, you saw this big blob of fat sitting there. If she went around the house grunting all the time, dripping with sweat. No man should be expected to put up with that. That would be a good cause."

Nice passenger I'd picked. "Listen," I said, shortly, "if I didn't like my wife, I'd leave her. All I'd have to do would be to pack up and move out on her. Then I could forget her, if that's what I wanted."

"That might not work," he said quietly. "You think you could forget, but you may be wrong. If you'd spent ten years living with a mountain of flabby flesh, maybe you couldn't forget it. There's a safer way than that." He stopped talking for a moment, his green eyes peering at me under the dirty brim of his panama, and when he began again his voice was sharp. "The thing to do

would be to dissolve the mountain. Blow it up, somehow. Get it off the earth. Then you could forget her."

"Blow it up?" I said. "You mean blow your *wife* up, with an explosive?"

He nodded. "That's what I had in mind," he admitted. "You see, if you just killed her, the way people usually do, you'd still have a picture of that mass of fat lying out there in the ground. But if you removed the body, there'd be nothing left for your mind to picture." He was smiling a little, now, as if pleased with his figuring. "That's the way I think it should be done," he announced.

I'd had enough. "All right," I agreed. "That's how you'd do it. Now let's forget the whole thing."

HIS small, white teeth flashed in the mirror, his lips stretching out in a thin smile. "We can't forget it," he said, eagerly. He was like a child, who's just learned a new lesson and is passing it on to a pal. "We can't forget it, now. We have to decide what you'd do about it. That's the whole question, don't you see? What would you do *after* you'd murdered her?"

I wanted to shut him up, so I gave him an answer. "Well," I suggested, "I'd probably turn myself over to the police. They'd be pretty sure to catch me, anyhow, so I guess I'd just surrender myself."

The sudden laughter made me take my eyes off the road and swing around, staring at him. His little mouth was stretched wide, the laughs bubbling out between his lips. The thick roll of fat under his belt flattened with each laugh, and the little black bag slipped off his lap and slid toward the floor. He stopped laughing and snaked his left hand down, catching it. "They'd hang you," he told me, the chuckle still in his

voice. "They'd string you up to a tree, or something, and leave you there. What would be the sense in surrendering?"

I said I guessed there wouldn't be any sense in surrendering, except that they'd be bound to catch me, someday. I said that I guessed I'd just as soon be hung as to run around the country trying to hide when I knew they'd catch me in the end. I was pretty disgusted with the whole business, and I let him know it. I told him I hadn't thought much about it, anyhow.

"That's the whole point," he cut in, quickly. "That's just it. Most people don't think about it. And then, when the time comes, they get caught. They shouldn't ever let the police catch them. Not if they think about it first."

I was getting it now. All this time I'd been going along, thinking here was just a queer duck making morbid conversation, but now I was getting it.

"The killing part is easy enough," he went on. "We've already solved that much of it. A little explosive in the cook-stove, and you go down town for some tobacco. You'll be back for lunch at noon. But you don't go back for lunch. You eat hamburgers and doughnuts in a restaurant and then you walk down to the highway and hitch a ride some place, so they can't find you."

He seemed to be talking to himself, rather than to me, but I was listening. I wasn't missing any of it. "That's simple enough," he went on. "That's the easy part of it. The important part comes earlier. The important thing to remember is to keep enough of the explosive so they'll never be able to hang you. You carry it with you, see, and then if they manage to corner you. . . ." he let go of the bag and shot his hands up in a quick gesture, like a farmer scattering grain for the hens. That is, it started out that way. I didn't see the

end of the gesture, just the beginning. I was watching the bag balanced on the roll of fat, and wondering if it was going to fall off.

I had the car down to about twenty now, just coasting in that broiling sunlight. The beads of sweat rolled down his cheeks. He reached one hand up and wiped them away.

"That's how I did it," he said.

I let the motor idle and slowed the car to a stop. I managed to keep my voice quiet. Somehow, with my nerves shrieking at me, I managed to say it calmly. "That was pretty smart. Pretty smart." The car had stopped coasting, and I leaned back and unsnapped the bolt that held the cloth top in place. "Listen," I began, "We're roasting in this heat. We'll have to put the top up, I guess. Keep the sun off our heads. Just grab it in the back, on your side, and heave forward. I'll handle this end." I had one foot on the running board, waiting for him.

He opened the right-hand door, sliding his grotesque little figure out to the dirt road. "It is hot," he agreed. He placed the black bag carefully on the ground and turned around, reaching up for the iron bar that holds the top in place.

I was in my seat before he'd touched it. The minute he set that black bag on the ground, I pushed my body forward, into the car, and pressed down on the gas. I left him there, staring after me, one foot raised to go on the running board that was ten yards ahead of him before the foot reached the ground.

I SLOWED down after about a quarter mile and slid my hands in under the wheel, clasping them on the spokes. It was easier to keep the car steady that way, even with my hands shaking a little. I could stiffen my body, leaning

against the wheel, and keep myself from falling apart.

If I'd been able to find a house, or a phone, I'd have been all right. But there weren't any houses, or phones. Just the dirt road burning itself out in front of me, and the little man standing back there where I'd left him, maybe waving his bag again at the cars going by. I went along like that, thinking of him, and looking for a phone, until I heard this horn blast out behind me and a heavy maroon sedan shot past, hitting about sixty-five. In the right-hand seat, next to the driver, I caught a quick glimpse of the dirty panama. That was all, just a quick glimpse—but it was enough.

I tried to keep on their tail, without getting too close. I didn't know how I was going to manage it, but I had to warn the driver of that sedan. Somehow, I had to tip him off.

I lost him, though, even with my foot on the floorboard straining the works out of the old roadster. At least twenty minutes passed before I picked him up again.

There was a big sign jutting out in the road—*Eat at Mike's*—and thirty yards ahead I made out the green roof of a coffee shack, with the maroon sedan parked smack in front of it. I pulled up, over into the parking space, and left my roadster. Through the window, I could see the little old man perched up on a stool, his panama lying on the counter, half covering the black bag. The fellow with him, the one who owned the sedan, was big, jovial looking, with a beefy smile creasing his face. The guy behind the counter was colored.

That makes three of us against him, I was figuring. Three of us can take him, all right. I stood there, watching through the window, and he spun around on his stool and caught my eye.

He stared at me a minute, and then his lips slid into that thin smile and he turned and said something to the others. They both peered out the window and the beefy one began smiling again, with him. The old man went on talking, pointing to the bag and then through the window at me, and I could see even the colored fellow begin to grin. I crossed the parking space to the side of the shack and pushed open the door.

He twisted around on his stool again, his legs dangling like a baby's, not touching the floor, and that half smile still on his face. He reached back with his left hand and grabbed the bag, holding it as though it were a football he was getting ready to pass to me.

I jumped. I must've jumped three feet back, holding my arms out like a catcher, trying to snare it before it hit the floor if he let go.

That's when they started laughing. The little fellow shook on his stool, his legs jerking up and down and that tight roll of fat around his waist folding like rubber. The big guy leaned against him, throwing one heavy arm across his shoulders, the tears streaming down his face. Even the colored man was laughing—big, roaring belly-laugh.

I'd been had.

I stood there, taking it, not saying anything. Every once in a while one of them would point to the bag and they'd go off again in that fat flow of laughter. The little man started to say something, choking for breath.

"He thought . . . he thought . . ." and then he gave it up and pointed to the bag, holding his fat tummy with his left hand.

I DIDN'T move. I was the sucker, the fall guy. I just stood there, letting them laugh it out. I was afraid if I moved I'd grab up that bag and smash

it over their heads. I was that sore.

Finally, the fat man pulled himself together and toned his voice down to thick chuckles. He fished a half dollar out of his pocket and tossed it to the counterman, moving toward the door at the other end. The little fellow followed him, bobbing up and down every other step, laughing fit to kill. At the door, the fat one reached down and took the bag, making as if to heave it at me, and they went off again, roaring all the way to the car.

I moved across the counter and ordered coffee, not asking for it, just pointing to the chromium urn. The colored boy nodded, reaching for a cup, but his body folded up into one of those rich belly laughs, jackknifing itself, and letting the deep sound pour out. He stayed that way, his body jackknifed over the counter, and I walked outside and started my car. I could hear him, inside the shack, still braying like a jackass.

I drove slowly, not feeling the heat. I was hoping I'd find them some place ahead of me. I was going to take that guy's black bag apart and make him eat it—piece by piece I was going to cram it down his throat until he choked for breath.

I was thinking of that, getting a picture of him squatting on the ground, chewing at the fragments of black leather, when I swung around a curve on the upgrade and almost rammied into a car angled across the road. A blue-and-white roadster. State police.

A young cop slid his body out of the roadster and pushed toward me, dragging his feet through the dry dust. He was carrying a sheet of white paper in his left hand, but his face was ten degrees whiter than the paper.

"You gotta go around," he told me. "You gotta go down by the valley road.

We got this road blocked off now."

This was it. I knew it was it, but I couldn't help the question I was fighting against it, not wanting to believe. "What's the matter?" I asked him. "Landslide?"

The cop shook his head, scowling. "Naw," he said. "Nothin' like that. We just got a guy." He stopped a minute, biting his lips, then said it again. "Yeah, we just got a guy we were after."

"You got him?" I asked. "You really got him?"

"Sure," the cop told me. "Sure. The hard way. We chased him five miles, doin' seventy, and he missed the turn up here." He spread his hands out, fan-wise. "*Blooeey!*" he finished.

I said, "A big fat guy and a little guy?" I guess I shrieked it at him. That would've been them . . . going along together, laughing at me, and then the state cops tried to catch 'em. And the little guy would swing around in his seat and see that blue-and-white roadster closing in, cornering him. I said, again, "A big fat guy, and a little guy?" and the cop shook his head, scowling.

"Ask me, buddy," he said. "Ask me. I never did get a good look at the guy with him. We were just going along, with me lookin' at this circular they passed out, and this car shoots by and I place the guy right off. I never did get a look at the other one." He shrugged his shoulders. "I'm hopin' it was a pal of his, myself. I'd hate to think he got some poor lug to travel with him, figurin' maybe he could beat the net that way. I'm hopin' it was a pal."

I DIDN'T say anything. I was thinking of the old man standing on the railing of the bridge, so I could see

him, waving his bag that way, and the fat one almost bursting his lungs, laughing at me in the shack. And the fat one, swinging around at the door and taking that little black bag out of the other's hand. I was thinking of that, remembering the old man's asking me about killing my wife, and then I got a picture of his wife, pushing her way across the floor, setting a match to the cookstove. I was seeing it now . . . all of it.

The cop said, "You know, it's a funny thing, his goin' out that way, just like it was fate, maybe." He leaned forward eagerly, as if to drive his point home. "You know what happened, buddy. You know what happened to that car?" He shot the words at me, as if he didn't expect me to believe it.

"It blew all to hell! Like that—before it even left the road, it squashed out, like a ripe tomato. That's what happened!"

I got out of my car, moving toward him, wanting to explain. It wasn't going to do any good, but I had to say it.

"He almost threw it at me," I told him. "That guy picked up the bag and almost heaved it right at me. He was standing in front of me, not ten feet away, and he almost let go. You know that? You know what he almost did?"

He didn't get it, I could see that. He just stared at me, and I moved closer, trying to make him see it.

"It was the fat one, see?" He held that thing right in his hands, and me standing there in front of him. Like a football, he held it." I kept my hands steady, pushing my right arm back, to show him how it was, but he didn't get it at all.

"The way I figure it," he suggested, "the way I figure it, is the guy must've been carrying some of it with him, planning another job. He must've been

carrying it with him, and it blew all apart. That must've been it." He said it as if it was his own idea, as if I hadn't told him anything. He pushed his hand toward me, holding out the circular.

"Can you figure it," he asked. "Can you figure a guy like that? He don't look the type, to me. Not to me, he don't."

I let my eyes drop to the picture, and then my head snapped down, fast. I just stood there, staring at it, hearing the cop's words dimly.

"'Wanted for Sabotage.' *Sabotage*, when a guy blows up half a plane factory, and kills eight people? Sabotage, hell. I calls it murder. And he don't look the type."

I kept my eyes on the picture. It was a good picture, all right, and a good likeness. He was grinning the way he'd been in the restaurant, his jewels creased back to his ears. He looked like he didn't have a trouble in the world.

He was the fat one, the driver of the red sedan.

The cop was still talking, trying to straighten it out for himself. "Funny," he said. "Funny, in a way, that car blowin' up like that. Unless, like I said, he was careless with the stuff." He pulled the circular out of my hand, scowling at it. "The other one," he said, doubtfully. "The one with him. I'd hate to think of maybe an innocent guy getting blown to pieces like that. The way I see it, he must've been a pal. Anybody else'd be crazy to ride with a lug like that. Plumb crazy."

I grinned at him, and then I wondered what I was grinning about.

"It was all crazy," I told him, slowly. "Screwy. A crazy, screwy kind of justice . . . but it worked. It certainly worked. I wouldn't worry about the

passenger . . . maybe he had it coming to him too . . ."

I turned stiffly and walked toward my roadster, not looking back. I didn't want to see the cop's face, or the broken railing, or the dead, dirt road curving out ahead of it. I wanted to forget it, all of it.

But I can't. I can't forget the fat

one, standing in the doorway, making as if to heave that bag at me, and all three of them laughing like fools.

And then I'll get a flash of the maroon sedan, tearing along the road, and squashing out suddenly—like a ripe tomato.

I wonder, sometimes, which one of them was really carrying the stuff.

Watch for

AUTUMN KILL

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by JOHN K. BUTLER

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Crime Oddities

By Kenneth P. Wood

IN ANCIENT Greece it was illegal to drink wine straight. All good law-abiding Greeks mixed their liquor with water before drinking.

Forgers frequently copy signatures from bank blotters. In order to overcome this, many banks urge their patrons to scratch out the image of their signatures on blotters after drying the check. Some banks are even using black blotting paper on which the facsimile of a signature cannot be seen to foil this dangerous type of forger.

Because William Meek, of Jones, Michigan, has a wooden leg he was released from jail after serving part of a ninety-day sentence for drunken driving. The sheriff told the court Meek required too much care, so they placed him on probation, instead.

In California it is contrary to law to work for nothing.

Murder committed by a student or faculty member of the University of Paris during the Middle Ages could not be punished by the government. The University was so powerful it even had its own court system.

It is a crime in Minnesota for a woman to dress up as Santa Claus on the streets!

King Charles IX of France was a peculiar host at royal parties. He employed professional thieves to filch jewelry and valuable swords from his own guests.

During the early colonial days in Virginia, fines, debts, and public obligations were paid in tobacco.

In the State of Alabama it is against the law to buy or sell a sack of peanuts after sundown or before sunup the next day.

According to the FBI one-half of the major crimes committed are the work of persons under twenty-five years of age.

Sir Henry Morgan, most daring of the buccaneers, attacked and sacked Panama City and set up a private government. Arrested and acquitted, then knighted by the King of England,

he became governor of Jamaica and had all freebooters that strayed into his island ruthlessly hanged

Federal officials in Roumania threatened to discharge the entire police force of the city of Buzen after an unprecedented crime wave. The criminals, becoming compassionate, sent a letter to the government requesting their retention, stating that they would leave town instead.

Criminologists declare that blonde women in great emotional crises are more likely than brunettes to kill their lovers.

A man in Stowah, Tennessee, was wanted for theft, and eventually he was captured by deputy sheriffs. They discovered the thief using one of the bloodhounds, that had been sent after him, to hunt rabbits!

Convicts in German prison camps are compelled to wear black masks when leaving their cells for exercise, in order that they may not be recognized by other prisoners.

No.
2

Lovers' Lane Kill

The cop went down with a slug through his abdomen



A Special Article

By W. T. Brannon

IT WAS near midnight of November 20, 1939. Only three days until Thanksgiving and yet the air was mild. A bright half moon was high in the heavens. Along the shaded drives of Humboldt Park in Chicago a number of cars had parked. In these cars were couples, some young, some not so young, but all enjoying the beauty of this Indian Summer night.

Policeman Harry Francois and his partner, Frank Goldwaite, ordinarily made regular rounds of inspection in these lovers' lanes. Tonight, Officer Goldwaite was off and Sergeant Fred Blank was filling in for him.

Francois and Blank had made their regular inspection rounds early in the evening. One car they had noted was a sedan parked only a few feet west of the famous Kosciusko statue in the north drive of Humboldt Boulevard. There was nothing unusual in this—certainly nothing to warrant a policeman's attention.

But, returning later, the officers noted that a crowd seemed to have gathered. Three men were standing beside the open door of the sedan.

The officers stopped their car on the other side of the drive and got out. They walked toward the sedan and Francois

was the first to reach it. Taking in the situation at a glance, he decided a hold-up was in progress. He noted that the three men were all young—mere youths.

"Hey," he said, "what's going on here?"

There was no answer. Then a single shot shattered the silence. Policeman Francois fell to the pavement.

By this time Sergeant Blank had come. As the shot was fired, one of the hoodlums turned west and ran through the park. The others ran north. Whipping out his service revolver, Sergeant Blank gave chase. He fired four shots at the two fleeing bandits, but none of them hit.

He chased them to North Avenue, a busy thoroughfare. They darted across, Sergeant Blank after them. But he ran almost into the face of an oncoming car and was obliged to jump back hastily or be run down. In that brief instant the killers had disappeared in an alley.

Realizing that he had little chance of catching them now, Blank recrossed the park to the place where Francois had fallen. He found that his companion had been hit by a slug that tore through his abdomen. He was dead.

The Sergeant looked toward the spot where the sedan had been parked. It was gone. The couple whom the policemen had been trying to protect had fled!

Sergeant Blank wondered for a moment if it had been a holdup after all. If it had been, surely the intended victims would stay and try to help the police in locating the killers.

He looked about for witnesses. Most of the crowd that had gathered had not seen the shooting of the officer, but had been attracted by the shots. Finally, one man came forward. He said his name was Andrew Andruska. He had

seen the sedan moving away and had thought it strange. So he'd taken the license number.

Through this information, Acting Captain Anthony T. McDonough of the North Avenue Police Station was able to trace the identity of the couple in the sedan. The man was Theodore Nelson, fifty years old, an official of the Metal Association of Chicago, and the woman who said she was thirty-seven, gave her name as Miss Newberry. Later, however, she admitted that her right name was Mrs. Ruth Tessmer. Nelson said they were "just good friends."

"Why did you run away?" asked Captain McDonough.

"Mrs. Tessmer was frightened and I was excited," Nelson replied.

"Can you tell me anything about the three men who tried to force you out of the car?"

"Not much," was the reply. "They were all young—just kids. In their late teens or early twenties, I'd say. My guess is that they were all of Italian extraction."

"One of them giggled," Mrs. Tessmer added.

"Can you identify them if you see them?"

"I think so," said Nelson.

"So do I," Mrs. Tessmer added.

"All right. I want you here for the show-up."

THE next morning, North Avenue police rounded up two brothers, one of whom had a leering smile and might be the giggling member of the murder trio. Nelson and Mrs. Tessmer were taken in to view them. The pair were Walter Borecki, nineteen, and his brother, Chester, twenty-one.

Mrs. Tessmer said that Walter resembled somewhat the youth who had giggled. Then she fainted. This was not

considered good identification and after first aid had been given to Mrs. Tessmer and she had been quieted, she was taken again to view the two youthful suspects. She decided that Walter was not the man, and the two were released.

The police rounded up other young hoodlums in the district, and these were viewed by the holdup victims. But none of them was identified.

The case was apparently at a standstill when news was relayed to Captain McDonough of a possible clue. Edward Skierka was sitting in a tavern reading of the policeman's murder. He said to the bartender, "I'll bet I know who did that."

The bartender gave this information to Captain McDonough. Skierka was located later at 1811 North Sawyer Avenue. He said that he had been talking to Miss Sally Zywicki, who lived in the same building, and that she had related an occurrence similar to the lovers' lane holdup.

Officers found Miss Zywicki, who readily recounted the incident. She had been in one of the lovers' lanes in Humboldt Park earlier in the evening with a boy friend. A young man had approached the car, opened the door, produced a gun, and said: "This is a stick-up."

Miss Zywicki recognized him as a youth called Dago, who had at one time lived near her. Dago recognized her, too.

"I was only foolin'," he said quickly. "You don't think I'd hurt *you*, do you?"

"You had me scared for a minute," Miss Zywicki admitted.

"Aw, forget it," said Dago, putting his gun away. "All I want is a lift. How's about takin' me down to Division Street?"

"So we took him to Division Street

and didn't think any more of it," Miss Zywicki said. "Although we didn't fall for the gag that it was just a joke."

"Don't you know his full name?"

"No. He was known as Dago and that's all I know. Except that I can tell you where he lived."

WITH this information, the police had no trouble learning the identity of the youth. They discovered his name was Joseph Russano, eighteen years old. They pulled him out of bed and took him to their car.

"I ain't done nothin'," he declared. "Me, why should I be mixed up in any crime? I'm a boxer."

"Yeah?" said one of the skeptical officers. "I suppose you're the champ or something?"

"I soon will be," Russano boasted. "Look at my car."

They looked at the car, on the back of which was a big sign that read:

JOE RUSSANO
CONTENDING LIGHTWEIGHT
CHAMPION OF THE WORLD

"See?" Russano said. "I'm the next champ. I fight regular at White City and Marigold Gardens. Why should I be a criminal?"

"That's what we'd like to know," said a detective. "Search his car, men."

This was done. The search quickly disclosed two guns. One of them was the gun that had killed Francois.

"I s'pose you need two guns to be a pug, huh?"

"Naw," said Russano, "I don't need no guns. But I bet I know who does. He's the guy that gimme them two rods."

"Yeah? Who?"

"Stanley Tracz. He lives at 847 North Hoyne Avenue. He's the guy that done it. That's why he gimme the

guns. Whyn't you go get him? You'll never take him alive, though. He's a tough guy. You better shoot first and ask questions later."

"Okay," said one of the detectives. "We'll pick him up and check what you said. When did he give you the guns?"

"This morning, early. Only a few hours after he done it."

"Okay. Come along, mug."

"Whatcha want me for?"

"We like your sunny disposition," a detective said dryly, "that's why."

Russano was held while his story was checked. Tracz was not tough at all.

"I didn't even see the guy," he declared. "If you don't believe me, look it up. I was in jail at the time."

This was checked and found to be true. Confronted with this fact, Russano was sullen. But after some grilling by the police, he finally named Jerry Mangano, twenty-two-year-old hoodlum and Italo "Giggles" Begani. He supplied their addresses and police got them out of bed.

Russano said Mangano had fired the shot.

"Sure," said Mangano, "I let him have it. I hate cops. I been a cop-hater ever since one of 'em killed my pal."

He referred to a fifteen-year-old boy who had been with him in a stolen car in 1935. Mangano, then eighteen, had been seriously wounded and the younger boy had been killed. At that time, Mangano had been released on a year's probation.

"These seats are pretty comfortable," said Giggles, referring to the chairs in

the police station in which they were sitting while Mangano was confessing.

"Whattaya mean?" Mangano demanded.

"They ain't hot like the chairs some guys get."

"Aw shut up."

After obtaining a full confession of the killing from Mangano, he and the other youths were taken from the station, with Nelson and Mrs. Tessmer, to Humboldt Park for a re-enactment of the crime.

Begani giggled and smiled and twitted his companions about their crime. Russano and Mangano accepted it callously. The killer said:

"Now I'm even. In my heart I've always been a cop-hater."

As unconcerned as if they were rehearsing a play, the young hoodlums showed the police exactly how the crime had been committed. They posed for pictures willingly enough, the two older boys with dour expressions, Giggles Begani with a smile.

The case was closed—as far as the solution was concerned—just twenty-nine hours after Francois had been shot. Commenting on this quick work, Mayor Kelly said:

"The force did exceptionally fine work in solving the murder. No one rested until the killers confessed. The Chicago force is constantly improving. Its members have minds, not just muscle."

He might have added a fact that most hoodlums already know:

It doesn't pay to kill a cop.

Cipher Solvers' Club for December, 1939

(Continued from page 23)

Corrections—°Minerva, Marion, Ind., 24 answers for Nov., '39, instead of 18. †Myrtle E. Cote, East Bridgewater, Mass., 21 answers for Nov., '39, instead of 16. †Bluejay, Ocean City, N. J., 20 answers for Nov., '39, instead of 10.

†Watsy Cal, Watsonville, Calif., 30 answers for Sept., '39, instead of 27. †Double R., Memphis, Tenn., 29 answers for Sept., '39, instead of 20, as previously credited.

(THE END)

Solving Cipher Secrets



M. E. OHAVER
"Sunyam"

A CIPHER is secret writing. The way to solve ciphers is to experiment with substitute letters until real words begin to appear. In solving, notice the frequency of certain letters. For instance, the letters e, t, a, o, n, i, are the most used in our language. So if the puzzle maker has used X to represent e, X will probably appear very frequently. Combinations of letters will also give you clues. Thus, the affixes -ing, -ion, -ally are frequent. Helpful hints appear in this department each week. The first cryptogram is the easiest.

No. 115—Technically Defective. By W2GVX.

LAG DEGYDNSGEE CY LAG SDNN-LTOG UKBPC BPUGFLPCS
YPSBGU PE EGUPCDENT PROKPUGB IT LAG PSAGUGSL NCV
HKPS CY EDFA K BGZPFG, VAPFA UGSBGUE PLE DEG BDU-
PSH OCCU FCSBPLPCSE BPYYPFNDL CU PROCEEPING.

No. 116—Holding Hands. By Connecticut Yank.

DATSHPRG LFYG VXTU VASB. BJS DRFNGVU, HSTKXUGZ
CAZ PALP, TGABPGV LAOATL AT. STG PFU BPSXUFTZ FHGU,
SBPGV PFU ZSXCRC DATSHPRG. ZGFRGV, UARGTB, PFU
LVFTZ BAYG. KSV PG PFZ UBFHEGZ BPG HFVZU!

No. 117—Crowded Together. By Gene Ralsteel.

OUGGODHYW VDBFJY, HWZJYFUBUAX "KHGF HAW EDVB,"
UAPDYYJPFGT GHUW DSF, BEDSGW EHJZ EHW KDYJ BVHPJ
OJFNJJA "KHGF" HAW "HAW," HAW "HAW" HAW "EDVB."

No. 118—Roman Romance. By N. Alizer

HGLYVDEX *HGXXVEX HDUHDHYZT HEUUVUS HDUXLVF-
GHK HDUHZFUVUS *HGZXGF. HGEYVDEX *HGXHG HDRRZ-
UHZT HDRNGY, HGADEX HDRFGTZ HDUXERRGYZT HGNGA,
HDUAHETZT *HGVEX' HGFZZF. HGYGXYFDLOVH HFVRZ!

No. 119—An Evening Meal. By *Waltraw

SELZUP ERTANO ZOTJ DNYVP GYOBTF VYHDYXRZ PSLZLAEP
GOSHO, GLA UTBSO BSZ, XZOLTA BMYNEYHF, USBBVYF USL-
NPZO FBSTSHNF, DHRAEP VZRKV OBRTA VPHNKLAAHT.

KEY-PHRASE ciphers, such as †Watsy Cal's No. X-88, afford some interesting angles not present in our weekly crypts. Due to the fact that the cipher alphabet consists of a 26-letter phrase or sentence, it is possible here for a given symbol to signify more than one plaintext letter, this depending, of course, on the key under consideration. The constructor may select any suitable key, in enciphering his message. To illustrate, the subjoined alphabet is based on the key-phrase "THE BEGINNING IS HALF THE WHOLE."

abc	defghijkl	mn	opqr	stu
THE BEGINNING IS HALF THE				
vwxyz				
WHOLE				

Thus, in this alphabet, letter *a* is represented by symbol T, *b* by H, etc. On the other hand, T is the substitute for either *a* or *s*; H may represent *b*, *o*, *t*, or *te*; and so on. So that, with this particular key, the word "two" would be enciphered as HHH, while "succeed" would be TEEEEE, etc. Another thing, a letter may act as its own substitute, as E for *e* in this case. And the intriguing twists vary with each different key-phrase.

No. X-88. Key-Phrase Cipher. By †Watsy Cal.
 "IO OTT ELST IETSAT OTFO
 FERTTS OTT BIUUS, OTTTE
 BIFA OU *FRETI'V IETTNT
 LOBLEI'S; TTET UORT OTT
 TNIFOOI'S BFENTEV VOUUS,
 FOS BTETS OTT VTUO TTFES
 EULOS OTT TUEIS."—*EFIRT
 *TFISU *TNTEVUO.

In solving †Watsy Cal's cipher, it might be well to start with the short words OTT, OTFO, and OU, noting also TTET and OTTTE, and bearing in mind that a repeated symbol may or may not signify the same letter. Endings -V and -S should likewise help considerably. The message and the key-phrase may both be developed together, each affording clues to the other. When you find a letter in the message, fill in the key accordingly; when you supply a letter in the key, try it throughout the message. The answer to No. X-88 will be published next week.

Turning to this week's straight crypts, in W2GVX's message guess IAG and VAPFA; K, PIE, and PE. Connecticut Yank, a newcomer, offers you BPG and PG for entry, with AT, TGABPGV, and SBPGV then unlocking STG and VASB. Gene Ralsteel, also a newcomer, has directed his efforts towards odd sentence construction rather than difficulty. Affixes UA- and -UAX provide a clue to the oft-repeated HAW.

In N. Alizer's alliterative message, try for word 6 through its ending -VUS, also watching HEUUVUS and HGFZZF. Find your own clues in *Waltraw's Inner Circle message, this week's hardest cipher! The key to *Dick Tate's division runs, 012345 6789. Asterisks in cryptograms indicate capitalization. Answers to Nos. 115-20 will appear next week.

No. 120—Cryptic Division. By *Dick Tate.

W	A	R)	N	O	R	M	A	L	(A	N	K
N L K N													
E R R A													
E N K W													
L R R L													
L R T N													
L T													

LAST WEEK'S ANSWERS

109—No matter whether it's a single word or a whole novel, this magazine's two new departments, Handwriting Secrets and The Crime Jury, can judge both, and render a just verdict.

110—Feathered aerial vertebrate clasped upon metacarpus equals pair perched within shrubbery. "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush."

111—Taking Civil Service exams limbers mental equipment. Eager job-seekers jam auditorium. Long tables, with pencils, paper, instructions, confront applicants. Few prove eligibility.

112—Whimsical wharfinger, while whiffing wholesome wheat whisky, whispered: "Which wheelwright, whittling whortleberry whip, whimpered, when whistling whiffet whisked whiskers whence?"

113—Corner grocer offers ketchup, wax beans, quince jam, extra-size gum drops, vacuum-pack kernel corn; also lamb chops, hog liver, milk-fed veal.

114—Key: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
 M A Y F L O W E R S

All answers to Nos. 115-20 will be duly listed in our *Cipher Solvers' Club* for May. Address: M. E. Ohaver, DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY, 280 Broadway, New York, N. Y.

Handwriting Secrets

Character Clues in Pen and Ink

by Helen King

DID you ever feel licked? Most of us have had that feeling, especially since Of Man Depression came along, but it is a phase of life we must have to complete our growth. Some of us seem to get a stronger dose than others, for reasons beyond our comprehension. Whatever kind of licking you've had to take, don't let it keep you down. Develop a sense of humor, and learn to look at things impersonally.

Most of us have been put in a financial hole, out of which we can crawl eventually. To shake off the results of an emotional wallop is more difficult.

Dear Miss King:

Ten years ago we lost our money, but we didn't mind—for we had our child and ourselves. Four years ago we lost our home, and two years ago our child. Now there are just the two of us, middle-aged, alone, and barely existing. What is it all about? Why do such things happen? We are failures—we are alone—we have nothing to offer others. We aren't starving, but neither are we saving. Is it just my imagination, or are we worse off than others?

Mrs. E. F.

Dear Mrs. F.:

You have allowed yourself to become morbid. Instead of thinking of the past, think of the present and future. You were happy when you were doing things for others—you can still do that. You were happy when you were working towards some goal. That is not denied you. You can

still make life brighter for someone who has physical afflictions. You can still encourage others. You can deliberately look around for someone worse off than yourself (and there are many) and do your bit. You still have a duty towards others. You were endowed with more intelligence than the average person. You had a better education, and now it is time for you to snap out of your depression and make the best of the situation.

None of us know why we receive certain sorrows, but it is all part of the game of life. Grin and bear it. We all get sorrow with the sweet, and we are given strength to pull through. Millions of persons in Europe are worse off than you—and hundreds of thousands of your own fellow citizens. It doesn't lessen your pain any to know the other fellow suffers too, but it does open windows for you to see through and to see if you can't do your share towards making someone else happy, and easier.

H. K.

A steady reader of this department has been puzzled for some weeks, and finally sets his question before us for explanation.

Dear Miss King:

My writing was analyzed about two months ago. Two weeks after that I wrote for a second analysis, as I had lost the first. Imagine my surprise to find that the two were not identical. The first mentioned my vocational ability; the second did not. Did my writing change so much? What caused this? I've been worrying about it for six weeks.

Olaf J.

Dear Olaf:

The first analysis usually includes the ten most outstanding traits, plus vocational aptitudes. When a reader writes a second time, and mentions it, the ten next most prominent traits are given. You won't find anything contradictory in the analyses. One merely complements the other. But why worry six weeks about it? Why not write immediately?

The writing does not change much in two weeks time unless something of great importance has happened to cause a definite change in character.

H. K.

Every once in a while somebody pops up with this question:

If a person wishes to write a certain way and deliberately practices, does that eventually change his character? Could you tell if it is a natural writing? Do you know of any cases like that?

You *can* change your writing, if you change your character. The change is writing comes from within; something must happen first to the personality to cause outward manifestations. For example, a young man was threatened with loss of work if he didn't overcome his carelessness, which was costing the company time and money. The boy realized the trait was revealed in his writing because his writing was being analyzed graphologically. So he tried immediately to change his style of writing to conform with things he had read.

1930 - am not very
1935 - quite careful
as you know

Every time he wrote he had a determined look—the kind that says "I'll fool them; I'll use a careful style of writing." Thus he concentrated on that trait, hours every day, for he did much writing in his line. He didn't realize that every time he wrote he impressed

on his mind the importance of being careful. He was forcing himself to get into a good habit, without realizing exactly how he was doing it. He changed his writing, all right—because he had changed within.

The illustration shows how he wrote before he had determined to show up the graphologist—and after. In trying to adopt a certain style of writing he had first adopted the trait. It stands to reason if you impress the importance of an act hourly upon yourself, there will be some result shown.

PURELY PERSONAL

Akos, California—Concentrate more, and don't be so ready to throw up the work. You have never learned self-discipline, so things go harder with you. Haven't you heard employers express a preference for high school graduates? It isn't the added years of study, but the added discipline that counts. A man who sticks to his study knows more, is better prepared to fit into a routine, than one who quits tasks assigned him early in life. If you can add to your discipline, do so for your own eventual good.

T.B.—Living with one's family isn't so bad, if each fellow does his share. It becomes unpleasant when someone lets down on the job, and the rest have to take over. When this is done the fellow who is shirking must be given to understand that aid won't always be forthcoming.

Annetta H., N.Y.C.—I think I know what he means when he talks about 70-30, and I'll bet you take the 70-part. Why not give him a fifty-fifty break?

Mary C., Buffalo—Your friends in New York aren't your type at all. Stay away from them is my advice.

Fritz T.—If the project looks good to

you, why not go ahead with it? You seem equipped to handle it. Good luck to you!

Ray, Kansas City—You know the old saying about the "spilled milk." Well, apply it to your case.

Cipher Solvers' Club for February, 1940

OUR readers submitted 7,847 answers to puzzles Nos. 25-48, inclusive, published in our Cipher Department last February, raising this year's solving total to 15,509 answers, and topping the February high mark of 7,790 answers established in 1939! Solvers who sent in February answers are listed herewith. ° Inner Circle Club and † Honor Roll Club members are distinguished by degree and dagger signs, respectively. All cipher solutions are credited in the monthly lists.

Twenty-four Answers—K. Aaba, Crowland, Ontario. °Aachen, Los Angeles, Calif. †George L. Adams, Brooklyn, N. Y. †Agatha, Van Dyke, Mich. °Age, Erie, Pa. °Imbak Agen, Bay Shore, N. Y. †Aitchzee, Grand Rapids, Mich. °Ajax, Staples, Minn. †Alackaday, Chicago, Ill. †Alvancy, Richmond Hill, N. Y. °Amanovletus, Franklin, N. H. †Anon, Pomona, Calif. †Arbny, Bronx, N. Y. F. M. B., Northfield, Minn. °P. J. B., St. Petersburg, Fla. †Whizz Bang, Montreal, P. Q. °See Bee Bee, Hamilton, Kans. †Stanley Bentz, Cleveland, Ohio. †T. E. Bicknell, Kansas City, Mo. C. E. B., Columbus,

Ohio. °R. L. Blaha, Newark, N. J. °Bluejay, Ocean City, N. J. †Pearl Bradley, Boley, Okla. †Chas. F. Bridewell, Houston, Tex. °Warren G. Brown, Babylon, N. Y. °Bugler, Elizabethtown, Ky. †Burbank, Baltimore, Md. †Frank S. Burlingame, Winter Haven, Fla. °Mrs. C. G. Burroughs, Madison, Wis. †A. B. C., Rochester, N. Y. M. A. C., Cleveland, Ohio. †Watsy Cal, Watsonville, Calif. †Capilus, Peru, N. Y. °H Le Care, Norfolk, Va. °How Carso, Winnipeg, Manitoba. †Chemystic, Ithaca, N. Y. °Blue Hen Chick, Middletown, Del. °Ciphermit, Bangor, Me. †Ciphersmith, Tallahassee, Fla.

(To be continued)



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DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY, 280 Broadway, New York, N. Y.

In my opinion the stories in the May 18th issue of Detective Fiction Weekly rank as follows:

	No. Here
THE GREEN TERROR by Judson P. Philips.....
KEY TO MURDER by Paul Allenby.....
SOME WON'T DIE by Frederick C. Pinton.....
ALIBI ALIBI by Robert Sneddon.....
DEATH—ACROSS THE BOARD by Borden Chase.....
HITCH-HIKER by James A. Kirch.....
LOVERS' LANE KILL by W. T. Brannon.....

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Remember

that, since the magazine must be made up some time in advance of publication, the prize-winning letters will not be published until several weeks after they have been sent in. Therefore, the results of the contest for the April 13th issue of DFW, together with the prize-winning letter, will not be printed until the June 1st issue, which goes on sale May 22nd. Don't forget that winning the ten dollars once does not make you ineligible to win again.

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